

# Uncommon Sense

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I trust you are vigorously pursuing your goals. Never give up on them. Great things come to those who stick with it. Now, let's unpack this issue of *Uncommon Sense*.

A lot of young people, college age or recent graduates, feel confused about what direction they should take their career. Even more experienced people sometimes have doubts about their career path, and wonder if they should switch gears. I address that in the ***Self-Development*** column.

I frequently hear the refrain from some people that such-and-such a thing is racist. A lot of people who fancy themselves the victims of racism seem profoundly obsessed with racism. ***The Elephant in the Room*** column zeros in on some examples.

The ***From Ara's Journal*** column addresses some issues related to science.

And ***The World of Words*** column serves up a delightful word with a nice ring to it that you will want to adopt.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



## **Self-Development**

### Figuring Out Your Career Path

I am writing this predominantly with young people in mind – specifically people who are either fresh out of high school and not going to college, or people fresh out of college. However, it may be relevant to some people who have been in the work force for some time, especially if they feel unfulfilled in their line of work.

I am often asked by college students nearing graduation what to expect when they finish their studies and enter the real world. These students often strike me as befuddled and

confused, and worried. They don't really know what's out there and they are uncertain as to how to approach their career.

Admittedly, there are few paths out there that are certain. Here is one: if you know you are going into the professions (i.e., accounting, law, medicine, engineering, fire fighting, psychology, etc.) then your path is clear. Take medicine; whether you plan to be a medical doctor,

perhaps a surgeon, or whether you wish to go into nursing (e.g., Nurse Assistant, LVN, RN, Nurse Administrator), the path is rather clear for each of those jobs. The more entry-level position of a Certified Nurse Assistant has you take a relatively short course, which includes some clinical work, followed by a comprehensive exam. It may cost you something in the neighborhood of \$1800 to complete. But once you complete the course and the clinicals, and then pass the exam, you are now a Certified Nurse Assistant and can go out and get a job doing that particular work. Obviously, a Registered Nurse involves more schooling and the comprehensive exam, known as the NCLEX, is a very comprehensive and daunting exam to pass. Earning an MD involves much more of a commitment, beginning with earning an undergraduate degree, ideally in one of the sciences, passing the MCAT, 4 years of medical school, passing the Medical Licensing Examination, completing a Residency (usually about 3 more years of specialized training), earning board certifications, and obtaining a state license to practice medicine. Not for the faint of heart. The main take-away: every profession, from law enforcement to dental hygiene, from automotive repair to plumbing, has a well-established path you will follow that is predictable and clearly defined.



For people who are extroverts and persuasive, and who wish to earn a lot of money, going into sales holds much promise. There are a wide array of sales jobs about there, from very low-end transactional sales to very high end big-ticket items such as selling corporate Lear jets, mainframe computer systems, or military weapons systems – and everything imaginable in between. While there's always pressure to sell, sell, sell, for those who are successful, there is a lot of freedom, including financial freedom. Top sales professionals earn an income that rivals (and sometimes surpasses) senior level executives.

But for the rest of us, it's an uncertain path. My recommendation is to get in touch with the types of activities you like to do, that you find fulfilling, and then do work that taps into your talents and interests.

For instance, some people are naturally inclined to work with data. They might start out as a research librarian. Perhaps such a person will spend her entire career in that field, or perhaps that person will eventually leave the library and get a job as a researcher at a Think-Tank such as The Rand Corporation, or for a political action committee, or for a media organization such as Sony Pictures, the Wall Street Journal, or National Public Radio.

Another example: some people love to have the spotlight on them. They may prove to be good in an entertainment capacity, as a comedian, magician, a musical artist, or actor. They may also find their place as a university professor, as a news anchor, or radio personality, or a professional speaker.

Here's another example: some folks are drawn to the world of ideas. They are more cerebral. Thus, they might also go into teaching, into philosophy, or into writing and publishing books, articles, essays, etc.

