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Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Dear David,

 Ara Norwood

Welcome to the New Year. I know this issue of *Uncommon Sense* is late getting out, but now that it's here, let me tell you what I have in store for you.

In this issue, the **Self-Development** column shares some observations about conducting effective job interviews. It's more of a "what-not-to-do" piece.

The Elephant in the Room segment challenges the growing narrative that illegal drugs (such as marijuana) should be legal, and that good things happen when it is legal. Pure poppycock.

The **From Ara's Journal** column shares a sad and haunting episode. Tread carefully when reading it.

And in **The World of Words** column, you'll get a word that, if used correctly, will give people the impression that you are well read and learned.

OK, let's get started.


Ara Norwood

Self-Development

How Not To Conduct a Job Interview

I believe that one of the most important ways an organization can become truly competitive is found in the manner in which they recruit.

One of the key components of the recruiting process is the interview. How people within organizations conduct those interactions can spell the difference between success and mediocrity.

I find interviewing such an incredibly fascinating exercise, that I routinely go on job interviews (as a job seeker) whenever I am contacted by a recruiter or a hiring manager to apply for a job. I do this even if the job is not something I would ever consider doing. Some of you  Job Interview might assume I have way too much time on my hands. But I love being in a job interview situation, for no other reason than to see how effectively or ineffectively the business professional or HR representative conducts the interview. I am always looking for new insights on what strikes me as effective in the art of interviewing, and I always find it instructive when the interviewer does a poor job of conducting the interview -- as I learn what not to do.

I recently received an email from a secretary asking if I would be interested in being interviewed for a job. She had found my resume on some job site -- probably something like Career Builder or Indeed -- which means it was a very old resume. She didn't spell out exactly what the job was about, or what the name of the firm was. Such omissions are usually a bad sign. But as the job opportunity was local, I agreed to meet the business owner for the interview, and we scheduled it for about a week out.

When I walked into the small office at the appointed hour, I did not see the secretary. In fact, there wasn't even a receptionist. But I did see the owner right away. He came out and greeted me, then escorted me into his small office, sat behind his desk, and began the interview.

Actually, he didn't begin what could be called an "interview"; he began what I would term a "sales pitch."

This man works for a large, popular insurance company that specializes in supplemental insurance. Their commercials appear on TV all the time and are quite clever and humorous. But the business owner made a number of fatal mistakes in his interview style, which I will now enumerate in the hopes that you do not make similar mistakes when you conduct job interviews.

First, he talked a lot. As I said above, it was not an interview. It was a sales pitch. He asked me almost no questions at all. Not a single question about my past work experience. Not a single question about my sales experience. Not a single question about my current work situation. Not a single question about my future aspirations. I seem to recall he asked if I lived locally. Nothing more.

Second, he asked me if I brought a copy of my resume. I had. He evidently had not read the resume his secretary had found online, so he knew virtually nothing about the person he was interviewing. When I handed him my resume, he gave it a quick glance and put it aside. It was clear that he was not only unprepared for this interview, but wholly uninterested in my background or skillset. He just wanted a body that was willing to bang out cold calls on the phone, which would undoubtedly line his pockets in some way.

Third, he made the mistake of telling me about other business endeavors he was currently involved with, outside of the insurance business he was interviewing me about. He had pet projects going on in the entertainment world, and he didn't mask the fact that his energies were divided between that and the insurance gig. So here he was trying to get me, the candidate, to be enthusiastic enough to put my whole soul into helping him build his insurance business, yet he wasn't solely committed to that business.

Fourth, he didn't limit the monologue to the professional realm, but told me a bit too much about his personal life, including the fact that he is a single dad, has three kids he is raising himself, one of whom is probably not going to amount to much in life and thus will probably be living with his dad (the interviewer) well into his adult years.

Obviously, I eventually informed him that the job was not for me. He gave me his business cards and asked me to share them with any people I know that may find the job of interest.

So the lesson I want you to learn is this: in order to conduct an effective job interview, scrutinize the candidate's resume well in advance of the interview, and have clear questions prepared based on the resume. Ask more questions, make fewer statements. Find out about the candidate's background, interests, and aspirations. Allow the candidate to ask questions. And don't spend so much time "selling" the candidate on the virtues of the job. The candidate should not be made to think the job is his if he wants it. Instead, there should be a sense conveyed that this job is special, should be something that is coveted, and will only be offered to the very best candidate.

Avoid the mistakes that this business owner committed and you will increase the likelihood that you will have a better crop of candidates to choose from.

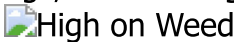
The Elephant in the Room

Drugs Are NOT A Violent Crime?

There are voices out there, in the media and elsewhere, promoting the falsehood that drugs are not a violent crime, and that illegal drugs, once legalized, actually

lowers violence and crime. Hence, a recent [propaganda piece](#) appeared in a publication out of the UK, *The Guardian*, touting the lowering of violence and crime as recreational marijuana becomes legal. Sadly, many gullible people who are on the fence with respect to legalizing drugs will read such propaganda and convince themselves that there is merit in making illegal drugs a normal part of the American culture. We should all be hooked on drugs and stoned out of our minds. That would make for a better, more progressive, safer America, right?

A similar bit of journalist foolishness comes to us courtesy of another British publication, *The Independent*. With the stunning, biased headline "Marijuana legalisation causing violent crime to fall in US cities, study finds," I wonder how many of those behind the so-called "study" conducted their research while under the influence of marijuana. I wonder how many of those so-called researchers personally like lighting up a joint every now and then. . . So I wrote a polite note to the principal author of the study, Evelina Gavrilova, and asked her about that. I have not received a reply.

