

Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Dear David,

I launched *Uncommon Sense* back in May 2011. At that time my subscriber base consisted of just a handful of people. The eZine was meant to be a sort of bully pulpit for my thoughts on a wide range of issues that I felt were important to talk about.

Today, we reached a major milestone by publishing this, our 200th, issue. We have grown from a few dozen readers to several thousand! I am grateful and humbled by the support and interest.

This issue consists of a Retrospective from the 3 main columns:

- Self-Development
- The Elephant in the Room
- From Ara's Journal

And, of course, I include a new word for your to utilize in the World of Words column.

I sometimes ponder what the future of *Uncommon Sense* looks like. My hunch is that I will continue to publish it twice a month for the foreseeable future. Should I live until January 2053, I will publish Issue #999 on or about January 15th of that year. I will be 94 years of age at that time. I suspect I will be ready to call it quits at that point and allow someone else to take the reigns.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

A Retrospective

On Listening: It's not difficult to become a more effective listener. It all begins with a decision, a commitment, and a desire to be a good listener. It's no more complicated than that.

On Service: It is easy to stand out in business -- any business. All you have to do is make the decision that you are going to deliver exceptional service, and then

execute around that commitment. You have to work to get everyone in the organization committed to the highest ideals of service, and it starts with recruiting the right people, extends into their onboarding experience, and then continues with management ensuring people are relentlessly focused on serving others -- both internal customers and external customers. When every employee is marching to the beat of the service drummer, taking ownership of problems, and displaying a perpetual "can-do" attitude, the competition doesn't have a chance.

On Leadership: Leadership is distinct from management. It is the leader who puts forth the vision and sets a course for direction. It is the manager who is tasked with figuring out a way to bring such objectives to fruition. Leadership is about big-picture concepts; management is about the nuts-and-bolts, the heavy lifting, the dogged work required to attain the outcome the leader puts forth as being worthy of pursuit. Both are critically important. But they are not the same.

On Goals: Goal setting is one of the greatest acts of self-leadership. The way I approach goal setting is to examine my roles, then decide what I wish to have, do, or be with respect to each role. I generally do so with a one-year time horizon

(though I also often look at a 3 to 5 year time horizon). Then I set weekly goals to put me on a path of accomplishment towards my annual goals. And it works! But the key to remember is that your weekly goals must be stated in concrete language. They can't be vague. The more precise your goals, worded in a way that leaves no room for ambiguity as to its completion, the better. And on that note, ask yourself two



questions: *Are there areas of your life that are problems you wish to rid yourself of, and if so, what has to happen to remove from your life the problem issue?* And: *Are there areas missing from your life that represent opportunities, and if so, what is out there that you should pursue and seize hold of and acquire?* Whatever your goals, they should arouse some passion within you. So don't go for the bland or the pedestrian. Go for things that you deeply care about and perhaps even crave.

On Careers: Most of the time, we should stay in our jobs (our places of employment) and produce the very best work we can. But there are times you should plan your exit strategy. For example, if you find you are no longer effective, and you are not making valuable contributions to the organization, you either find a way to turn that around and resume bringing value, or, if that seems implausible, you plan your exit strategy. If you find your boss stifles your ability to contribute, keeping a proverbial straight-jacket on you so that you cannot produce the results you otherwise could produce, then you plan your exit strategy, knowing your boss isn't likely to change. If you find that you know longer have the respect of your team or your colleagues, you need to take a hard look in the mirror and ask yourself what you contributed to that unfortunate outcome. If you can do things to change such dim views, make the necessary changes. If the damage is done and cannot be undone, learn from your mistakes, plan your exit strategy, and

move on. Land a new job, and do not repeat the same mistakes. If the nature of the work no longer interests you, and you feel bored and burned-out, figure out what kind of work would interest you, and go get a job doing that.

On Time Management: If you want to better manage your time, consider this: there is a distinction between *a task* and *an appointment*. The former is fluid, flexible, and has a variable quality to it in terms of when it gets done. The latter is solid, firm, and invariable, in that once it's in your calendar, it is a firm commitment with a specific start and stop time allocated for its accomplishment. Some tasks should actually be put into your calendar, not left on the indeterminate Task List.

