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# Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 123

July 11, 2016

## Greetings!

Summer is moving along well. I am sitting out here on my lovely and spacious deck, just outside my bedroom. It is almost midnight as I type this and get ready to program it to be in your InBox tomorrow morning bright and early. The air is cool and still. The crickets are chirping. And it is very peaceful.

What a contrast from what so many experience -- and even from what I often experience. Life is challenging and it's sometimes an uphill battle to make sense of it all.

Making sense of things is what *Uncommon Sense* is all about. Trust me: there are some important messages for you in this issue. Which one will have the biggest impact . . . only you can tell.

So drop me a line if you have a moment, and let me know what segment in this issue had the biggest impact or brought the biggest value.

I'll be waiting. . .

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood

P.S. Happy birthday to TF, a fellow Covey Leadership Alum. She should be out



celebrating, but as is typical of her, she is out serving others. Bless her heart!

## Self-Development

### Some Frank Talk About Wealth

While I do not consider myself of man of what one would call immense wealth, I recently had a client of mine, RM, ask me a question he had asked before many moons ago. The question was framed, *How do you make your money?* But what this client, a young man with a successful and growing business, had in mind was, *How did you manage to pay off your mortgage?* We tabled the original purpose of that meeting for a bit and had a frank and engaging exchange about wealth.

Here is a summation of how I responded.

First, if someone wants to pay off their mortgage, which, while not easy is certainly doable, one must devote a significant amount of thought and energy and resources to such a daunting undertaking. One must be willing to sacrifice a lot of other things. One should also set up an [impound account](#) with the institution holding the mortgage, usually a bank. An impound account involves having your mortgage payments also include your property taxes so that you don't have to pay such a large property tax payment every April and December. Also, the financial institution to which you pay your mortgage can set up a special account involving automatic payments that take place every two weeks, rather than once a month. In other words, suppose your mortgage is \$2000 each month. Rather than pay the full \$2000 on a monthly basis, you can pay \$1000 every two weeks -- which occasionally will involve a month where you made three payments of \$1000. If you stipulate to that financial institution that, wherever possible, the payments are to go towards the principle and not the interest, such a strategy will give you some much needed momentum in paying off your mortgage.

But in my own case, although I followed all of those rules, and they did make a big difference, the reason I was able to pay off my mortgage at such a young age was that, along with some family members, I had invested in real estate at an even younger age. I owned a duplex in Silicon Valley that I bought at a very low price, put a fair amount of money into it over the years, and eventually accumulated enough rent money to pay it off. Then, just before the housing collapse of late 2008, I sold it and reaped a huge profit. Admittedly, that fortuitous bit of timing was helpful.



Another thing I told my client is that a decision was made a long time ago not to see myself an employee, but rather, be an employer. That was something I

learned from a mentor, CF, early in my career. It's very difficult to build wealth as an employee. It can be done if you land a high-level spot in the organization, assuming it's a big and profitable organization. But even more importantly, I believe, is to have both multiple streams of income, and also to invest intelligently. Multiple streams of income takes the common assumption that you have just one 40-hour-a-week job and turns that conventional wisdom on its head. In my own case, I have a consulting practice with a number of clients that keep me busy. I speak professionally. I publish this newsletter which periodically uses the Shameless Plug column to promote a product I sell on my website. I teach at the college level on a part-time basis, which is not a big money-maker, but has resulted in my being retained as a consultant from time to time by a former student (which is where I met RM and several other clients.)

As for the investment side, I don't give investment advice even though, with the help of others, I have done reasonably well with real estate and also with stocks at different times in my life. But I would recommend some books for those who wish to understand both the broad principles of wealth building as well as the specific strategies. One is [Money: Master The Game](#) by Tony Robbins. Also, Michael Masterson has written [Automatic Wealth](#) and [Seven Years to Seven Figures](#). There is much to learn from such writings.

Finally, I would offer a caution about acquiring wealth, especially if you acquire it suddenly (such as a winner of the lottery, an overnight success rock musician, a person who wins a lawsuit, or as a result of an inheritance from a wealthy parent.) When a person suddenly incurs a bonanza like that, it can do strange things to one's psyche. All of a sudden this person experiences a psychological rush that messes with his judgment. One may feel a sudden surge of power and a sense of invincibility. One starts to realize that she can now make all sorts of decisions she could not have made previously. And such a person often starts to make foolish decisions. He buys things. Impulsively. And people who get wind of his windfall start to come out of the woodwork with their sob stories of why they need help, and the newly-minted wealthy individual is happy to oblige, not so much because he truly wants to help, but because it feeds his ego to be seen as a person who is capable of helping. This is dangerous, and it explains why many a lotto-winner [ends up less happy after winning](#) than prior to winning.

Finally, I reminded RM of the fact that my greatest fear is outliving my money, therefore I have set up systems to prevent that from happening. Much of my income gets funneled into various financial instruments that will build momentum and enable me to both live quite well in retirement down the road, and/or leave something substantial for my children after I am gone. I could live "better" right now if I wanted to, but I find it smarter to set aside a substantial amount of income as a sacrifice, an investment, in my future and that of my children. (For those who would like a referral for an honest and competent retirement planner, I know the absolute best in the business -- Mike Sears, of [World Class Retirement](#) based out of the Inland Empire region of southern California. No one I know has the combination of absolute fidelity, integrity, and understanding as does Mike Sears. And in making this recommendation, understand that I have absolutely no referral fee arrangement or anything of the kind with him. He is simply my best-

## The Elephant in the Room

### Responding to the Leftist Paradigm, Part 3 of 10

Continuing my response to the challenge thrown my way by Dr. J after he read Issue #120 of *Uncommon Sense*, wherein he retorted:

*It would be helpful to your argument to give examples of how the "Left," antagonistic as it appears to racism, income inequality, intervention into foreign wars, poverty, environmental destruction, Global Warming, insider trading, sexism, Creationism, pollution, disenfranchisement of voters, etc, poses an existential threat to the US. If anything, the progressives in this country appear host to its better angels.*

Dr. J is correct that the Left is antagonistic to intervention in foreign wars. In fact, large segments of the Left tend to be antagonistic to war of any kind anywhere any time for any reason. Thus, the hippie slogans "Make love, not war," "Give peace a chance," and "War is not the answer" are venerated by the Left and ever on the tip of their naïve tongue whenever world conflicts erupt.

