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Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue #231

January 25, 2020

Welcome to the first issue of *Uncommon Sense* for 2021!

This issue's **Self-Development** column gives you a quick pep-talk about the importance of goal-setting.

In the **Elephant in the Room** column I once again hand the reigns off to another thought-leader, this time to the ever insightful Kevin Brock, who has a very important reality check to give us. Please read it carefully.

The **From Ara's Journal** column contains some thoughts I have about a rather profound realization I recently acquired following a conversation with a friend.

As always, **The World of Words** column continues to help you build and expand the power of your ability to express yourself.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

Goal-Setting Imperative

We are in a new year. This is a good thing because it gives us an excuse to reassess our priorities, and rethink the direction of our life. All of us have an opportunity to strive to better our situation and improve our condition. The choice to determine our outcomes and the quality of our life is ours to seize or to squander. We call this goal-setting.

2020 was an atypical year. We faced much political upheaval and contention. There were riots and looting. Portland, Oregon faced (and still faces to this day) enormous upheaval by radicals and anarchists, and local as well as state government officials, not to mention law enforcement professionals, seemed incapable of putting a stop to the lunacy and public destruction. There was a contentious and controversial presidential election. There

was a pandemic that affected vast swathes of society. I myself was directly affected by the Coronavirus and at one point felt I was going to succumb to it.

But it's time to put all of that in the past and recognize that, come what may, we can do much to improve our lives if we make sound decisions, plan well, and take decisive action.



So ask yourself some questions. Are there things you wish to acquire? Is there something you wish to own? I'm talking about actual, tangible "things" such as a new technological tool (think smart phone, tablet, laptop computer) or perhaps a new gaming console, or a high-end pair of sunglasses. Or perhaps something involving clothing, or a musical instrument, or a new car, new bed, new major appliance for the home, or a beautiful garden in your backyard. Or perhaps your "thing" is tied to a new medical procedure involving your teeth or your hair or your waistline or your eyesight or your complexion. There is nothing wrong with having a desire to acquire new "things," provided we keep such desires in their proper perspective. (No "thing," regardless of its cool factor can take the place of great health or great relationships.)

Here is another set of questions to consider. What would you like to do? Are there experiences you are interested in? Do you have a Bucket List that clarifies what those experiences are and why they are important to you? There is an endless array of potential experiences you could pursue. For instance, do you want to develop a skill of some sort? Perhaps mastering the game of chess, or learning to dance the tango, or archery, or becoming highly proficient in the use of Excel, or becoming proficient in speaking and writing Italian? Would you like to travel – perhaps to every state in the U.S.A, or perhaps to certain key cities, or perhaps to various foreign countries? Or maybe you'd like to go to certain events as a member of the audience to experience various forms of education or entertainment – magic shows, Broadway musicals, concerts, poetry readings, lectures by eminent scholars, or symposia on various fields of study. Maybe you would like to just get out more and discover the many hidden treasures that are within your local region of the country, as you'd be amazed at how many fascinating venues are right under your nose or within reach by a moderate road trip.

A third area of inquiry involves personal development, or how you evolve and improve as an individual. What kind of a person do you want to be? Are there quirks in your personality you wish to eradicate? Are there personality traits in others you deeply admire that you wish to adopt? Do you have a characteristic that you would like to expand upon and enhance in some way? What kind of a person do you really wish to grow into? Does your temper need to be tamed? Do you wish to be more patient? Do you wish to develop a sense of humor, or become more happy? Do you wish to be less pessimistic, and more spirited and positive? Do you wish to be a more romantic individual or have a rich social life?

All of these areas – things we wish to have, things we wish to do, and things we wish to be – can be attained by setting a specific goal to address that particular area. In writing down our goal, it should be stated as clearly and precisely as possible. And it is wise to set various sub-goals that lead to and support the main goal. And of course, we should visit those written goals very frequently, at least weekly if not daily to ensure we are putting forth the necessary effort to work on our goals.

If you haven't taken the time to chart some new goals for yourself for 2021, I recommend you carve out some time to do so, because it is not too late. Review the questions I have

posed here, and allow your imagination to flourish as you consider all of the rich possibilities that can be yours.

Do this, and you are virtually certain to have a productive and meaningful year in 2021.

The Elephant in the Room Violence Like a Cancer Grows by Kevin R. Brock

Violence tolerated is violence forecasted. After eight months of violence in urban streets across America that was largely met with Chamberlain-esque appeasement by those charged with the responsibility to protect us, the political elites are suddenly incredulous that violence has come to their workspace.



The unwritten rules of violent behavior mandate that barbarity be restricted to poorer neighborhoods and its effects borne primarily by the lower socio-economic classes. According to this way of thought, that's where rioting properly occurs; that's where robberies and assaults and murders properly occur; that's where domestic violence and human trafficking all properly occur. When confined to those areas of society, this theory holds, violence can be managed and tolerated.