And some may wish to make their mark serving others. They may do well as a paramedic, a midwife, a pastor, a child psychologist, a marriage counselor, an elementary school teacher, a server in a high-end restaurant, or find fulfilling work in a child care center.

Knowing what types of activities bring you fulfillment is key. There are low-end jobs for every type of person, which are not that hard to acquire. Yet over time, as skills and abilities expand, one can transition out of low-end jobs to other positions with ever-increasing responsibility – and ever higher pay.

Don't fret if you get into a job you thought you would flourish in only to find that you made a big mistake. You learned something. And that's valuable. And those skills you learned may possibly be drawn upon down the road some day. But you can get out quickly when you discover you don't belong there, and transition into a completely new and different position to see if that is a better fit. Eventually, you'll gain insights into your likes and dislikes, your talents and areas where you don't – or can't – perform, and you'll make smarter career decisions.

Good luck!

## **The Elephant in the Room**

### *Everything Is Racist!*

One of the more unfortunate aspects of the human condition involves the need of certain people to look outside of themselves for their own failures. This tendency is often manifest in finger-pointing towards others, rather than looking in the mirror and facing reality. Facing reality often means accepting responsibility for one's culpability, and this is simply too painful for many. This is serious stuff because only when one embraces the notion of personal responsibility can one take the necessary actions to course-correct and better one's situation.



However, many in our species take the easy route by blaming others for their woes. Theirs is a position of "I am not responsible for my circumstances; you are!" This tendency comes in many forms. We get fired from our job due to non-performance, yet we claim we got fired due to our boss having it in for us. We get expelled from a university for cheating on an exam, but we tell our friends we were framed. We get divorced after our spouse catches us in an act of infidelity, but we explain our failed marriage by pointing out the supposed flaws of our former spouse, claiming those flaws became intolerable and therefore we simply had to end the marriage. In other words, we lie to ourselves and to others.

One of the more troubling trends taking place at this time involves a segment of both the black community and the white community. Certain people within the black (and white) community can only be described as "race hustlers," meaning they try to stir up contention by loudly proclaiming that blacks are the victims of system racism, and therefore, blacks cannot get a fair shake because white people hate them and are out to harm them. Therefore, blacks should be in a perpetual state of outrage against whites. And if blacks such as Larry Elder, who recently ran for Governor of California, are

not perpetually outraged, then they must be aiding white racism against their own people (which is why Larry Elder was ruthlessly smeared with the label "[The Black Face of White Supremacy](#)").

One of the many problems with failing to take personal responsibility for oneself while constantly claiming victim status is that the purveyors of victimhood begin to hallucinate. I mean that literally. They start to see racism everywhere (except in themselves which is where it resides). They see racism where no racism exists. They label everything around them as racist in a psychotic frenzy, extending their labeling not only to people who haven't a racist bone in their body, but to practices, institutions, and even to inanimate objects. Here is a small sampling of the absurdities:

**Music theory is racist.** How do we know this? Because a radicalized Leftist professor named Philip Ewell said so. Professor Ewell, who happens to be black and who also happens to teach music theory, has talked himself into believing the absurdity that music theory has a white racial frame which "encompasses a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and reactions to language accents, as well as radicalized inclinations to discriminate." In other words, music theory hates black people. Given that I earned a degree in music theory, I confess I intend to have a stern talk with my diploma and demand that it become more inclusive. But on a more serious note, it should be pointed out that when a Texas music professor by the name of Timothy Jackson so much as questioned the notion that music theory is racist, [he was promptly fired](#) from the University of North Texas where he has taught music theory for many years. In other words, an absurd and aberrant notion that music theory is racist was not only proclaimed by a radical professor from New York, but Administrators in Texas simply accepted such nonsense and punished one of their own professors for questioning the idiocy.