Further, the Left denigrates conservatives with the propagandistic mantra that to be a conservative is to be a war-monger. Sensible people know better.

War is an ugly, horrific, and regrettable act. Many lives have been cut short due to man's inhumanity to man. Many tears have been shed over the death or suffering of friends and family members, vast swaths of infrastructure have been razed, and much treasure has been lost due to the blistering blight of war.



There are wars that come about due to the desire of evil people who lust for power and thirst for conquest. And there are wars that are fought to defend the legitimate rights of a nation-state. The American Colonies engaged in what is now called the Revolutionary War when they decided to no longer tolerate the tyranny of Britain. Most historians (except perhaps a radical Leftist like [Howard Zinn](#)) understand that the Revolutionary War was a justifiable war. Likewise, the Civil War, which resulted in the death of over 463,000 Americans - more than the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Indian Wars, the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, both World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War combined - was a painful but important war that had to be

fought to align our stated values of "liberty and justice for all" with our actual way of life.

Dr. J does have a point in one sense. The Founders warned us about getting entangled in the foreign affairs of other nations, and that included their conflicts. I agree with Dr. J on this point, but so do virtually all conservatives. Taken to an extreme, however, that would mean that we would stand by and do nothing when certain enemy forces attempt to murder and enslave our friends and allies from other nations. Does anyone really regret that we fought in [the Korean War](#)? Should we really have allowed Adolf Hitler to have ransacked Europe unimpeded? When we have the power to put a stop to genocide, do we not have a moral obligation to at least consider it - even if it means formally declaring war?

War is not the answer?

Unfortunately, sometimes, war is the only answer.

And that, my friends, is the latest elephant in the room.

## Shameless Plug

### Uncommon Sense is Now Archived!

For those of you who would like to see past issues of *Uncommon Sense*, all previous issues, from #001 to #122 have been archived on my website ([www.aranorwood.com](http://www.aranorwood.com)). If you hover over the Blog link at the top of the home page, a sub-link will appear labeled eZine Archives. Click on that and you'll see the first 122 issues (and I will be adding each new issue of *Uncommon Sense* in a timely manner.)

I am grateful to **Brian Cuda** of **Conceptinet** for his brilliant work in adding this feature to my website. Brian is my web master and designer, and he does absolutely brilliant work. Need a new website? Brian is the man! Contact him at [www.conceptinet.com](http://www.conceptinet.com).

## From Ara's Journal

### On Examining One's Motives

It's very important that we become more sensitive to our motives. By this I mean that we often do things based on some sort of hidden agenda in our minds that we ourselves do not often take the time to acknowledge or examine.

Here's an example: A man walks across the lawn on a college campus to throw away a piece of paper in a trash can. The trash can is 35 yards in front of him next to a coffee kiosk. And there was also a trash can right next to the man, which he knew full well. So why did he



walk the 35 yards to the trash bin next to the coffee kiosk? He went there because an attractive young lady in a summer dress walked up to the coffee kiosk to buy coffee and the man wanted her to notice him. Hence, the 35-yard walk.

It is possible that the man isn't even overtly conscious of the motive behind his decision to take the extra long walk. It may have been no more than a fleeting thought, one that he promptly banished to the nether-regions of his consciousness. Yet the motive is there, plain as day.

How about our motives during conversations with others?

Sometimes I wonder if there are all sorts of motives in play during a conversation in social settings among groups of people. How much positioning is taking place? How much showing off is happening? How much are the various parties looking for a way to steer the conversation in a direction that allows them to tout their accomplishments or experiences, unaware that many times it is tediously obvious to the other conversationalists?

These are interesting questions worth pondering, and while I don't want to overstate the significance of such trends, I do believe that a healthy dose of self-reflection is in order.

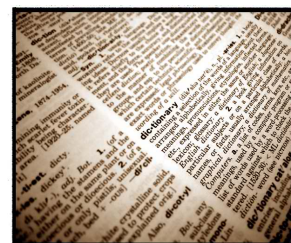
## The World of Words

### Vapid

#### Building Your Power of Expression

**Vapid**, adj.

**Pronunciation:** 'vapəd



**Meaning:** Back in the 17th century, if wine had gone flat and lost its flavor, it was said to be vapid. Today, the word is used to describe things like speech or writing or personality that is lifeless, dull, or boring, but the word could be applied to other things as well. Things that are tedious could be said to be vapid. Same with things that are tiresome, or unanimated, or spiritless. When Ben Stein played the role of the monotonous economics teacher in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, he adopted a vapid persona. When Donald Trump chided Jeb Bush in the 2016 presidential primary for lacking energy, Trump was essentially saying Bush was vapid. If you've ever eaten a meal at a restaurant that was not in any way flavorful, that meal was vapid.

**Usage:**

- *I can't think of a more vapid sport than bowling, which puts me to sleep whenever I watch it on TV.*

- *Reassign Larry to the mail room, primarily due to his stiff and vapid mannerisms.*
- *Calling rap music vapid would be a compliment; calling it music at all would be an inaccuracy.*

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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](mailto: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](http://www.aranorwood.com)

**Sincerely,**

Ara Norwood  
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