

Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue #249

December 14, 2021

The year is coming to an end in a few short weeks. It will be time to take an accounting of your accomplishments, and hopefully set your sights on new horizons. I'll be discussing that topic (Goal Setting) in early January. In the meantime, I am highly pleased with the quality of this issue of *Uncommon Sense*. I hope you are as well.

Leadership is such an important theme. And one of the most important elements of leadership is a topic you can read about in the **Self-Development** column. Please do.

The **Elephant in the Room** column addresses a very deplorable occurrence that took place relatively recently, and spells out the implications of the travesty, making sense of the unthinkable. Do read it carefully.

The **From Ara's Journal** column addresses my take on the problem with apologies.

And **The World of Words** column delivers, yet again!

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

The Sixth Deadly Sin of Leadership: A Failure To Exhibit Integrity

Leadership is a daunting proposition. And living a life of integrity is equally daunting. Put them together and it becomes clear why enlightened, sustained leadership is so hard to come by.

People often throw the word *integrity* out there as a synonym for honesty. But that is not quite what the word suggests. In fact, I consider integrity to be an even higher virtue

than honesty, and much harder to maintain consistently.

The root behind the word integrity is also the root that gives us words such as integer, integral, and integration.

When you think of the word *integer* in the context of the math sciences, you would probably think of a whole number. Integers are referred to in math as “whole-valued” numbers. They can be positive numbers, they can be negative numbers, and they can even include the zero. But they cannot be decimals or fractions. They must be, in a word, whole.

Likewise, the word *integral* is defined as something necessary to make the whole complete – notice that word *whole* again.

Furthermore, integration is an interesting word. To integrate means to combine one thing with another so that they become *whole*. Are you seeing a pattern?

Integrity is about wholeness, or, said another way, integrity is about congruence between two things: you, and your values.

Thus, if I claim one of my core values is, say, courage, and if I act cowardly, I not only lack courage, I also lack integrity. If I claim that virtue is a core principle I wish to be the defining attribute of my life, yet I entertain foul, smutty thoughts, I not only lack virtue, I lack integrity as well. If I make sure I am well known for my commitment to truth, yet I refrain from getting to the bottom of a matter because I wish to maintain an image, or support a preferred narrative, not only is truth merely something I give lip service to, but far worse, I lack integrity.

Integrity is to character what water is to life. Without it, we cannot survive as leaders – precisely because we cannot lead in any meaningful sense -- not only in our our own lives, but we cannot lead others. The reason we cannot lead our own lives without integrity is because we are bound by our whims and our passions, not our principles. And the reason we cannot lead others without integrity is because, sooner or later, people will see our duplicity and quickly abandon us.

Leaders who master integrity will have followers. People will believe in them. There is a “sense” that permeates from the leaders and which reaches followers enabling them to be assured they are dealing with a person of authenticity. Men and women like to be led by such figures. In fact, while all of the 7 deadly sins represent an imperative for groundbreaking leadership, this sixth deadly sin is, unquestionably, the most important of the 7.

Integrity is an attribute that is rarely mastered quickly. It can take years – for some, almost a lifetime.

And that explains, in large part, why authentic leadership is so scarce.



Glorifying Victimhood

In January 2019 the country was riveted by an account out of Chicago of a modern-day lynching. The victim happened to be a celebrity who was a star of a popular TV show. But his celebrity status was not the reason for the lynching. The reason for the lynching was 3-fold:

- The victim was gay.
- The victim was black.
- The victim was an anti-Trump Leftist.

Or so we were told.

The attackers were said to be two white men who wore MAGA hats (MAGA referring to "Make America Great Again" – the key campaign slogan of President Donald Trump.) And the attackers were both racist and homophobic. They physically punched the victim repeatedly. They poured bleach on the victim, presumably to turn his black skin white, showing they were demented white supremacists. And they put a noose around the victim's neck, suggesting they really did intend to lynch him by hanging him from a tree, or something along those lines.



The mainstream media (meaning the Left-wing media) all pounced on the story and accepted it uncritically. After all, the media has a built-in bias to believe America is systemically racist, and this violent episode only supported that narrative. Politicians such as Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, along with most other Democrat darlings also denounced the perpetrators – not so much the actual thugs who were said to have committed this heinous act, but President Donald Trump and the entire Republican Party, whom they believed were the actual guilty parties for creating such a violent anti-black, anti-gay zeitgeist.

There was just one small problem: the entire story was fabricated. It never happened. It was a hoax. It was staged.