More On Leadership: When it comes to the world stage, geopolitics, etc., there are two distinct leadership styles: *Virtuous Leadership* and *Commanding Leadership*. Mahatma Gandhi personified the first, to the extreme. Winston Churchill encapsulated the second. Virtuous leadership works when dealing with reasonable people, because such people can be reasoned with. But when facing off with psychopaths, deviants, criminals, or terrorists, one cannot reason with such people. One must turn to the decisiveness of Commanding Leadership. One must adopt the cloak of Churchill, not Gandhi. One must be prepared to crush one's opponents because some forces out there are so deranged, they only understand the calculus of force. A very strong stand must be adopted in such situations, and the opposition must be met with strength, however harsh and grim the outcome may be.

On Results: Execution is one of the most important skills any achiever or would-be achiever can acquire. In fact, I would rank execution ahead of public speaking ability any day. I would rank it ahead of organizational development prowess, negotiation, team building, and conflict resolution. Once you have a large-scale, significant goal selected, you have to accurately assess where you are today in relation to that goal (Point A) and where the attainment of that goal will actually have you situated (Point B.) Then you must begin the process to map out exactly what has to happen in order to traverse the jungle that lies between Point A (current reality) and Point B (desired future.) Usually lots of things have to happen. And you are not going to be cognizant of all of them at the outset, for the shifting sands of reality will require you to pivot and shift and angle and pivot again. You will have to be flexible and you may have to change course a bit. In fact, circumstances may demand you abandon your original strategy and adopt a different one -- perhaps slightly different, or perhaps profoundly different. That's the nature of the beast.

On Productivity: What most people have in mind with respect to multi-tasking is the notion of 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 different projects or tasks in front of you at your workstation and you are hopping around from one to the other. You pick up the phone to call the airlines to book a flight. While you are on hold, you continue using your calculator to tabulate some numbers for a weekly report you have to submit. But then, one of the numbers reminds you of something, so you quickly go to check out a website. You open a new browser and there's Google, which you drag to the monitor on the right side of your desk. But before you can locate what you were looking for, the airline agent comes on the line to assist you. You begin to tell her about your impending flight you need assistance on, when you get an important text message asking you for a quick piece of data. You pull up your

email to look for that requested piece of data, while you are, in halting, tentative English, giving information to the airline agent (who is wondering why you are so hesitant.) You end up taking longer on the phone with the airline agent than was necessary, and you forgot all about the numbers on the calculator, which shut off eventually due to inactivity. Multi-tasking of that sort can be messy and confused. My recommendation: don't attempt to multi-task. Instead, focus all of your energies in an unbridled fashion on the key task at hand. Give your full devotion to that task. If you get sidetracked by an unavoidable interruption, fine. Deal with that interruption, but mentally bookmark where you left off with regard to the previous task, and get right back to it as soon as the interruption gets resolved.

On Intelligence: 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. 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.

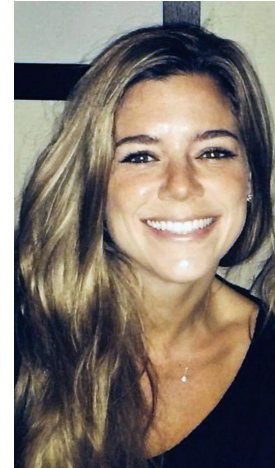
The Elephant in the Room

A Retrospective

On Abortion: Abortion remains one of the most controversial topics, drawing much heat, but not much light, from those who insist on favoring what they euphemistically call "a women's right to choose" (while assiduously avoiding finishing that sentence, refusing to clarify what it is the woman is choosing.) And Planned Parenthood remains to the unborn, our most innocent of the species, what Auschwitz was to millions of Jews who were exterminated there during World War II. Planned Parenthood alters their procedures to favor abortion over other alternatives. Further, they set up relationships with organizations that offer incentives to Planned Parenthood to make abortion the default strategy so that money is funneled into Planned Parenthood's coffers. Planned Parenthood see unborn babies as nothing more than "line items" on a balance sheet, according to their own unguarded statements.

On Inclusion: The word *inclusion* is both a favorite word of the Progressive Left, and also a highly suspect word. Their use of the term is virtue-signaling (i.e., "See how virtuous I am? I wish to include people who otherwise would be excluded. What a great person I am!") But in reality, the word is simply code language for embracing aberrations and shunning normative values.