The breaching of the heavy doors and magnetometers and concrete barricades of the Capitol, erected by the elite to protect the elite, broke all kinds of unwritten rules. Those deterrents were designed to keep terrorists at bay, not mobs of violent Americans. Mobs are supposed to damage their own neighborhoods and businesses, according to the elite. Storming the Capitol just isn't done. The Capitol building is not Kenosha, for heaven's sake.

The establishment went apoplectic on Wednesday evening. Cable news avatars gave hot airtime to politician after politician who, with indignant consistency, described the Capitol breach as "a dark day in American history." Why — because Congress has now personally felt the heat of violence? Large segments of urban poor and urban businesses continue to have dark days every day while these same, now shaken politicians have done little to nothing to end the violent nightmare rending these communities. In reality, elected officials have made it worse.

Anyone with a background in the military or law enforcement knows well this singular harsh truth: ***Violence unmet with strong deterrence will beget more violence. Violence allowed is a reliable predictor of violence to come.***

Criminals continue to burn and destroy property in a number of our cities. Criminals have now stormed and destroyed property in the Capitol. Politicians and their media acolytes desperately draw left-wing/right-wing distinctions in their typically cynical attempts to wring political advantage that would benefit them and their parties. It's a disgusting theatre. There are no distinctions. Offensive violence is a crime, deserving of disincentivizing punishment no matter what the motivation.

When violence is not punished, we cannot be surprised when it continues. Right now, like it or not, the message of 2020 is that violence pays off. Democratic mayors and city councils responded to anarchist thugs with autonomous zones, stripped police budgets,

and dropped criminal charges. Then-candidate Joe Biden said little of substance about the persistent riots, and Democratic-leaning media downplayed coverage.

President Trump had a legal right and, arguably, an obligation to use federal resources to stop the violence in these major cities, but instead disingenuously claimed that he needed an invitation from the affected localities in order to act. He needed no such permission. The federal government will step in and protect minnows in an estuary without state consent.

Democratic leadership failed to act in order to appease a leftward-drifting base. Republican leadership failed to act in order to amplify the disorder in Democratic-controlled locations. In other words, ***violence was tolerated in favor of political calculus in an election year.*** Lives were imperiled and property destroyed in disadvantaged areas so politicians could obtain or stay in power. This is the weak, self-serving political leadership we have been sentenced with.

Many in Congress are now criticizing the police for failing to deter the rioters storming the Capitol. Their hypocrisy and double standards are stunning and shameful. The police were demonized all last year for the sins of a few and, ostensibly, for inflaming the passions of peaceful protesters. Their departments have been verbally brutalized and defunded, and the best of them are leaving the profession in droves. But now that the elite need them, the police are pilloried for not providing adequate protection.

The responsibility for violence belongs to those who encourage it and those who carry it out. But the responsibility to protect the law-abiding from violent criminals rests with our political leaders — and they are failing many in America. Violence can be significantly reduced by overwhelming, strong and appropriate deterrence. When politicians choose not to adequately confront violence for political reasons, we can expect with absolute certainty that violence will continue to metastasize. Those who traditionally feel safe soon won't.

Now that the Capital has felt the sting of a violent mob, perhaps an autonomous zone can be established in those hallowed hallways to accommodate the grievances of those who stormed in. And maybe the Capitol police can be defunded at the same time. Certainly charges don't have to be pressed upon those who feel marginalized. After all, what's good for the rest of America should be good for our representatives.

Sounds absurd, right? The absurdity of weak leaders isn't hard to expose. Let's not tolerate violence — no matter where it appears or who commits it.

* * * * *

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

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* * * * *

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From Ara's Journal

You Never Know When It Will Be The Last Time

In speaking with an amazing woman, JR, the other night, I found myself captivated by the direction the conversation took. She began pointing out that in life, you never know when your next [fill in the blank] will be your last.



Let us imagine that you are having a conversation on the telephone with one of your children. Perhaps it is a joyous conversation. Perhaps it is somewhat pedestrian and routine. Perhaps it is a bitter conversation. Either way, that conversation could be the very last conversation you have with your child.

Or let's imagine you are going to your favorite restaurant for another delicious meal. It is entirely possible that particular outing is your final one to that favorite eating establishment.

Because let's face it: One day it will have been your last time – either talking on the phone to one of your children, or eating in that favorite restaurant, or any other single thing you do. . .

It's a sobering realization.

I will try to reflect on that reality, a reality for which I am grateful to JL for her wise ponderings. Perhaps if I can remember that reality in the moment, in every moment, I will behave differently and I will behave better.

Because any given moment, at any given event or occurrence, could be our last. . .

The World of Words

Grouse

Building Your Power of Expression

Grouse, n., **Grouching**, v.

Pronunciation: grous

Meaning: To grouse is to complain in a petty manner, to grumble, to object to something. People who grouse are expressing their disapproval, as they speak out against some matter. It can be used as either a verb (to grouse) or as a noun (as in, a *grouse* is a complaint).



Usage:

- *She overheard him grouching about his new assignment.*
- *Our only grouse is about the noise of the construction.*
- *Stop your grouching, as it is starting to annoy me.*

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