The actual perpetrator was the alleged victim, who was living a very privileged life as a popular TV actor. Jussie Smollett, now age 39, had enjoyed a starring role in a popular TV drama called *Empire*, where he was paid very handsomely to work doing something he loved – act. It turns out he was a much better actor on set than in real life. Police who interviewed Smollett found it odd that he allegedly went out in the freezing cold in Chicago late one January night to get a sandwich from a Subway sandwich shop, got mugged on the way home, and ended up back in his apartment with the sandwich still intact. The police also found it strange that Smollett seemed very nonchalant about casually and calmly removing the noose from around his neck long after it had allegedly been placed there. (Note that Smollett was still wearing the thin, white rope around his neck at around 2:40 AM when the police arrived to interview him).

Although Smollett was charged by a grand jury with a Class 4 Felony in February 2019, this for filing a false police report, in March all charges were dropped by a corrupt city prosecutor, Kim Foxx, who is black and a radicalized Leftist who believes America is systemically racist and that blacks rarely if ever are guilty of committing crimes.

Smollett was recently tried again in court and found guilty of 5 felony counts. In spite of the incontrovertible evidence against Smollett, he and his attorneys still defiantly insist he is 100% innocent, even though the two so-called thugs that attacked him turned out to be black, not white, and both of those attackers worked with Smollett on the set of *Empire*. Both attackers (who are muscle-bound body builders) testified under oath they were paid by Smollett to stage the attack and were told not to hit Smollett too hard, but to pull their punches.

Mr. Smollett's career is, deservedly, ruined. It is doubtful he will ever work in a legitimate job in Hollywood, although illegitimate radical groups such as Black Lives Matter will probably offer him a job as a spokesman.

Still, it is telling to realize that Jussie Smollett's hoax has meaning in the deeper milieu of American society. For one thing, it points to the utter fallacy of the entire Left-wing narrative that America is systemically racist.

Why?

Because if racism of this sort is so systemic, one would not need to stage a hoax. Instances of such lynchings would be commonplace. They would be apparent. There would be no particular need to try to get the American people to wake up to them because they would already be obvious. The Jews who lived in Germany in the 1930s did not need to stage anti-Semitic hoaxes to demonstrate how vile Nazis were; such villainy was commonplace in 1930s Germany. Jews had their hands full of *actual* anti-Semitic atrocities and had no need to come up with fabricated ones.

The key question is this: *Why did Mr. Smollett lie about being mugged?* In other words, what prompted Smollett to do something both so unthinkable and so stupid? Did he want publicity? No, he already had that. Did he want fame? No, he had that, too. Did he want money? No, Mr. Smollett is not at a loss for money. (Estimates of Smollett's net worth range from \$500,000 to \$1,500,000). So then, why did he do it?

I believe I know the answer.

In the Leftist mind there is something more desired than publicity, something more coveted than fame, and something more lusted after than money.

That thing is *victimhood*.

Mr. Smollett was not a victim. He was one of the most privileged men of his demographic – a thirty-something black, gay man who has a TV following and whose show, *Empire*, was watched by as many as 5.3 million viewers. One could say Jussie Smollett had it all. He was doing the things he loved. He was popular. He was well-liked.

But he wasn't a victim.

And victimhood was the one thing he desired more than anything else.

In one sense, however, and one that is probably lost on Mr. Smollett, he actually *did* achieve victimhood.

He is a victim of his own hubris and narcissism.

Will the Left-wing media or Left-wing politicians ever acknowledge any of this? Will President Joe Biden or Vice President Kamala Harris ever walk back their outrage? Will Bernie Sanders, who in 2019 tweeted "The racist and homophobic attack on Jussie Smollett is a horrific instance of the surging hostility toward minorities around the country. We must come together to eradicate all forms of bigotry and violence," ever acknowledge

Smollett fooled him? Will Senator Cory Booker, who tweeted: "The vicious attack on actor Jussie Smollett was an attempted modern-day lynching. I'm glad he's safe. To those in Congress who don't feel the urgency to pass our Anti-Lynching bill designating lynching as a federal hate crime– I urge you to pay attention," start paying attention to the fact that this was a vile hoax? Will Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who pontificated "There is no such thing as 'racially charged.' This attack was not 'possibly' homophobic. It was a racist and homophobic attack. If you don't like what is happening to our country, then work to change it. It is no one's job to water down or sugar-coat the rise of hate crimes," wake up and acknowledge that the attack was neither racist nor homophobic, but a blatant lie that she fell for? Will she discontinue the practice of sugar-coating the rise of fake hate crimes?

Of course not. People on the Left do not value truth. They value a narrative – a false narrative – that they are victims and are therefore owed something by the rest of us.

And they *are* owed something.

And all of us should give these fraudsters what they are owed – something they could never embrace. Raw, in-your-face, accountability.