On Illegal Immigrants: The death of a beautiful, innocent American named Kate Steinle, who was shot dead by an illegal alien in 2015, was a watershed moment, in that it exposed the Left as being lawless. The man who shot her had been deported 5 times, yet continued to re-enter our country illegally. He also had seven felony convictions on his record prior to murdering Kate Steinle. Yet not a single Democrat in the senate would pass Kate's Law, which would impose a mandatory 5-year sentence on any illegal alien who has previous felonies on his record re-enter the U.S. illegally after being deported. And a San Francisco jury found the defendant innocent of all charges -- essentially saying that an illegal alien murderer is more valuable to their society than the life of a U.S. citizen.



On Socialism: The Democrat Party today has changed. It has been taken over by socialists. It is a regime that replaces God with the State (i.e., big government), and multiculturalism over our Latin motto *E Pluribus Unum* (from the many, one), and one that quashes individual liberty. This is demonstrated in myriad of ways, from Navy Chaplains being forbidden to pray in the name of Jesus, to football coaches being fired for leading their teams in prayer after games, to banning nativity scenes in public, to college art professors forcing their students to strip naked for the final exam, to middle school sex education teachers taking their students on a field trip to an adult novelty shop, to U.S. Senators (Dick Durbin) voting to repeal the First Amendment with respect to free speech, to the Assistant Dean of Students at Cornell University claiming he would welcome terrorist groups such as ISIS on campus, to immigrant students at UC Irvine claiming the American Flag itself represents hate speech and makes them feel unsafe (yes, a flag makes them feel unsafe, as if it will reach out suddenly and assault them), to cable news hosts decrying the term "hard worker" because they think it suggests a favorable outlook on slavery, to the new and nutty notion of pronouns being changed to reflect transgender preferences, to Planned Parenthood employees (Amma Dermish) claiming they perform "partial-birth" abortions routinely, to the US Sentencing Commission releasing over 50,000 dangerous criminals from prison because they believe the prisons are overcrowded or that too many blacks are incarcerated.

On the Threats to America: When I think of the activities of today's so-called Progressive Left, I am reminded of the words of Abraham Lincoln, who prophesied as follows: "Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant to step the ocean and crush us at a blow? Never! All the armies of Europe, Asia, and Africa combined, with all the treasure of the earth (our own excepted) in their military chest, with a Bonaparte for a commander, could not by force take a drink from the Ohio or make a track on the Blue Ridge in a trial of a thousand years. At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer. If it ever reach us it must spring up

amongst us; it cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen we must live through all time or die by suicide."

On Racism: While the so-called Progressive Left routinely label white conservatives "racist" towards blacks, it is actually the Left that is racist. How do I know this? Here are 3 obvious indicators: A) The Left supports Affirmative Action for blacks on the erroneous belief that black students cannot succeed in college unless standards are lowered for blacks; B) The Left oppose voter ID because they claim blacks are incapable of obtaining ID, something they would need to drive a car, purchase alcohol, board a commercial airplane, or obtain medical services; C) The Left is opposed to school vouchers because they believe that black parents are in no position to decide which school to send their children to, resulting in black children being forced to remain in substandard schools.

On Charitable Giving: The research is pretty conclusive: while the Progressive Left harps on helping the poor, it is mostly lip service. Conservatives clearly donate more money to charitable causes than do those on the Left, as an October 20, 2018 [breakthrough study](#) demonstrates.

On Global Warming: Global Warming is a religion for the Left, and a false religion at that. While it is certainly true that some level of warming is taking place, the hysteria demonstrated by the Left has invalidated their credibility. Leftists routinely claim 97% of climate scientists believe it is human behavior that is causing global warming. This false figure is taken from a crackpot named John Cook, who simply made up the 97% figure almost out of whole cloth. CO₂, which climate alarmists feel is the grim reaper, is a greenhouse gas without which life on this planet would not be possible. Atmospheric levels of CO₂ have been increasing since the end of the Little Ice Age (about 1800 AD) and during the last two centuries, the global mean temperature has been increasing slightly and erratically by about 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit. Man-made burning of fossil fuels has only played any sort of role for a very small window of time within that 200 year range (from about the 1960s to the present day -- only about 58 years out of 200 years) yet the 1.8 degree rise in temperature has been erratically rising over the entirety of that 200-year range. Thus, the majority of that time horizon has had no significant man-made fossil fuel burning, yet still had some mild warming take place, indicating that other factors besides the burning of fossil fuel also contribute to climate change. And, while Leftists do not acknowledge this, the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change reported in 2007 that "The long-term prediction of future climate states is not possible."