**Ballet is racist.** Just ask the radical ballet dancers at the Princeton University Ballet Club, a student-run club many of whose dancers are white. Ballet is a demanding art form. Think of it on one end of the dance spectrum with twerking, that spasmodic perversity that simulates rough sex on the opposite end of the spectrum. Thus, ballet demands discipline, precision, and enormous self-control. Its choreographic moves require exactness, something akin to a "Perfect 10" performance in Olympic gymnastics. But to the ballet dancers at Princeton University, [they have determined](#) that such exactness amounts to white supremacy and a hatred for black people. Think about it: Ballet is a form of racism against blacks. Ballet itself hates blacks. It therefore must be changed into something closer to twerking. There must be sloppiness and in-artful maneuvers. Only then will ballet be favorable to blacks. Can you think of a more racist way of seeing the world? I can't. The very people at Princeton who claim to be fighting racism are themselves blatantly racist.

**College mascots are racist.** The Nebraska Cornhuskers have had a cartoon mascot for about 50 years or so called Herbie Husker. He looks like a good old boy wearing overalls, carrying a football, and has a corn husk sticking out of his pocket. He also was shown making an OK sign with his hand, with his thumb and index finger forming a circle as we often see people do to indicate positivity or agreeableness. But because the figure's other three fingers are thought to form a "W" (even though those three fingers are not even sticking straight up – they are curved), that must mean the "W" refers to "White" as in "White Supremacy." Of course, as soon as someone claimed Herbie Husker was supporting white supremacy, the [college administrators instantly caved](#) in to the madness and had the logo changed. And it's not much different at Notre Dame, where some people are up in arms about their mascot being a Leprechaun! Yes, [a Leprechaun is racist!](#) It hates black people. Even though a recent photo I saw of the student who has been selected to be Notre Dame's mascot is black himself. He must hate black people also. After all, he is their Leprechaun.



**The term "Master Bedroom" is racist.** If you refer to your bedroom by that term, it proves you [believe in slavery](#) and that you are a master plantation owner. No further commentary is needed.

**The police in New York are racists.** All of them. Even those cops who are black hate blacks. (Do the black cops hate themselves?) So says a radicalized [Leftist-Socialist named Kristin Richardson Jordan](#), who recently gained a seat on the New York City Council. She demands we defund the police and release everyone currently in prison, insisting that the police system was "created to preserve slavery." So cops are not there to enforce the law or confront criminals. They are there to perpetuate slavery. Even if the cops are black and the criminal is white. Don't let facts or logic get in the way.

**Professionalism is racist.** The very concept of professionalism is [a white supremacist construct](#). And the implication is that since blacks are incapable of being professional, we should excise the notion of professionalism from society. Does anybody besides me see the abject racism inherent in such lunacy? Washington University in St. Louis held an entire event as part of Black History Month to explore such drivels.

**Everyday words are racist,** such as "grandfather," "red," "minority," and "ninja," and all point to the fact that the user [is a seething racist who hates black people](#). Just ask the race-hustlers at the University of Washington who made this stuff up. Also, a lot of names tied to federal lands, [such as "squaw"](#) are racist and will be banished under the Biden Administration. In other words, when I say I am going to ski at Squaw Valley, that means I am perpetuating an offensive slur on indigenous women, whom I hate. What else could it mean? Of course, if I were to confront a Leftist who believes this nonsense, and ask them to prove that I hate Squaws because of my use of the geographical term "Squaw Valley," they would be dumbfounded, but no less dumb than when we began the conversation.

**M&M candies are racist,** or at least the cartoon-like characters representing the candy are being [redesigned to be more inclusive](#). One can only imagine that the unstated purpose of this change was to make blacks (and others) feel more included. (Included in what, exactly?)

**The Christmas song "Jingle Bells" is racist.** Why? Because according to a [radicalized college professor](#), the first performance of Jingle Bells, which took place in the mid-1880s, *may have* been performed during a minstrel show in Boston where white performers wore blackface. Remember, we don't actually *know* that white performers wore black face. But because they *might have* worn black face, that proves one thing: when you sing Jingle Bells today, you are showing you hate black people. Even if you are black. Makes sense?

