

# Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Dear David,

Great to have you back. I hope your summer is humming along nicely. As for me, this evening I begin teaching a 14-session college course at College of the Canyons in Valencia on the wonderful subject of Management. Should be exciting!

In this issue of *Uncommon Sense*, the **Self-Development** column explores an important dimension of our social life. I hope you get something out of it.

The **Elephant in the Room** column explores the notion that the English language is often used in ways that are innately problematic. I give 3 examples of what I am talking about.

The **From Ara's Journal** column highlights just how difficult it is to truly communicate effectively

And, of course, the **World of Words** column favors us with another lovely exhibit of the magnificent English tongue.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



## **Self-Development**

### Dating

I would like to consider dates. Not the fruit, which I don't particularly care for. Nor do I have in mind anything calendrical, although such matters do hold my interest. Instead, I would like to explore the social construct of meeting an individual (or individuals) and enjoying each others' company.

Dating takes many forms. If you are (or were) single and of high school or college age, you might be aware of a traditional ritual wherein a young man extends an invitation to a young lady to get together for any number of possible outings. It might involve going to a movie, or going to the beach, or having a picnic in the park, or enjoying a meal in a restaurant. Such social events can be delightful and allow for bonding, and the developing of healthy relationships.

Even when married, husband and wife can and should go out together for social bonding. Usually such dates are far more relaxed because the couples are not

typically trying to impress each other (which, frankly, is rather unfortunate). They are already married so there's not much left that they haven't already experienced with each other.

There is a construct, experienced by both married and unmarried couples, known as the double-date. This involves two couples getting together. It carries with it very interesting dynamics because in a double-date, one's focus is no longer limited to one other person, but to three other people. Not everyone takes to the double-date, but it can be a very fulfilling way to approach dating.

Then there is the blind-date, which takes place with single individuals. Usually the guy and girl meet due to the brokering of some mutual friend, who makes arrangements for the two of them to go out. The match-maker has the best of intentions, and sometimes gets a perverse, vicarious satisfaction out of the arrangement (i.e., "They are together because I brought them together.") Occasionally it proves to be a match made in heaven; other times it ends up being a disappointment for all involved.



A "date" doesn't have to involve courting. In fact, when thought of merely in terms of its social ramifications, void of romance, any two people can get together for some level of social enjoyment, even if for nothing more than a brief conversation. I have a good friend named Bill. We meet for dinner every so often, and, because he is both brilliant and a sensational conversationalist, we have very engaging exchanges over steak every now and again, discussing politics, religion, sports, music, business, society, and philosophy. I wouldn't describe our get-togethers using the term "date" due to the implications that term often carries with it. But when you break it down, it's not that much different from what many people would think of as a typical "date" between a man and a woman who are on friendly, albeit non-romantic, terms.

I am a big believer in having a rich social life. So whether it involves what one might think of as a "date," or a casual get-together, or even an engaging, in-depth and long-overdue telephone call with a friend, I strongly endorse an active, rich social life. Having such moments of social interactivity punctuates the pedestrian routine of our lives and gives us something to look forward to. A concert, a movie, a festival, a walk along the beach, a meal, a fair, a museum, a hike in the forest, a carnival, a symposium, a book signing event, a parade, a national park, a monument, a zoo, a dance, can all be enjoyable outlets for social interaction and for sweetening the existence of our lives.

## The Elephant in the Room

### The Bastardization of Language

While driving recently in a part of Los Angeles with which I was unfamiliar, I passed by a building that called itself a **Gentlemen's Club**. I began to ponder

the irony of such a label. The contradiction seemed so stark. Here we have a business where men bereft of meaning pay money to satisfy their carnal instincts, where they can behave like untamed adolescents wanting to get a peek at a bunch of scantily clad (or unclad) women. These men do not form any sort of committed relationship with these objects (which is how these women are perceived), but they get to experience a fleeting fantasy for an evening, an evening that leads to more emptiness.

These men are gentlemen?

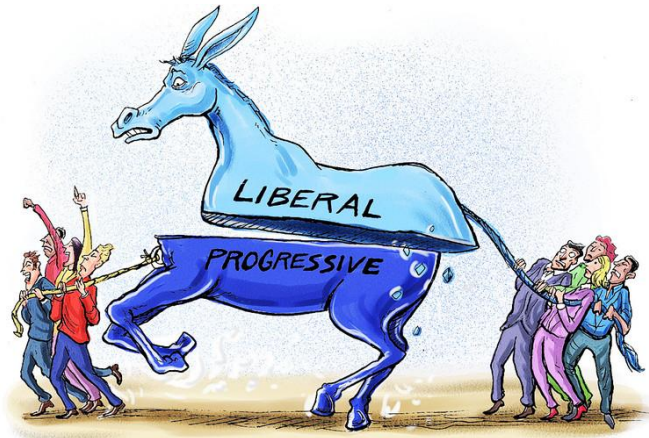


Somehow, I have a very different conception of what a true gentleman is. The so-called "men" who frequent such establishments are not gentlemen. They are, instead, infantile in their moral development, puerile in their capacities of self-discipline.

