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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

In This Issue

[Leadership vs. Management](#)
[Debating Radical Islam, Part 2 of 3](#)
[The "White Privilege" Card](#)
[Add Auspicious to your Vocabulary](#)

Quick Links

[Ara's Web Site](#)
[Facebook Page](#)

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Issue: # 109

December 14, 2015

Greetings!

I hope you are well!

It has been a pleasure to put together this issue of *Uncommon Sense*. I address a racial issue in my **Journal** column, which you may find eye-opening. I'd love to hear your perspective on the matter if you care to write to me -- regardless of your position.



Also in this issue, I continue the debate on Islam with my friend and very able debate opponent, Craig. My **Elephant In The Room** column spells out where I agree with Craig and where I do not. As I mentioned in Issue #108, I will allow Craig the floor for our third and final installment on this debate, and you can expect a vigorous response from him in late December on this important topic.

But I begin with a quick discussion of an important question about leadership and its relationship to management in the **Self-Development** column. I hope it gives you food for thought.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood

Self-Development
Leadership and Management: The Distinctions

It's a common and oft-repeated query -- the question of how management is different from leadership.

Here's a simple way to cement the distinctions in your head. Take the phenomenon of goals.

It is the leader who sets goals. The leader in you conceives of the goal and develops a compelling vision of a desired future (ex. "I will finish a marathon some time in 2016." "I will earn a minimum of six figures in 2016." "I will read no less than 30 books next year." "I will go on a double-date once each month in 2016.")

The goal, when envisioned, is spellbinding, desirable, and mesmerizing, and is enough to make one salivate.



It is the manager who takes that goal and figures out a way to bring that goal to fruition. It is the manager that must inform his spouse or girlfriend of his intent to go out socially with another couple each month, get her buy-in, and persuade another couple to go out with them. It is the manager who has to manage her time in such a way so as to be able to complete the reading of those 30 books. It is the manager who must calculate out how much average monthly income would result in a six-figure income for the year (it's just over \$8,333 each month) and figure out what has to happen to hit that number consistently, and then execute consistently. And it is the manager who decides what the workout schedule is going to consist of, and then actually opens up time in her schedule to engage in the regular distance running that must take place to be in prime condition.

Thus, when it comes to big-picture concepts and innovation and new direction, such things lie within the purview of the leader. When it comes to nuts-and-bolts execution, the heavy lifting, the dogged work to attain the outcome, such lies within the domain of the manager.

While both are important, they are not the same -- they are like apples and oranges. Yet, both are critical, and the two are complimentary. One is not more needful than the other.

And you can -- and must -- do both.

The Elephant in the Room

Debating Radical Islam, Part 2 of 3

Hello Craig:

It's difficult to know with exactness the scope of the problem we are discussing.

Islam is a religion that consisted of, as of 2010, about 1.6 billion people. We can assume that number today stands closer to 1.7 or 1.8 billion.

For purposes of our discussion, the key question pertains to how many Muslims believe in and/or practice jihad (or terrorism). In other words, how many of these people are extremists, or are radicalized? Again, it is difficult to know for certain, but some estimates put the figure in the 15% to 25% range (according to ACT! For America) while others put the figure at less than 1% (according to The Rand Corporation -- although that figure is limited to those Muslims living in Western Europe, not the Middle East or Africa.) After looking at some data, I've seen estimates as falling within a range of 75,000,000 to 375,000,000 jihadists among the almost 2 billion Muslims living. Certainly groups like ISIS, al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Taliban, and other Islamic terrorist groups are Exhibit A in terms of the kind of people that make up the lunatic-fringe of radical Islam. These savages wish to kill any and all -- including their own fellow Muslims -- whom they deem to be less-than-committed believers in Islam. In fact, they wish to take over the entire globe and force the entire population of planet earth to adhere to Islam as they establish what they refer to as Sharia Law. They want this for the United States of America as well as for the rest of the world and they will kill without compunction to bring that goal about.

