


Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Dear David,

 Ara Norwood

Welcome back to another foray into the world of the important. . .

Uncommon Sense is designed to stimulate the mind, provoke the conscience, and feed you with wisdom and perspective. I trust you will not be disappointed with this issue.

In the **Self-Development** column, we explore the meaning of intelligence and how to boost it.

In the **Elephant in the Room** column, I confront the latest controversy that threatens the stability of our republic -- the refusal of professional athletes to show respect to the flag and the national anthem.

In the **From Ara's Journal** column, I share some necessary insights about the death of a porn icon.

And you will love the **World of Words** column, you'll get a dandy of a word to add to your vocabulary.

OK, let's get started.


Ara Norwood

Self-Development

What Is Intelligence?

Intelligence is in high demand. So few people possess it in great degree. So let's discuss this.

Intelligence is the union of acquired knowledge and applied knowledge. Some people (not enough) acquire knowledge. Even fewer apply the knowledge they acquire. Far too many are content to read a book or attend a lecture and, once they possess new knowledge or understanding, essentially shrug their shoulder and say "Well, that was interesting." And nothing happens further.

To amass intelligence, one must read widely, think deeply, and constantly keep up with developments in a given field. And there must be focus on many fields, not just one or two pet-fields. The more areas of  intelligence knowledge one acquires the more one can make greater sense of this world, the more options a person can see, as she draws connections and correlations and between various fields of learning, seeing interrelationships previously unseen, and bringing a fuller picture to the way things work.

Here are six quick tips for boosting your intelligence:

First, read often and read widely. Books are your best bet, but not your only bet. Scholarly journals, magazines, trade publications, blogs, and, rarely but occasionally, newspapers.

Second, highlight the most valuable and profound things you read, and make notes in the margin of your books.

Third, go back and re-read a great book for a second time. You'll be amazed at what you learn the second time through.

Fourth, share what you learned that was profound. Talk about it. Weave it into your speeches, presentations, and writings.

Fifth, expand your own vocabulary. The more words you understand and internalize, and the greater your fluency with using those words in commanding and elegant ways, the greater your intelligence.

Sixth, find intelligent authors and read their work regularly. Their brilliance will rub off on you. For me, some of the luminaries I find as uber-intelligent would include Victor Davis Hansen of the Hoover Institute, the late William F. Buckley, the late

Neal A. Maxwell, the late Neil Postman, Louis C. Midgley, C. Terry Warner of the Arbinger Institute, Nassim Nicholas Taleb, author of *The Black Swan*, among others. Figure out who sparks your own imagination in ways that are profound and far-reaching and visit their writings often. You will grow steadily and will be a force for good.


The Elephant in the Room

Explaining Patriotism

"There is one unmistakable lesson in American history; a community that allows a large number of young men to grow up in broken families, dominated by women, never acquiring any stable relationship to male authority, never acquiring any set of rational expectations about the future - that community asks for and gets chaos."

Daniel Patrick Moynihan

Some principles are sacrosanct, meaning they are regarded as too important to be tampered with. For citizens of the United States, patriotism is one of those sacrosanct principles. But what is patriotism? What does it mean to be a patriot or to be patriotic? Very simply this: A patriot supports his country, not in a casual way, but in a vigorous way. A patriot is keenly prepared to defend his country against all enemies, foreign or domestic. To be patriotic is to possess devotion towards, and to express robust support for, one's country. Thus, as citizens, when we recite the Pledge of Allegiance, we stand, we speak deliberately and solemnly, and we place our right hand over our heart as a gesture of devotion. Likewise, when our national anthem is performed, we stand as a sign of respect and commitment. If we do not do this, we exhibit a lackadaisical outlook that betrays our lack of patriotism, if not our outright contempt for our country.

A former quarterback for the San Francisco Forty-Niners began a recent trend. He decided to remain seated during the National Anthem. His reason for doing so, in his own words, was based on his opinion that this country oppresses black people. It is interesting to  Kaepernick note that this man is half-black, being born to a white mother and fathered by a black man, out of wedlock. He was adopted as a baby to white parents who raised him. So what this well-paid athlete decided was that America is racist. And since America is racist, he is no longer going to honor his country by standing during the national anthem until he decides the country is no longer racist.

Let's dig deeper. What he has in mind when he claims the country is racist is, among other things, white law enforcement officers shooting black men, and getting away with it. That's it.

And his behavior has caught on. Numerous athletes, mostly black, in various sports, have decided to show disrespect for their country by not standing during the national anthem. Some, like Michael Bennett

of the Seattle Seahawks have taken their disdain even further, and have [started the practice](#) of flashing the black power salute after tackling white players on the opposing team, thus perpetuating the very racism they themselves decry.

I will now deconstruct this trend and present 5 reasons why I believe this trend is wrong, disgraceful, and misguided on every level.