On Tolerance: The Progressive Left brand themselves as paragons of tolerance. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are the least tolerant of opposing views in the body politic. Here are some examples: Left-leaning New York Governor, Andrew Cuomo, openly declared that conservatives are not welcome in the state of New York. (He called them "extreme conservatives" but he imagines all conservatives are extreme.) Brendan Eich, the CEO of Mozilla Corporation, was forced from his job in less than two weeks by Leftist Extremists who could not tolerate the fact that Mr. Eich donated to a cause they didn't believe in. The Left wishes to criminalize those who disagree with their take on Climate Change. And if you even so much as question the premise of the global warming

activists, the Left wants you investigated. In fact, a top French weatherman challenged the Leftist narrative on global warming and was promptly fired from his job. Likewise, a popular fire chief in Atlanta affirmed his Christian beliefs that homosexuality is immoral, and was promptly fired. The Leftist Administrators at the University of Tennessee refused to allow students to hold a Christmas party because they are intolerant of anything approaching Christianity. And a Leftist Federal judge (an Obama appointee) banned a high school in Indiana from showing a Nativity scene in the school's Christmas musical. A married couple, both professors at Yale University, pointed out that students have a right to wear Halloween costumes of Mexican dress (like a sombrero) and were viciously assaulted by insane and intolerant Leftist students to the point that both of the professors resigned from their teaching posts.

On Trump Derangement Syndrome: One wonders what it is about the Leftist obsession with Mr. Trump that renders some of them powerless to resist the urge to smear him at every turn. Here are my theories: When the Left are confronted by American values (i.e., conservative values) it is somewhat akin to when Dracula is confronted with the rising sun, or a cross. The spasmodic recoiling, the histrionics, the erratic, lurching twitches, while entertaining, are things that seem to be almost Pavlovian in their predictability. Today's Left hates America in the same degree that the British hated the notion of America back in 1776. And while Donald Trump is not particularly ideological himself, in other words, while Donald Trump is not particularly conservative himself, he has made a number of decisions that would please conservatives, most notably selecting Judges Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S Supreme Court, and by rolling back or reversing many of the more Leftist policies of Barack Obama. This has the Left in convulsive fits. When Donald Trump began his presidential campaign, he made it clear that he was going to fix the illegal immigration problem. He spoke of building a wall, he spoke of ending DACA (the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals act), and he intends to wage war against sanctuary cities and states. This causes Leftists to foam at the mouth. Why? Because Leftists do not wish to enforce the law when it comes to immigration. Leftists want open borders. Why do they want this? Because Leftists believe that by promising all sorts of "free stuff" to illegal immigrants, such immigrants will vote for Democrats and keep them in power. The Left views illegal immigrants as their oxygen supply. The Left really expected their candidate, Hilary Clinton, to soundly defeat Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election. They really wanted the next president to be a woman, regardless of how unlikable, corrupt, or incompetent she was, and, more than that, they wanted a continuation of Leftist policy to blanket our republic. They didn't get what they wanted or expected. Add to that the fact that Mrs. Clinton won the popular vote, Leftists felt the agony of being so close to victory, yet still not getting the ball over the goal line. As Leftists are often childlike in their maturity level, many of them are still sniveling, howling, and blubbing -- even 34 months later. The bitterness of defeat is something many Leftists cannot stomach, cannot come to terms with, and so, their vexation, which is enough to burst a spleen, causes them to trash their President with a knee-jerk consistency. The Left expects the powerful (and that includes Donald Trump) to fawn all over them with adulation and deference. And most people, including most politicians, oblige. So many among the elites show deferential reverence towards Hollywood, and the Mainstream Media, and the Academy, that it is rare to find a politician who is not judicious and circumspect (i.e., gutless) in how they reckon with such Leftist entities. But Donald Trump truly

does not care about pleasing the media. He is unimpressed with Hollywood. He holds disdain for Leftist institutions. And since Mr. Trump is relentless in the hard-hitting salvos he fires off regularly in their direction, and since he cannot be intimidated by their bluster, they go a little crazy. That may well explain why Congress is now moving to impeach Mr. Trump, over the flimsiest of evidence. They sense they will lose in the 2020 election and therefore they must get rid of Mr. Trump any way they can. Impeachment seems to be their only hope.