Since they cannot realistically bring such a vision about at this time, we see various acts of terror take place, with the September 11th, 2001 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in New York being the most dramatic. But the Fort Hood attack, the Boston Marathon Bombings, the attack on our Consulate in Benghazi, the recent attack in San Bernardino, and many other such atrocities both domestic and abroad, resulting in countless deaths and even more injuries, lead one to believe that Islamic

terrorism is seeping into our country and sweeping across other nations with reckless abandon. (For a listing of Islamic Terrorist attacks, [click here](#) to see the staggering reality.)

But where I have misgivings about your take on the problem concerns how much credence you give to the sway the Koran has over the hearts and minds (and actions) of Muslims. I think you grossly overstate the hypnotic pull the Koran's teachings supposedly have on believers. You seem to paint with a very broad brush the scope of the problem. You rightfully point out passages in the Koran (or in authorized commentary by leading voices in Islam) that authorize deception on the part of Muslims, allowing them to justifiably feign friendship with non-Muslims while plotting their destruction. But really, Craig, you believe such passages or commentary translates to a wholesale brainwash of all Muslims? Such would constitute a level of religious magnetism unprecedented in human history. Let's explore why:

First, when I earlier cited various Muslims whom I knew personally (AH, RK, etc), and whom I felt it would be inconceivable for them to behave violently, I said that because of what I sense from them. I read people, just like you read people. And while it is possible for an individual to fool me or you once in a while, such instances are the exception, not the rule. People



(Muslims included) are always telling you who they are and what they represent. As Emerson once said, "What you are shouts so loudly, I cannot hear what you say." Thus, it is very difficult for a person to conceal their character from others in the long-term.

Second, you trotted out the Islamic tenet called *taqiya*, which is a form of religious deception. But you also correctly pointed out that this tenet is particular to Shia Islam. This fact hurts your premise considerably, given that the Shia faction of Islam constitutes [only about 10% to 15%](#) of adherents to Islam. So 85% to 90% of Muslims, being of the Sunni faction, do not subscribe to this tenet.

Third, even for those Muslims who are of the Shia variety, it is difficult to imagine that *all of them* allow such a belief to govern their every action. There are a wide variety of degrees of commitment to one's religious principles, with some being strictly observant, and others being less so. On top of that, it is not clear that every Shia Muslim believes that *taqiya* is to be a regular part of their day-to-day religiosity, or even if it was, that it would lead to the taking of someone's life. (Could not *taqiya* simply allow some Muslims to pretend they are friendly to a non-Muslim while they secretly hold non-violent disdain for the non-Muslim?)

Additionally, who is to say that every Muslim is even aware of *taqiya*, or that they agree with it if they are aware of it? Are there not Christians who are unfamiliar with certain teachings of Jesus or his apostles? St. Paul mentions an esoteric ordinance called Baptism for the Dead in one of his epistles (see 1 Corinthians 15:29) yet almost no believer in the New Testament today has a clue what Paul is referring to. Likewise, Matthew 5:22 has Jesus indicating that if you call someone a fool, you are in danger of going to hell. Really? Merely for calling someone a fool? I am quite confident that millions of Christians have, for one reason or another, called another person a fool in spite of this teaching. In another New Testament passage (Matthew 5:29-30), Jesus seems to be suggesting that the removal of certain body parts (your eye, your hand) is preferable to committing certain sins involving those very body parts. Is Jesus counseling we dismember ourselves? At face value, it seems he is. But almost no one ever carries out such dismemberments. In another instance of a difficult passage, Luke 12:51-53 makes it sound as if Jesus is anti-family, suggesting that he has come to turn a man against his father, or turn a daughter against her mother, that he did not come to bring peace but a sword. Are we to understand that the Prince of Peace is actually anything but? My point in bringing up these New Testament passages is to make the case that some passages of scripture are:

- not understood
- not taken literally
- not lived, even if believed
- and, in some instances, not even within the awareness of some believers

Therefore, to reject my original premise that there are Muslims for whom violent extremism would be

inconceivable on the grounds that the Koran authorizes duplicity is an unwarranted stretch.

I agree we have to be vigilant. I agree we have to be on our guard. I agree that healthy debate with Muslims is warranted. And in the wake of the recent San Bernardino terrorist attack, I agree that there are Muslims among us that are monsters who are simply waiting for the right moment to strike.