* * * * *

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

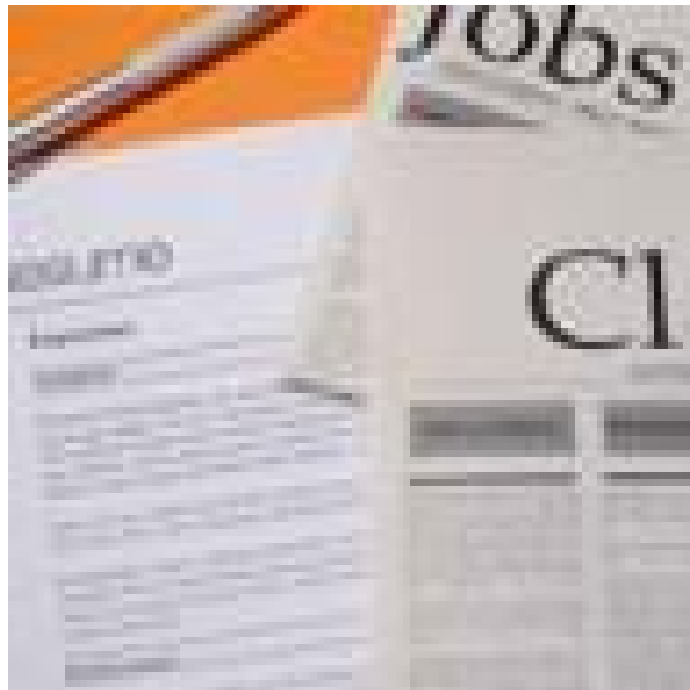
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* * * * *

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"I could not have gotten my first job without your expertise. Thank you so much! I learned that I had to reword and improve my résumé in order to be taken seriously in the workforce. I had been given tips from my professors in Health Science and other professionals but your advice was just what I needed. It took weeks of frustration waiting for interview calls when I happened to stumble across your website and discovered that I needed help. Your publication enlightened me with your knowledge on the wording and format needed to attract an employer. Furthermore, your booklet helped me recognize certain skills and work experience that I would have never considered important until you got me thinking about it. Thanks for a great product!" -- R. Espana, Valencia, California

From Ara's Journal

On Apologies

Apologies are tricky things. They sometimes function in opposite ways depending on whether we are speaking of a public or a private apology. Let me illustrate.

I hear a lot of people in public life offering what they would call an apology. Usually it comes about because someone says something that is true, others get angry by that truth and claim they are "offended," the person who uttered the original truth begins to cower, and then says something like, "For any I may have offended, I am deeply sorry."



All of it is fake. All of it is theater. None of it is sincere.

By contrast, in private life, in our personal relationships, it works differently: someone will say something that really is offensive, the person who is legitimately offended will express himself as such, and the offending party will say something like, "I am sorry that what I said offended you."

This is also fake and insincere.

Allow me to translate what the offending party is actually saying: "It is really unfortunate that you opted to be offended by what I said. I am sorry you chose to be offended. I am not sorry for what I actually said, but I am not going to belabor that point. Instead I will do no more than to say I am sorry you are so thin-skinned and so fragile that you are not strong enough to handle the unvarnished truth. There: I have apologized. See what a big person I am? Now, perhaps you can be big and accept my fake apology so we can move on."

The reason such apologies are fraudulent is because the person who did the offending, and who is now offering an apology, has not really acknowledged their own culpability in the matter. Their focus is on the offended party and their feelings of anger or hurt or whatever the negative emotion may consist of. But the offending party, if offering a

legitimate apology, would not focus on critiquing the reaction of the offended. Instead, the offending party would focus on their own culpability. The offending party would, in essence, say something along these lines: "I have offended you. You have every right to be offended because what I said was thoughtless, mean, and wrong. I was out of line for having said something so unfair and so crass. I am truly sorry for having said something so idiotic. I hope I will someday merit your forgiveness."

Notice the humility? Notice the meekness? Do you see how different in temperament that apology is when compared to "I am sorry you were offended by my words"? The latter focuses on what the offending party did. The former focuses on the offended party.

We are all going to make errors in judgment and say things we later regret. We need to, collectively, do a better job of acknowledging what we said to offend another, and less on how the offended party is reacting.

Only then will our apologies have meaning and impact.

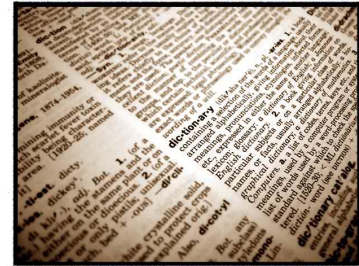
The World of Words

Abdication

Building Your Power of Expression

Abdication, n.

Pronunciation: ʌbdəkāSH(ə)n



Meaning: Abdication refers to a failure to fulfill a responsibility. When one is abandoning a right, a duty, or a responsibility, that person is engaging in abdication.

Usage:

- *When the majority throws up its hands because the problems are too entrenched, that's simply an abdication of responsibility.*
- *Your failure to take decisive action is an abdication of your authority.*
- *The failure to arrest the looters suggests we are witnessing the abdication of responsibility of city leaders in San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, and Los Angeles.*

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