I have never personally taken an illegal drug of any kind. But I do have direct experience with people who have taken illegal drugs, even a drug as comparatively benign as marijuana. Here  is what I have seen first-hand:

- Persons taking marijuana have been unable to hold a job or find purpose in their lives. And they have allowed many years of zero-productivity and direction pass by. They have become sluggish and lazy non-contributors.
- Persons taking marijuana have stopped growing emotionally. I know people, to this day, who are in their late 20s and early 30s, who either have been or still are, regular consumers of marijuana, who have the personality and emotional maturity of a 14-year-old.
- Persons taking marijuana have eventually found that the drug did not continue to provide the level of intoxication they sought, and so they have graduated to other, more dangerous drugs. Marijuana may not be a gateway drug for everyone who uses it, but it certainly is for many.
- Persons addicted to marijuana have lied continually, and stolen repeatedly, from other people.
- People taking marijuana are intellectually primitive. This is because the drug contains an active ingredient called [THC](#) which essentially bores holes in one's brain. Persons taking marijuana have become anti-social.
- Persons taking marijuana have become wildly violent, breaking down doors in their own home, smashing windows, throwing furniture, and otherwise causing mayhem. The notion that marijuana mellows one out and calms them down is a myth, based on the kind of marijuana that was available in the 1960s and '70s. Today's marijuana is laced with all sorts of poisons that have very unpredictable affects.
- Persons taking marijuana have pulled knives on others, threatened to kill them, and have otherwise been violent and a little crazy. As I said, I have witnessed this first-hand.

So the notion that marijuana should be legalized, and is harmless, and lowers crime and violence, is a myth. It is a part of the Fake News that is out there, and it is perpetuated by people who themselves love marijuana and are intoxicated by


it with some regularity. At the very least, drugs are a violent crime on one's sense of self, one's sense of being, and even on the quality of one's relationships.

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.

Shameless Plug

Norwood Addresses Founding Fathers

It was my great honor to keynote a breakfast meeting this past week for the Rotarian Club in Newbury Park. I spoke on the Founding Fathers. My talk, Six Great Men, focused on the six titans who played the biggest role in the founding of our Republic: Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James  Norwood Lecture 02 Madison, and Alexander Hamilton.


I had addressed this same group last year and was pleased to be invited back.

On this occasion, I had the opportunity to address the issue of slavery as it pertained to the Six Great Men. Although several of the Founders were slaveholders, none of them were responsible for the institution, and all of them had serious misgivings about slavery. These men were products of their environment, and it took some of them a bit of time in coming to grips with the immorality of the practice.

It's a controversial subject, to be sure, yet one that reveals our Founders as men of principle, who harbored deep misgivings of the practice, and some of whom vigorously tried to eradicate.

From Ara's Journal

Reflections On An Acquaintance

The woman who contacted me was only faintly familiar to me. I knew I had some vague exposure to her name, but I  Journal Writing couldn't quite place who she was. Then I reflected further on the last name. I knew this woman's husband, but I had never met the woman herself. She was now reaching out to me to tell me what had happened to him.

Her husband was a classmate of mine from high school. He and I were not friends, per se, but we were both on the wrestling team our freshman year, and though he was a very strong and talented athlete, he did not return our sophomore year -- or any subsequent year -- to compete on the wrestling team. I

remember at the time I felt his absence was a great loss, leaving a significant gap in the strength of our team.

I didn't cross paths with him again until this past summer. I had hosted our 40-year reunion, and he attended. While host, I had a myriad of duties the evening of the big event, such that I did not have the luxury of conversing with very many people -- and we had a huge turnout. But he was one of the very few exceptions to that: we had a very meaningful and sobering conversation, talking about old times, and my sharing with him some of my more unfortunate experiences with his older brother that could have changed the course of my life for ill. In fact, had I agreed to go down a path his brother had suggested, I could very likely be in prison right now.

He listened to me intently, and confided that he hadn't heard from his brother in decades. I could sense a certain melancholy settle over him.

And now, six months later, he was gone. Even though had a great job. Even though he had interests and hobbies. Even though he had a wife and three kids. From the outside, he appeared to be a settled family man.

But it was a façade. His inner demons were forever haunting him, buffeting his mental equilibrium and tearing at his psyche. He came to that point that none of us ever wants to come to, concluding that 58 years was enough, that there was really nothing to live for, surmising that whatever fate awaits him on the other side, it is preferable to this lone and dreary world.

So he did the unthinkable. He killed himself.

His widow is strong, and she will go on. His kids were, understandably, rattled, but they are in healing mode. And me? Even though he and I were not close in any stretch of the imagination, I knew him. I respected him. I liked him. And I grieve at the pain he must have suffered for many years, culminating in his doing something of such gravity, something so irreversible.

And I am resolute in my desire to do a better job in strengthening everyone I cross paths with, always and ever encouraging others to choose life, to choose growth, and to choose the ongoing adventure called mortality.

The World of Words

Vouchsafed

Building Your Power of Expression



Dictionary

Vouchsafed v.

Pronunciation: vouchsafed

Meaning: To vouchsafe something is to give or bestow something to someone else, as by favor, graciousness, or condescension. It is to permit, or to allow. We

here use it in the past tense.

Usage:

- *I was deeply surprised, because you'd never vouchsafed that interesting tidbit before now.*
- *They vouchsafed his return to his own country.*
- *It is a blessing vouchsafed him by heaven.*

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).

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