But given what I know of human nature, and the enormous difficulty of any religious tenet holding such deep sway over the populace at large, I cannot agree that *taqiya* has the sort of wide-spread, hypnotic, spellbinding, bewitching, and irresistible pull that you seem to attribute to it. Thus, I can be friends with a Muslim (and I am with several.) Is it possible that such a Muslim friend could turn on me when I least expect, and murder me? Of course it is possible. But is it likely? Not the Muslims I know. . .

And I'm willing to take that chance.

Shameless Plug Norwood to Address the Redlands Rotarians

It will be my honor to address the Rotary Club of Redlands this coming Thursday. My topic will be **Six Great Men, Part 2**, which explores six of the key Founders of our Republic. Zeroing in on Franklin, Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton, I peer into their past and hone in on their relationship to their parents, their intellectual acumen, and their views on slavery. It is a riveting and penetrating look into the men who sacrificed their all in order to launch this grand experiment, this City on a Hill, known as America.



Should your organization benefit from a hard-hitting leadership program of this kind, simply send me an email (ara@aranorwood.com).

The "White Privilege" Card

What does one do when one is falsely accused?



When one gathers together all of my flaws, one will not find racism among them. I am no more interested in the color of a person's skin than I am in the type of toothpaste they use. A person's race holds no interest whatsoever to me. I not only consider racism to be a wicked propensity, but a foolhardy one as well. The thought of judging another person -- unfavorably or favorably -- due to their race suggests to me colossal idiocy.

On a team I manage are four women, all of whom happen to be women of color. All are accomplished, intelligent, well-read, and successful. One of them recently sat in on a full-day seminar I delivered. During said seminar, I lead into our morning break with a blond joke. The joke is quite funny and doesn't really make the blond out to be a colossal clod, but illustrates in a humorous way a misunderstanding she had with a home owner, resulting in her painting not his porch as he hired her to do, but painting his Porsche which is what she thought the homeowner had instructed her to do.

Somehow, this professional woman on my team, probably influenced by the Black Lives Matter movement, raised the issue with me a day later during a debrief and asked me if I thought such a joke might hurt or alienate any blonds in the program (of which there were none), or even upset others who have friends or family members who are blond. I told her that if such was the case such persons would do well to not be so hyper-sensitive. I said that such persons who would take offense at a harmless and well-told joke should develop thicker skin and not be so prone to look for things to be offended about.

Her response? She told me that my outlook is indicative of my "white privilege."

Leaving aside for the moment the question of how a blond joke is tied to this notion of "white privilege" I have a feeling that the statement is laced with irony. None can white-wash [sorry, I couldn't resist] the fact that the

statement is a perfect example of projection. After all, the statement is an accusation of racism, when in fact, the utterer of such a statement is displaying the very crime being asserted.

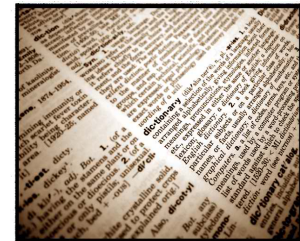
This incident occurred at the very end of a meeting that had a hard-stop on the hour, as I had another meeting at that time in another part of the building. So what I could do but smile and say, "And on that happy note, our time is up. . .?"

But the issue will -- in fact, the issue must -- be addressed. While I cannot claim any understanding of this woman's past, she cannot claim any understanding of mine. And while I do not judge others by the color of their skin, I am not amenable to being judged that way either.

The World of Words

Auspicious

Building Your Power of Expression



Auspicious, adj.

Pronunciation: ô'spiSHəs

Meaning: This word is apt when one is describing favorable conditions, or things that are conducive to success. When conditions are fortunate, or prosperous, or opportune, you have what we call *auspicious* conditions.

Usage:

- *It is so wonderful to see you on such an auspicious occasion.*
- *From his auspicious beginnings as a winning amateur boxer, he has gone on to dazzle in the professional division, winning all of his welterweight bouts thus far.*
- *I am sad to report that their marriage did not get off to a very auspicious start.*

New subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" should have been sent out to you already. If you have not received it, please communicate that to me via email (ara@aranorwood.com).

For more information on my work, follow me on Twitter ("Ara Norwood"), or on Facebook (keyword "Leadership Development Systems") or via my website: www.aranorwood.com

Sincerely,

Ara Norwood
Leadership Development Systems