**Columbus Day is racist.** According to [the proponents of Critical Race Theory](#), if you celebrate Columbus Day, you are racist. A respect for Columbus equates to a hatred of black and indigenous people.

**The national holiday known as Thanksgiving is racist.** If you believe in getting together with family, serving a lovely feast of turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, rolls, and pumpkin pie, that proves you hate black people. Even if you're black. You're actually a white supremacist. Just ask the [radicals over at MSNBC](#).

**Math is racist.** A recent *USA Today* article [explored that construct](#), clearly veering towards the idea that since black people are incapable of doing math, math must therefore be racist – the mathematical formulas have volition and hate black people. But again, to suggest that blacks are incapable of doing math actually points to the abject racism held by the person maintaining such a notion. There is nothing inherently defective about a black person which renders them incapable of doing math. But since many blacks, unfortunately, do not perform up to standards, the assumption is that such failure is not due to a lack of effort, or a lack of effective teaching, or a lack of standards and

expectations by parents, but is due to racism, the favorite default position by the radical Left. This may explain why Kate Brown, the radicalized Governor of the state of Oregon, [suspended math proficiency requirements](#) for high school graduates throughout the state. She simply believes requiring blacks, whom she imagines are genetically incapable of doing math, to reach a certain proficiency is racist.

**In some colleges, the school song is racist.** Case in point, the University of Texas at Austin's school song is "The Eyes of Texas," an old favorite. [But to some of the black students there](#), the song is racist. So they are suing the institution that is attempting to educate them.

**Non-Black Women wearing their hair in braids is racist.** So if someone like Vanessa Hudgens wears her hair in braids, evocative of what some black women do, [that means Ms. Hudgens hates black women](#) and is a seething racist. Don't see it as a desire to emulate the hair style of some black women. See it as racist.

**The NFL itself is racist.** Just ask [Colin Kaepernick](#).

**Condoleezza Rice, who is black, is racist against blacks.** She is a "[soldier for white supremacy](#)" according to the Left.

**Following directions is racist.** It's white supremacy. In other words, if you are a young student and are expected to sit quietly and behave yourself, [that ideal is itself racist](#). It's indicative of black hatred, so says Mr. Josh Thompson, a white English teacher at Blacksburg High School in Virginia.

**Being right-handed is racist.** According to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, [you have privilege if](#) you are right-handed. As in, White Privilege.

**Being white is racist.** That's right. If you are white and part of the English Touring Opera company, there is a good chance [you will be excluded](#) from their 2022 ETO Tour, all in the name of diversity, not in the name of talent or musicianship. At least 14 musicians, all of them white, were dropped from their roster because they were white. Because, obviously, the English Touring Opera company cannot condone racism, and being white is, evidently, racist. Perhaps that explains the apology of one Virginia Tech professor. What did she apologize for? [For being white](#). That may also explain the reason of Psychology Professor Derek Hook of Duquesne University in Pennsylvania said that [white people should commit suicide](#) as an ethical act, and as an opportunity to "castrate whiteness." Since Professor Hook is white, perhaps he could lead by example.

**Favoring Black Republican candidates makes you a racist against blacks.** Folks, you can't make this stuff up. If you have a favorable view towards a candidate who is both black and Republican, [that makes you a racist against blacks](#). That is not a typo. And no, this is not something published in *The Onion*.