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.)



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

From Ara's Journal

A Retrospective

On Change: The path to goodness is clear. No matter how badly we screw up, with few exceptions, we can dust ourselves off and start again. We can renew our desires to do the right thing in any realm -- the physical, the social, the mental, the spiritual, the economic. Change can happen quickly. We just need to have the determination to course-correct.



On Tragedy: One of the saddest stories I encountered involved that of a 3-year-old boy named Aylan Kurdi, who drowned along with members of his family fleeing war-torn Syria. While his tragic death took place in the autumn of 2015, I am, to this day, haunted by his story, one that causes me to wonder why tragedies such as this are allowed to happen. One can only hope such tragedies make us more humane.

On Gratitude: The sin of ingratitude is a serious one. Yet it is humbling to realize that, as mere humans, we may on occasion experience lapses that result in our failing to say Thank You to someone who clearly deserved such thanks. It's critically important that we remain mindful of the many who have helped us along our way, and to express our deepest thanks to them.

On Sacrifice: There is wisdom in sending a portion of your income into various investment vehicles, from a simple savings account to an IRA, a 401(k), an annuity, or to more life insurance. Your ability to make adjustments in your spending habits will take effect, and you will eventually be able to retire comfortably. It is important to put off today's pleasures for tomorrow's joy, in a word, to sacrifice.

On Jesus: Even if I were a non-believer in religious matters, it would be difficult for me to escape the conclusion that there is something about the very name of Jesus that commands reflection. No other name of any religious sage, be it Buddha, Sri Chinmoy, Meher Baba, Thomas Aquinas, Maimonides, Joseph Smith, Martin Luther, Mohammed, or Abraham cause the same kind of reaction. True, some adherents of Islam will react strongly, even violently, if they believe a person has done anything to shame the name of their prophet, but he is still seen, among Muslims, as a prophet. Jesus, on the other hand, is seen as more than a prophet. Depending on who you ask, He might be thought of as the Son of God, or the Messiah, or the Redeemer of mankind, or the Savior of the world, or the Lord of life, or all of the above. And He is seen as being, in some sense (again, depending on who you ask) as God Himself, as divine, as possessing the status of deity. Interestingly, while His name is blasphemed by average people without thought or hesitation, His name, when brought up in non-profane ways, is unsettling to so many. And instinctively so. It's as if the human conscience, at least in the western world, is automatically attuned to the reality that the name of Jesus is singular and profound. The average person is more at ease if that name is not uttered. They can go about their business without concern for the implications

of that name. That tells me that there is some sort of authority in that name. The name is not on par with other religious figures of the past. And the fact that this name represents a figure who lived about two millennia ago adds to the singularity and power of that name. Further, the fact that our calendaring system is divided between a countdown of years prior to His birth, following by a count-up of years following His birth, is profound. Were I a non-believer in religious matters, these facts alone would give me pause.

On Purpose: Viktor Frankl is a wise human being. He has said many things laced with wisdom and depth. One of his sayings that comes to mind is: "You don't invent your mission. You detect it." That wording brings certain imagery to my mind, namely, that our lives are like the work of art that is produced by master sculptures. In sculpture, the ideal is to take that rough, crude, shapeless block of marble and to see the image that is already there, but is surrounded by excess. The artist then goes to work, sanding off a corner here, filing down a bulge there, chiseling away the unwanted excess down there, bringing forth the masterpiece that was always in his mind's eye. We all have a mission to perform. We all have talents to unleash. We all have purpose. Our job is to detect it. And then our job is to actualize it. Daily. Hourly. Moment by moment, for the betterment of humankind.

On Cycles: I have good news and bad news. First the good news: I recognize that if I am experiencing ill-fortune at any given time I know from direct experience that I am very likely going to come out of the downward trend in short order and see a brighter future. Now for the bad news: after I have enjoyed good fortune for a bit, I am almost certainly going to see a reversal and have to face illness, the loss of a friend, sadness, grief, anxiety, or some other misfortune. But more good news: all of that bad stuff will soon be replaced by good stuff. And more bad news: all of that good stuff will soon be replaced by bad stuff. Are you seeing a pattern? The optimist in me has made a decision: I have decided to always remember that the likelihood is high that no matter how much bad stuff comes my way, good things are around the next corner.