That got me thinking about the bastardization of language. Calling a perverse establishment a Gentleman's Club (when it is anything but) had me wondering what other instances there are where people use a term that masks an opposite or different reality. Several examples jumped out at me instantly. Here are three of them:

- **Progressive:** This is a term used by a group of people who are not wanting in self-esteem. This group of people possess a sense of self that is unjustifiably inflated. They imagine themselves as in possession of qualities of character that are truly remarkable. There is no figure from the past that they look to for guidance, wisdom, or inspiration -- certainly not George Washington, Martin Luther King, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, or Jesus of Nazareth, for all of them are demonstrably inferior than today's Progressives. Instead, they dream up utopian notions they wish to impose upon others in Totalitarian manner, all the while back-slapping each other as they advance ideas that are fundamentally destructive. Despising the great lights of the past, they fail to learn from the past, as they are, by nature, historically illiterate. Thus, they imagine, turning a school into an institution that is focused on having 5-year-old boys confront the question of whether they are really boys, rather than teaching such boys how to read and write and learn basic arithmetic, is their idea of being Progressive. Further, turning our country's economic system from one based on free-market capitalism into one of abject socialism is imagined by these people to be a mark of Progressive thought. In addition, while they do not use the actual term "open borders," these people, for political reasons (not out of a sense of humanitarian relief) wish to eradicate our sovereignty and fling open the borders to allow anyone and everyone who wishes to live in our

country free access, while pillaging our economic, education, and health care systems. That is considered Progressive as well. In all of these ways, and in countless more, this group of renegades are **Regressive**, not **Progressive**. They are the complete antithesis of what they imagine themselves to be. There is no one less self-aware in the body politic than the Regressive Left. That emperor truly has no clothes.



- **Racist:** Racism was once a problem in the United States, beginning with the slave trade, which, in actuality, predated the birth of the nation. But this country went through a brutal Civil War for the express purpose of eradicating slavery once and for all, an indication of a sense of virtue held by a significant portion of the populace. However, old habits die hard, and racism continued in many circles from the post-Civil War era through the 1960s. Is there still racism today in America? Of course. There are people who are white who hold disdain towards people that are different from them -- blacks, Latinos, Asians, Armenians, Turks, Albanians, Algerians, you name it. And there are people who are black (or any other racial group you can think of) who hold disdain and suspicion towards whites. In fact, every group has their racists among them and racism is not unique to the United States. Further, racism is far, far worse in other countries. However, and this is very important, **racism is largely out of vogue today in America**. All it takes is for someone to make a clearly racist statement or behave in a racist way and the masses, justifiably, come out in condemnation of that person. Racists are marginalized today, and that is how it should be. And, fortunately, racists make up a very tiny fragment of the total population. Blacks, Asians, Latinos, and Caucasians all have it very good these days living in America. Racism is no longer seen respectably. Having said that, one need only look at the 2020 Presidential Candidates seeking the nomination of the Democrat Party to know that almost every one of them -- namely (and especially) Cory Booker, Beto O'Rourke, Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris, Joe Biden, Pete Buttigieg, Bill de Blasio, Julián Castro, Bernie Sanders, and Kirsten Gillibrand -- have all tossed the charge of racism around quite loosely, both at President Donald Trump for whom there is no credible evidence he is a racist, and towards people generally, especially Republicans. They have used the term so frequently, so recklessly, that the term has lost its meaning. (Even Nancy Peoisi, that Left-Wing Paragon, was essentially called a racist by AOC.) Thus, you can be sure that when the typical politician hurls out a charge of racism towards an opponent, that opponent is probably far less racist than the one making the charge in the first place.

- **Homophobe:** The word literally means one who fears homosexuals or homosexuality. Like the term racist, the term homophobe is misused, but in a different sense. Whereas when Person A calls Person B a racist, more often than not it is Person A who is the one in possession of an unhealthy preoccupation with race, while Person B usually doesn't even think about racial matters. Conversely, when the charge of homophobe or homophobia is hurled at an opponent, the one throwing out the pejorative is not usually guilty of the very thing they are accusing others of. And, in truth, it is often the case that the person being charged with homophobia does, in fact, have negative views of homosexuality. Yet the charge is still bogus. It is a misappropriation of the term. People who are charged with homophobia rarely possess actual fear of homosexuals or homosexuality. Instead, they find the practice odd, unseemly, and perverse. That is not the same as having fear of it. And, as it turns out, those who are quick to accuse know this. Thus, they are misusing a term. What the accuser is really saying, in essence, is this: "You are a horrible human being because you find the notion of two naked men kissing passionately and spooning each other in bed disgusting. And I think you are disgusting for feeling that way! You should therefore be banned from employment, you should be publicly shamed and humiliated, your children should be threatened with rape, and your life should be ruined! And we are prepared to bring those very things about unless you

apologize and renounce your current beliefs and adopt our beliefs!" Such is the shrill hysteria and cosmic lunacy of those who are quick to charge others with homophobia. They



need to come up with a term that is more accurate, one that captures the notion of seeing homosexuality as morally repugnant, and strange, and as perverse, but not as something that causes fear or dread in the one who holds such views -- views that are in harmony with the moral rectitude of the God of Israel as taught in both the Old and New Testaments, and views that draw a clear distinction between having revulsion towards the practice of homosexuality, and compassion towards fellow human beings who may be practicing it. No decent person, religious or not, who sees something degenerate about homosexual practice would ever consider treating a fellow human being who engages in such practice with ugliness or disdain. The same cannot be said for those who hurl charges of homophobia at their opponents.