And my all-time favorite:

**A rock is racist.** A massive, multi-ton boulder that was located at the University of Wisconsin-Madison had to be removed from the campus. The rock had been on the campus since the 1920s. It was known as Chamberlin Rock, which sits atop Observatory Hill, and named after a 19<sup>th</sup> Century geologist. But since an obscure reporter from an earlier time period referred to the rock on one occasion using an archaic term that included a racial slur, today's students, upon finding out that little footnote of history, [deemed the rock racist](#). Not the reporter, but the rock. So the rock, since it hates black people, had to go. And, as is the case with almost all college administrators (virtually all of whom lack a spine or good judgment) the rock was dug out of the ground, hoisted by a giant crane, and banished. One student made this triumphant claim upon its removal: "This moment is about the students, past and present, that relentlessly advocated for the

removal of this racist monument. Now is a moment for all of us BIPOC students to breathe a sigh of relief, to be proud of our endurance, and to begin healing." So it appears that because some obscure reporter referred to the rock using a racist slur about a century ago, this young woman student of color was deeply injured by the rock's presence and was in desperate need of curative and therapeutic triage. And she got her wish. The racist rock has been removed at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars.

It should be obvious that the Left has lost its collective mind. But the Left believes that if they can put normal, decent citizens on the defensive through false charges of racism, they have won some sort of victory. Yet their arguments are unpersuasive. Calling music theory racist, to focus on but one example, confuses the milieu in which music theory of the Common Practice Period flourished, which was Europe, with a racial construct which is unwarranted. The fact that music theory found its origins in predominantly white Europe does not mean that non-white people are despised. It simply means that the musical truths that were acquired through centuries of analysis happened to occur in a predominantly white culture. Yet the resulting understanding of musical concepts such as pentatonic scales, dynamics, hemiola, Sprechstimme, counterpoint, mixed meters, extended chords, atonality, and chance music (to name a very few) are open to all peoples of all races to explore, make use of, and gain understanding of, whether their purpose is to compose music or analyze music. Furthermore, music theory can be applied to all musical forms, whether those forms originate in Bombay, Addis Ababa, Jarkarta, Amsterdam, Belo Horizonte, or St. Louis. The same could be said with respect to Ballet, math, Thanksgiving, and many of the other things belched out by today's race hustlers. Most of the other charges claiming racism are beyond absurd and enter into the realm of the psychotic.

\* \* \* \* \*

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

## **Shameless Plug** Norwood Expands His Coaching Practice

I was fortunate to have studied under Peter Drucker (seen in the photo -- and yes, I did sport a beard back then) in graduate school. Earning an advanced degree in the field of management from the elder statesman who essentially invented management as a formal discipline is something akin to a young physics student studying theoretical physics from Albert Einstein. It was a magnificent and honored time in my life.



But in addition to learning about the ins and outs of management, I also learned an enormous amount about the field of performance coaching from Drucker. As a result, I have found that my work as a performance coach has driven more pronounced results in

clients than my training workshops or my keynote speeches. And it is interesting to note that recently, more people have reached out to me for coaching services than for any other single thing I do.

Should you or one of your co-workers need some specific developmental work, either to eradicate a weakness or build on an existing strength, reach out to me. I might be able to help.

## **From Ara's Journal**

### **A Blink is Not a Wink**

I find it both fascinating and troubling that in our Covid-19 Age, many pundits have taken to heart a revealing statement by Rahm Emmanuel, President Obama's one-time Chief of Staff and later the mayor of Chicago. Emmanuel once said, "Never let a crisis go to waste." By that, I suspect what he meant was so-called Progressives should use any crisis any way possible to further their Left-wing takeover of America. Thus, when the Coronavirus struck about 2 years ago, many people in power instituted draconian measures which effectively hurt small businesses and middle-class Americans, two entities loathed by the Left. Further, many in the media, in politics, in Hollywood, and even in some segments of the medical community, chanted the mantra "Follow the science," as if science had somehow vindicated their policy positions. They also branded any and all contrary views as "misinformation" or "disinformation" and were greatly aided by social media, where Facebook and Twitter (and others) would silence such opposing voices so that the Left could have an unfettered and unchallenged monopoly on the public square.