First: let me paint a scenario where I might, begrudgingly, condone such disrespect of the flag. Let us suppose, for the moment, that the agitator is correct and that the country is thoroughly racist. After all, he made a blanket statement that it was. He didn't qualify his allegation that the country is racist. He didn't say it was sort of racist, or 20% racist, or occasionally racist. He made it clear that, in his jaundiced view, the country is racist through-and-through. Let's imagine he is correct. In that scenario, I could be sympathetic to his denigration of the flag, even though his actions are cause for consternation. Still, if the country was, in the main, thoroughly racist against blacks, if we were still forcing blacks to give up their bus seats to whites, if we were still preventing blacks from joining country clubs, or playing golf, or flying first class, or eating in certain restaurants, then sure, I would give him a pass. I would not join in his protest in that way myself, but I would understand his point of view. Clearly, in such a scenario, we would need to get our house in order.

But his stance is flawed. I don't have to point out the fact that whites have been largely displaced in the NBA by black players, or that black players are found in great abundance in the NFL and in most other sports. Instead, I would ask: didn't this country recently (2008) elect a black man to the highest office in the land? And didn't this country even more recently (2012) reelect this same black man? Do we have no people of color sitting on the US Supreme Court? Are there no black senators currently serving, along with other blacks serving in the House of Representatives? Are there no black doctors in America? Are there no black coaches? Are there no black professors? Are there no black CEOs? And since there are black men and women serving in such positions, as well as in countless other types of positions of respectability, does that not suggest that America is not racist, for if America were racist, we would not have allowed a black man to be our President, or a senator, a congressman, a doctor, a lawyer, a coach, a CEO, a professor?

So where does Mr. Colin Kaepernick come up with the notion that America is thoroughly racist? Here is one indicator: he began dating a Muslim woman who is quite the activist, cut from the Black-Lives-Matter cloth. Only after starting a romantic relationship with Ms. Nessa Diab did Mr. Kaepernick's social media posts switch from photos of his football games to [focusing on black nationalist](#) and Black Lives Matter-related themes -- America is racist, veneration of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers, and support for cop killer Assata Shakur. Essentially, Ms. Diab, who once [compared](#) Baltimore Ravens owner Steve Bisciotti to a slave owner, radicalized Mr. Kaepernick.

Second, are those who refuse to stand for the national anthem on the grounds that America's white cops are busy shooting to death innocent, unarmed black men grounded in reality? No. Professor Roland Fryer of Harvard conducted an [empirical study](#) of police shootings to understand what the data revealed with respect to race. What he discovered is at odds with what the Black Lives Matter anarchists claim. Professor Fryer found that when it comes to the use of lethal force, that "blacks are 23.8% less likely to be shot at by police relative to whites."

Black Lives Matter activists will say this data was flawed and racially biased. Only one problem with that: Professor Fryer is himself black.

Third, [52.5% of homicides](#) are committed by blacks. This is not an opinion. This is a fact. This is not a statement of racism. This is a fact. This is not arguable. This is a fact. Given that blacks make up a mere 13% of the U.S. population, yet somehow account for more than half of all homicides, one would be forgiven for wondering why some black athletes charge the U.S. with systemic racism rather than put their focus on the question of why blacks are responsible for such a disproportionate amount of violent crime resulting in murder. Thus, Colin Kaepernick and others like him have been duped. They've been hoodwinked. They've been deceived. They are railing against a problem that does not exist to any serious degree, and are missing an opportunity to address a serious problem.

Fourth, if they wish to address the actual problem, they should focus on why young black women give birth to babies when they are not married, resulting in a very large number of black children ([77% by some measures](#)) growing up in single-parent homes. And they should address why married black men abandon their families in droves. Leftists call this a myth, which simply demonstrates that on the Left, the inability to face up to painful realities causes one to deny their existence. Taking a knee before the national anthem will do precisely nothing to solve such problems. If well-paid athletes really wish to deal with the problems blacks face in the inner cities, they should go into the inner cities and talk to the people there, inspiring them to think outside of themselves and consider the numerous possibilities that are all around them; they should set up institutions that teach black girls the critical importance of protecting their virtue and not being sexually active prior to marriage; they should help instill in young black men a sense of the sanctity of marriage and the responsibility to care for and nurture their families once they start them. This is hard work but substantive work. Taking a knee is vapid, self-serving, and disrespectful to our republic. Working directly with the people takes time, money, and patience, but could bear fruit.

Fifth, many will attempt to refute what I am saying here by turning to the claim that such athletes have something called Freedom of Speech. The assumption is that with Freedom of Speech, the athletes' disdain for the flag is justified, and I am not justified in saying anything. Such persons assume Freedom of Speech puts a gag on my mouth. What they do not understand is the basic truth that I also have freedom of speech. So while the athletes have a "right" (in the legal sense) to disrespect the flag, I have a "right" (in the moral sense) to call them out, to condemn them, and to point out their bad faith as well as their foolishness.