Our language, which is such a potent part of the warp and woof of our culture, is often bastardized and sullied by people who misuse our language for their own

nefarious purposes. We need to be mindful of that and call people out when this occurs.

So the next time you hear someone accuse another of racism or homophobia, consider challenging them. It might be instructive, if not to them, then to onlookers who are within earshot. And the next time you hear some chest-thumping person call themselves a Progressive, challenge them. Ask them what they accomplish that could possibly be called *progressive*. And then try not to smirk at the non-answer they give. And the next time you are walking down the street and see some adolescents in adult bodies streaming into what is called a Gentlemen's Club, be a gentleman (or lady) yourself, and just keep walking. . .

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**

## Need Help Preparing For That Next Big Interview?

So you have trouble with job interviews? You get nervous? You feel unprepared? You get psyched out? I understand. And that is why I am pleased to alert you to my eBook: ***Your Interview Roadmap***. At over 12,000 words and with six appendices, this guide book will open your eyes to what really goes on in the world of interviewing from both sides of the table, and will prepare job seekers to hit it out of the park 80% of the time. (OK, more like 90%, but I prefer to be understated.)



If you are interested in purchasing the product, you can [click here](#) to make your purchase. The advice you will glean from this eBook is golden! I would charge you six times the price of the eBook to give you the same advice in person.

If you've done poorly in job interviews in the past, you can turn it around. The answers are there. Take action!

## The Fragility of Communication

I was driving down to the airport to drop off my daughter who was catching an international flight. I had on a talk radio station during the one-hour drive down to the airport. Traffic was a bit snarled in some places. I didn't get the sense my daughter was much interested in the talk radio program. At one point, she said in exasperation, "Come one!" I took that to mean she had had it with the talk radio program. This annoyed me because I felt I was doing her a favor by driving her to the airport; the least she could do is not harass me for my choice in radio stations. But it turned out she wasn't reacting to the radio program at all. She was frustrated with the amount of traffic.



Two days ago I was lifting weights in Gold's Gym. I was focused on Bench Press and my goal was to work out with 180 pounds, which is about what I myself now weigh. It's hard for a man of my age to work out with his own body weight. And because my right wrist is a bit on the unreliable side, and I do not wish to experience dropping such a heavy amount of weight on my chest with no ability to hoist it back up, I sometimes reach out to a nearby weight lifter and ask him to spot me. Normally, I explicitly tell the person the following: "Please spot me, but do not touch the bar at all in any way unless I completely fail." They often ask if I want help getting the bar off the trestles. I always decline their offer. On this occasion, I had 2 different individuals spot me for two of the sets. I gave very clear instructions to the second fellow, and he followed my instructions. But I failed to give the usual explanations to the first guy, partly because I thought he was a Russian national and I wasn't sure how much English he understood. Sure enough, on each rep, he lightly put his hands under the bar and gave me some assistance in lifting it. At one point, on about my third of five reps, I told him not to touch the bar, but he continued to do so. The result was that the five reps I churned out were actually quite effortless. I wasn't happy. I was even less happy when I stood up and he said, with his Russian accent, "It was all you!" Nonsense. It was partly him. But I blame myself for not making myself clear from the outset what my expectations were.

I am finding it more and more common to misunderstand others. Even with people I know well. Such persons will say something to me, using language that makes perfect sense to them, but is completely baffling to me. Someone will make a request of me, and the first words out of their mouth reach my brain, and my brain processes those first few words, and my mind goes down a path that I am certain is the path they intended for me to go down. Yet it turns out they actually had something very different in mind than I had imagined. This occurs daily.



I am discovering that I have to quiet my mind, and resist the temptation to think I know what others mean by the seemingly plain words they are using, and accept the fact that I may simply be failing to understand. It takes discipline and resolve to improve the communication process. The landmines are everywhere in our interactions. Stepping clear of them is an ongoing challenge.

## The World of Words

### Epoch

#### Building Your Power of Expression

**Epoch**, n.

**Pronunciation:** épək



**Meaning:** An epoch is a period of time in history, or perhaps a period of time in a person's life, usually one marked by notable event or particular characteristics.

#### Usage:

- *The Civil War era was an epoch in 19th-century U.S. history.*
- *Pasteur's important researches mark an epoch in the technical aspect of fermentation.*
- *Many people consider the development of the first antibiotic to be the epoch of man's therapeutic advances.*

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)

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