I have been reflecting on the use of the term *science*. What is science, really? Science is an attempt to discover and understand the immutable laws which regulate nature. Science is most assuredly not concerned with human behavior and human affairs, partly because humans, unlike natural phenomenon, are not always predictable, even if there are patterns in much of human behavior. Science would be focused on things like how the planets orbit the sun, or why the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Science would be interested in why cold environments cause us to shiver. Science would include study of disease, or corrosives such as nitric acid, or why the venom of a funnel web spider is so dangerous to humans. Science would concern itself with why and how chlorophyll is produced in a leaf, or which molecules are present in water, or how hydrogen works to provide power to homes and factories.

But science is powerless to explain why some people get rich, or why people migrate south, or why aborigines in New Guinea practice the rituals they do.

Why? Because science is concerned with processes – immutable processes that take place in nature, such as gravity. By contrast, the research done by sociologists, or anthropologists, or psychologists deal not with immutable processes but with practices, by which I mean the actions of human beings, which can include things such as making combat decisions about how to win a battle, who to put on the Board of Directors of a public corporation, what to spend money on, how to decorate a home, or whether a mob boss orders a "hit" on a rival. Once natural processes are understood, a certain predictability occurs and we can make inferences. Human beings are far less predictable, which is why the study of human practices cannot be called science, only "social science" at best (or what my long-time friend and mentor Louis Midgley refers to as "bad science.")



In short, to borrow a metaphor from Michael Oakeshott, a blink is not a wink. A blink falls in the realm of a process which is based on natural law. It has its origin in physiology and the causes of a blink can be studied and understood in scientific terms. A wink on the other hand is a practice. It comes from human motivation. Its intentions cannot always be understood, perhaps not even by the one winking.

People who seem to worship science often confuse the two. I vividly recall attending what was purported to be a serious, scholarly forum some years ago featuring a lecture by the infamous atheist and anti-religionist Sam Harris. While sitting in the audience surrounded by a lot of people who were all too happy to be there, someone sitting in front of me started a conversation with the dozen or so people sitting around him (including me). This was about 20 minutes before the event formally started. He was interested in our thoughts on what constitutes the differences between an atheist and an agnostic. While most of the people around him seemed stymied by the question, I was not, and so I offered several salient points on the differences. People seemed riveted by my explanation, with the exception of a rather tall lady sitting a few seats away from the man asking the question. After I finished my explanation, this woman, who fancied herself a scientist (a neuroscientist no less) proceeded to speak to me using a level of arrogance and snootiness I have only seen on television sitcoms. With an air of authority, she proclaimed I was clearly not a scientist. It was definitely meant as an insult, as if not being a scientist is a deficiency which rendered anything I may say on any subject to be void of value. What she didn't understand, (because I asked her point blank) was that her pronouncement itself was unscientific. Here she was basking in the glory of superiority due to her being a scientist and I being a knave, as if everything can and should be understood using the law of science. Yet her very pronouncement lacked any scientific heft. This was lost on her. But her worship of science as a discipline was evident.

Much of the nonsense coming from the CDC, from Anthony Fauci, and from even many doctors about Covid are based on conflating a blink with a wink, or, in other words, from ignoring the distinctions between processes (the realm of science) with practices (the realm of social science). Keeping such distinctions in mind would go a long way in understanding why it is that some scientists occasionally behave very unscientifically.

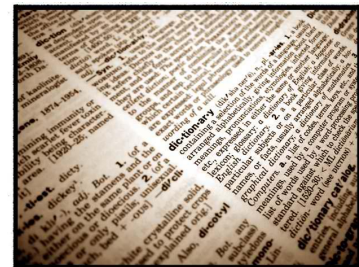
## The World of Words

### Exacerbate

#### Building Your Power of Expression

**Exacerbate**, v.

**Pronunciation:** ig'zasəɾbāt



**Meaning:** To exacerbate is to go from bad to worse. Any time you intervene in an already bad situation, perhaps in an effort to make it better, but instead make it worse, you have exacerbated the problem.

**Usage:**

- *The forest fire was exacerbated by the lack of rain.*
- *I think it best you do nothing, lest you exacerbate the problem.*
- *If you confront him at this stage, you risk exacerbating his already ill-tempered demeanor.*

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