On 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. 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.

On Blessing Others: One of my favorite ploys in life is to pay for someone else's meal in a restaurant if I think they are overworked, overwhelmed, or just need to catch a break. As one might imagine, it elevates the spirit of all involved.

On Mourning: It is inevitable that we will face grief in our lives, mourning is good for us. Mourning has a cleansing effect on our soul. Mourning heightens our

humanity, making us more compassionate and decent. Mourning makes us less petty and less selfish. Mourning has a humbling effect on us, making us more contrite, pure, and real. Facades seem to melt away when we are in a state of mourning. Pretense, showmanship, positioning, posturing, popularity, all seem to stop mattering. We become good and pure and true when we mourn. I don't wish for myself or others to experience the great losses that bring inevitable grief and mourning. Yet, all of us will, as that is the reality of the life we are saddled with. But I am grateful for the good effect that mourning has on us.

On Judgment: Judgment is an emotionally-laden word. Most of the time, I hear things said about the notion of judgment that seem to give it a bad rap. Most people say some version of, "Don't judge. It's not your right." But good judgment is a hallmark of wisdom. That suggests to me that judgment if it is wielded appropriately, is a virtue, not a vice. Jesus is reputed to have said, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (John 7:24.)

On Opinion: There are a lot of strong opinions out there. People everywhere (myself included) pontificate with regularity about this or that topic. It is important that we remember that such verbosity represents, for the most part, the person's opinion. We often blindly imagine our opinions are far more than our opinions. But our opining is not necessarily aligned with "truth." In fact, it's surprising when our opinions are perfectly so aligned. The problem is that many people subconsciously assume they can bend truth to fit into the narrow mold created by their opinion. What should happen is the precise opposite: we need to learn to bend our opinions to fit securely in the realm of truth. This can be done through careful thought, humility, inquisitiveness, openness, and an adoption of Karl Popper's magnificent adage, that we remain "forever tentative" in our dogmas.

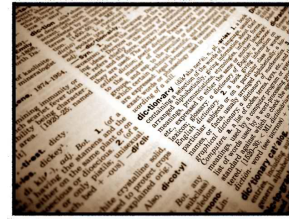
On Good and Evil: This world seems calibrated towards degeneracy, not progress. We delude ourselves by seeing today's faddish firms (Apple, Google, Facebook, Tesla, Uber, Amazon) growing and providing more and more products and services, and then imagining that those trends are evidence that we are evolving. We are not. Many people today are capable of unbridled cruelty; many young people today have no compunction about sending the most hate-filled text messages to others. Far too many people would never lend a hand to help someone in trouble, whether that trouble involved rescuing someone from a burning building, or stopping an assault. Far too many graffiti taggers would not hesitate draw a gun and shoot to kill any person who demanded they stop their vandalism. Far too many citizens are horrified at the notion of deporting illegal aliens -- people who are here against the law -- even when those illegal aliens commit additional felonies in this country. It takes real effort to stand for what is right. And evil has now reached such a critical mass, to the point that it is fashionable to wallow in it, that those who dare to stand up to evil are now routinely shouted down, mocked, and belittled. I see no way to a peaceful resolution. Those who stand for what is right and good and true are going to have to become warriors, reluctant warriors, but warriors nonetheless. Those who cherish goodness and truth and virtue are going to have to learn to be bold, blunt, and confrontational. That is the only thing that will send wickedness to flight.

Fiefdom

Building Your Power of Expression

Fiefdom, n.

Pronunciation: fēfdəm



Meaning: While this word originally referred to the estate or domain of a feudal lord, it has come to refer to, in our modern parlance, any organization owned or controlled by one dominant person, or an area over which a person exerts authority or influence.

Usage:

- *The United States cannot sit back and watch an al Qaeda fiefdom rise up in Iraq.*
- *But Chechnya has become a republic of fear, the fiefdom of one man: its mercurial 36-year-old president, Ramzan Kadyrov.*
- *He ran his own fiefdom and supposedly was making money hand over fist for both the company and for himself.*

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