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Welcome to my latest thinking in this issue of *Uncommon Sense*!

Want to get a helpful and overdue reminder about the importance of service? Then turn to the ***Self-Development*** column, where I present some thoughts, but with a twist.

Ever wonder if our country is really going to hell in a handbag? Then read ***The Elephant in the Room*** column and decide for yourself.

The ***From Ara's Journal*** column gives voice to the Yin and the Yang of our lives. See what you think.

The World of Words column delivers a wonderful gem of a word that I hope you incorporate in your growing and vast vocabulary. In fact, why not use it today?

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

Subtlety In Service

The truth of the matter is I hesitate to bring this up. I don't want to be seen as being guilty of virtue-signaling, therefore I ask that you take me at my word that my purpose in telling the following story is to be instructive, not to shine a spotlight on me personally.

I walked into a rather large meeting room, one that had a seating capacity of around 60. Office chairs were stationed behind wood tables arranged in a double-U-shape, a larger "U" on the outer perimeter surrounding a slightly smaller "U" in the inner portion of the room. A few stray chairs were along the side wall, just inside the doorway. I took one of those seats, the one closest to the door.

Almost every seat around the U-Shaped tables was taken by a crowd of mostly blue color workers. These were rugged men and women who worked hard to bring about great things.

One man walked in about 5 minutes after the meeting had started. Because the one vacant chair closest to our side of the room was in a narrow passageway and hard to get to, he decided to stand just inside the doorway, and he leaned against the wall. He was a large man, quite large, in fact, and overweight. That probably explained why he did not try to take that one vacant seat; he wielded too much girth to get access to it easily. But I could tell that he probably had bad knees and perhaps other health problems. I sensed he would have liked to sit in a chair.



I was tempted, in an act of graciousness, to offer him my seat. And I almost did so.

But then I sensed that my doing so might possibly hurt his pride or embarrass him in some way.

What to do?

I knew what to do. Without drawing any attention to the man, or engaging with him in any way, I simply abandoned my chair and walked over and sat in that one remaining chair that was vacant. It was a slight chore in that I had to maneuver between some people and the outer table, but I was able to do so without much trouble.

And the big man? He waited a moment, and then he took my original seat I had abandoned by the door.

What did I learn from that experience?

I learned that good can be done without any fanfare. And there are opportunities all around us to make life pleasant for others without making a show of it.

Service to others is wonderful, but anonymous service has its own special charm.

Anonymous service is service you do without any sort of public recognition. Sometimes only the person being served knows about your role in it. Other times the circumstances are such that not even the person being served knows of your involvement.

Again, a story that is not meant to be virtue-signaling:

Once I attended a Church congregation for about a year while I lived in the South Bay region of Los Angeles. The Sunday School teacher was a woman of great talent and wisdom, and a lot of strong capabilities in the art of teaching.

In one of my first Sunday's attending her class, she made a passing comment to the class that Dennis Prager had just published his first of five volumes of his commentary on the Old Testament. It was on the Book of Exodus (and was called [*The Rational Bible*](#)). She lamented the fact that she wanted to buy it but its price was just out of reach for her at that time.

The next day I bought a copy at Barnes and Noble, looked up her address in the Church Directory, and left a copy on her porch with a note expressing my gratitude for her excellent teaching. My note was unsigned.

The next Sunday at Church, during her Sunday School lesson, she waited until near the end of our class time to bring up the fact that someone had blessed her with the kindness of that Bible Commentary by Dennis Prager. She had tears in her eyes as she talked about receiving it. She also said, "I think I know who gave me this wonderful book, but I'm not 100% certain." I was quite confident she had no clue who had given her that book because I was a stranger to her, she didn't know me or my name, and we never had a single conversation during the entire year I was in her Sunday School class. But she was heartened by the fact that some anonymous individual had reached out to her and made a meaningful gesture on her behalf. She felt appreciated, and that realization surely made a difference in her life, undoubtedly offsetting the moments of anguish we all face.

If you want to be a force for good in the workplace, in the community, or in your homes, supplement your good works with acts of anonymous service. Try to work your magic to bring about much good to others and do it in such a way that they won't know of your involvement. It will enrich your own heart, and it will be the means of bringing much good to others. They will have renewed appreciation for the human condition, and you will be of stronger character because of it.

The Elephant in the Room

Cornell Cowers

Abraham Lincoln stands alongside George Washington as one of the two greatest presidents in U.S. history. Historians and presidential scholars are divided on who



was the greater of the two. But it doesn't matter: both made history in achieving Herculean accomplishments.

So why would someone complain about Abraham Lincoln? And why would someone have a problem with his Gettysburg Address, one of the greatest American speeches ever delivered? What follows are my speculations based on years of observing such matters.

In recent years, radicals on the Left have claimed Lincoln was a racist. Such absurd notions have gained traction. Therefore, we can safely assume a person who would complain about Lincoln and his magnificent speech is probably a misguided hater of America. And it turns out that someone at Cornell University – probably a student with a fondness for Antifa and the Black Lives Matter movement – issued a complaint of the presence of a bust of Lincoln next to a bronze plaque displaying a rare copy of the famous address.