One more thing needs to be said. As is consistently the case, the Left ruins everything it touches: politics, the media, the university, the military, concerts, the justice system, the Oscars, and now sports. Until very recently, people like me turned to watching football on television to escape from the contentious world of politics. But now, NFL football forces me to be treated to the latest trend in Leftist activism. So I don't watch the NFL games anymore, starting last week. It's just not worth it. Apparently I am not alone. DirecTV is being [forced to give refunds](#) to subscribers who are tired of the Leftist shenanigans, and NFL TV [ratings are](#)

[plunging](#), due to the seeming collusion (or spinelessness) that NFL coaches and owners are engaging in with radical activists on the field.

Allow me to summarize:

- NFL athletes have a right to protest, just as fans like me have a right to speak out in condemnation of their protest. That is part of the accepted dynamics in the marketplace of ideas.
- The flag and the national anthem are sacrosanct, and thus, except in the most extreme of circumstances, should not be defiled or disrespected, even if there is a certain amount of racism that is present in the country.
- NFL players who feel that there is racial injustice lingering within America's borders would do well to directly confront it, and work to eliminate it, but not be disrespecting our flag, or our other patriotic symbols.
- NFL players who claim that their refusal to stand in respect of the flag are actually honoring the flag are deluding themselves. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is wrong to refuse to stand for the flag or the national anthem due to some grievance -- real or imagined -- that you feel strongly about. There are other ways, far more productive, to address the injustices in this world. Desecrating the flag is not one of them.
- Racism in this country still exists, but in much smaller amounts than at any time previous. Some of the racism today comes from those mostly ignored, inconsequential fringe groups like Neo-Nazi's, Skin Heads, or KKK members. But they are thoroughly discredited and not taken seriously by most Americans. Most racism in this country today comes from race-baiters like Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson, and many (not all) in the Black Lives Matter movement.
- Fewer blacks than whites are shot to death by cops, and most of the time, those who are shot by cops were guilty of some sort of crime. For instances where cops are involved in unjustified shootings of people of any color, swift justice should be served.
- The NFL is going to continue to alienate and lose viewers until either the owners and coaches step up and regain control of the disrespect, or until the current generation of dishonorable players are replaced by a new crop of players in the years ahead who have a different set of values.

Final thought: it wasn't always like this. Back in the 1990s, when NBA basketball player Chris Jackson of the Denver Nuggets, who converted to Islam and changed his name to Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, refused to stand for the national anthem because he claimed the flag is a "symbol of oppression, of tyranny," [he was fined \\$31,707](#) for each game he demonstrated such disrespect. He was the team's leading scorer at the time, but the league's deputy commissioner, Russ Ranik, stated it plainly: "The NBA's rule on this point is very clear and all our rules apply to all players."

Can one imagine an NFL or NBA owner having the moral backbone to say something similar today?

Clearly we have lost something. Courage. And common sense.

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

Check out [my website](#) for tools to help you with your career, your presentations, and other matters.

From Ara's Journal

The Damage is Done: The Death of a Porn Icon

Hugh Hefner died this week at age 91.



Journal
Writing

And in typical fashion, people came forward to pour fawning praise on him.

Norman Lear called him a "true explorer." (Uhm, . . . yes, in a manner of speaking.) Jesse Jackson praised him as a civil rights champion. Larry King called him a "giant" of free speech. (Just speech?). Carmen Electra opined that he "loved life and what he did." (Yes, I'm sure that's true.) USC Gender Studies Professor Lois Banner declared, "He was very bold. Much of his brilliance is as a marketer." Pamela Anderson wrote, among other things, "Thank you for making the world a better place."

There are some things one can say about Hef that are positive: He was a maverick. He was a visionary. He was courageous in pursuing his objectives.

But, alas, what I don't see among all the tributes being heaped on him is that, in the end, he trafficked in pornography. He did objectify women. He spent his career debasing and degrading the mystery and the magic and the specialness of sex. He cheapened the most sacred union between a man and a woman. He took something that was holy, and prostituted it. In doing so, and in doing so effectively, he changed the psyche of an entire generation of women, and even more men. Hef believed he did a good thing, and he often spoke with confidence and bravado when he explained why he did what he did.

If there is an afterlife and an Almighty, I somehow have a hard time imaging Hef standing so confident as he tries to explain himself before a different sort of audience.

The World of Words

Bellicose

Building Your Power of Expression



Dictionary

Bellicose, adj.

Pronunciation: beləˈkōs

Meaning: Something that is bellicose is prone to mean-spiritedness, aggression, or hostility.

Usage:

- *Having gained acceptance and protective status, gay rights activists today have become emboldened, and have morphed into one of the most bellicose elements in American society.*
- *There have been a number of bellicose threats made by the leader of North Korea towards the United States.*
- *My sister is hard to live with due to her bellicose nature.*

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Sincerely,

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