While we don't have the details at this time of what actually took place, because Cornell University is unwilling to come clean, we can surmise that a radicalized student saw the bust of Lincoln and felt personally threatened by it. This student likely felt that he or she was looking at a bust of what he/she imagines is a racist, and wondered why the university was celebrating the existence of a white male cisgender racist steeped in ableism, patriarchy, and intersectionality. This student likely had tremors, accompanied by uncontrollable twitches, then probably started crying, and requesting a cry room or safe space – a room outfitted with coloring books and Play-Doh, with goldfish and kittens, with a blanket and a pacifier. None of that sophomoric silliness surprises me.

But what happened next is truly shocking: the university actually took such nonsense seriously, and instantly capitulated to the demands of this stumbling, illiterate narcissist.

The university looked at two things: on one side of the equation was the invaluable copy of the Gettysburg Address along with a bust of perhaps our greatest President ever; on the other side of the equation was the terrorized student who probably imagined the bust of Lincoln was apt to come alive and bite her finger. The university staff then compared two elements and, inexplicably, sided with the young student who imagines he/she is wiser than all the professors at the university, and who, like a child having a tantrum, made all sorts of absurd demands. The university decided to remove brilliance, remove wisdom, remove substantive history and placate a numbskull.

That the student is a moron is not in any way surprising. I expect pampered, pathology-packed peons to make ludicrous demands. But I don't expect elite universities to cower in fear in the face of such psychosis.

Cornell truly caved in to madness. In doing so it elevated brainlessness and ineptitude, the very things it is supposed to be curing in young people.

Cornell University is now a laughing stock – a paper tiger, not an institution of higher learning, and one that charges between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per year for tuition.

This is one example of the decline of America, a decline that is caused by a combination of Leftism and cowardice.

* * * * *

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

From Ara's Journal

On Being Real

Sometimes people have opposing characteristics. These disjunctions of thought are peculiar and mysterious. I've considered my own dichotomies. For instance:



- On the one hand, I am uncomfortable with small crowds in social settings; making small talk with people I do not know very well is not my cup of tea. On the other hand, I have no qualms whatsoever about giving a speech or delivering a seminar before audiences of 10 to 10,000. Go figure.
- On the one hand, I am like Thomas Jefferson in this sense only: I do not like strife or contention. I shun chaotic environments and prefer tranquility. Shouting and screaming, arguing and bitter exchanges cause me to gravitate to more serene

spaces. Yet on the other hand, in certain settings, particularly on social media, if my buttons are pushed, or if someone is advocating something I consider foolish or dangerous (say, a treatise on why the U.S. Constitution is no longer relevant and should be jettisoned) I can be a keen debater and adopt a take-no-prisoners persona.

- On the one hand, I believe deeply in God, and strongly support a faith-based approach to life (while in no way shunning rigorous thought and the best in scholarship). Yet on the other hand, I find atheists fascinating and love to converse with them, striving to understand the way their mind works in their secular religion of godlessness.
- On the one hand, I am very much in favor of marriage and quite opposed to divorce. Yet on the other hand, I am unmarried due to divorce.
- On the one hand, on a micro-level, I love people. Yet on the other hand, on a macro-level, I think humanity stinks.

What to make of such internal contradictions? Hypocrisy? Hopeless inconsistencies? Bi-polar behavior? Confusion? A sign of a Gemini?

I don't think so.

But I do think the human species is both mysterious and complex at times.

I have plenty more to say about this. . . but I think I'll call it a day.

The World of Words

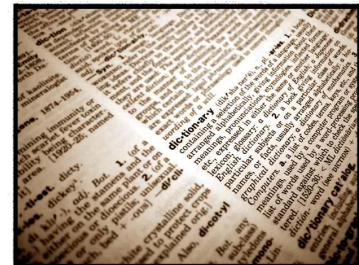
Smarmy

Building Your Power of Expression

Smarmy, adj.

Pronunciation: śmārmē

Meaning: If you are old enough to remember the TV show *Leave It To Beaver*, you will likely remember that "wise guy" known as Eddie



Haskell. What was so ingratiating about Eddie is that he was such a trouble-maker when he was alone with Wally or Beaver, but whenever he found himself in the presence of the parents (Ward and June Cleaver), he acted like a perfect little gentleman, which was completely phony, and everybody knew it.

Whenever you encounter a person who is excessively polite or overly helpful, or gushing with too much flattery, or pouring it on with the dispensing of compliments, that person is of a smarmy disposition.

Usage:

- *No, mother, I will not go out with him: he is smarmy, immature, and just plain weird!*
- *He strikes me as the kind of guy who is a smarmy lady's man in a bad suit working his "magic" at the bar.*
- *Just look at that smarmy face -- it makes you want to punch it!*

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