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Welcome to my latest installment of *Uncommon Sense*.

Self-Development is a passion of mine, so I use the column this go-round to share some ice breakers I favor when putting on a workshop or other program that requires audience participation.

The Elephant in the Room column shares a guest editorial from C. J. Pearson, a black man who has some things to say about a recent tragedy involving the beating death of a black man by 5 black police officers (who are now being charged with murder). What Mr. Pearson is reacting to is the charge by many on the Left that 5 black cops killing a black man in their custody is an example of white supremacy. His article pinpoints what he believes is the single biggest threat to black America. I happen to have an alternative view of what that single biggest threat consists of (I believe it's black children growing up in fatherless homes) but I respect his views.



The bleak topic of violent death also, coincidentally, creeps into the **From Ara's Journal** column, but does so with a somewhat stirring and prescriptive message of hope.

And I firmly believe you will love my choice for **The World of Words** column.

OK, let's get started.

Ice Breakers, Anyone?

I'm a professional communicator and educator. That's what I do for a living. I do it through speeches, seminars, workshops, coaching, consulting, writing, and teaching.



One of my corporate clients is about to host a major learning conference spanning several days. I was asked to share some possible ice-breakers for them to use, to lighten up the atmosphere. I share them below.

If you are ever in a position to utilize these ice breakers, by all means, do so. (Note: if you would never be in a position to utilize ice breakers, you are forgiven for skipping this column).

WORST JOB

Once audience members are split into small groups, take turns going around a circle and stating what your worst job ever was. The answers may be eye-opening, hilarious, etc. The purpose of this 5-minute icebreaker is to have your employees bond over something personal. (Hopefully, no one will say it's their *current* job!)

PAIRED STRANGERS

Group the audience in pairs, preferably with a partner they've never met before. Once pairs are formed, instruct them to discuss a topic. Almost any topic will do, but keep away from politics, social issues, and religion or anything that's controversial or in poor taste. The Super Bowl was recent; that could be a topic ("What did you think of the recent Super Bowl?" Or, "What was your favorite Super Bowl Commercial?" Or, "What did you think of the Half-Time Show at the Super Bowl?") This can get people talking and start the bonding process.

WHO IS IT?

Have each employee write down a fun-factoid about themselves (tell them to keep it clean) onto a sheet of paper, fold it, and put it in a box. It can be something that not too many people know about them, perhaps an unusual accomplishment, a challenge they overcame, a hobby that isn't known by others, perhaps an unusual language they are fluent in). When everyone's done, the seminar leader pulls one paper, reads what's been

written, and the rest of the group tries to guess who it belongs to. It's always good for a laugh or some "Oohs" and "Ahs".

MOVIE BALL

Throw a Beachball around. Whenever someone catches it, they have to utter a famous line from a movie. (Example: "*You can't handle the truth!*") Then that person gets to throw the ball to someone else who must name the movie the line is from within five seconds. (A given movie can be referred to more than once as long as it's with different lines.)

ONE WORD

Divide the meeting participants into groups of four or five people by having them number off. Tell the newly formed groups that their assignment is to think for a minute and then to share with their group the one word that describes X. (Best to have them write the one word down on a yellow Post-It Note).

X can be a topic, perhaps the topic of your meeting, such as *our culture*, or *decency*, or *harassment*, or any other similar topic. In fact, sometimes I use the One Word Ice Breaker after I have shown a short but provocative video clip that is relevant to my theme.

This ice breaker helps the group explore their thoughts on a common issue. This ice breaker is a perfect segue into the topic of the meeting or training class. The group is usually fascinated with the variety of the words chosen. Consequently, the ice breaker usually provides a snapshot into the current thinking of the group about whatever the topic is under discussion.

The Elephant in the Room

This Is The Biggest Threat To Black America -
Hint: It's Not The Police by C. J. Pearson

Following the release of graphic body cam footage that showed the brutal beating of 29-year-old Tyre Nichols by five Memphis, TN, police officers, the left proceeded to do what it does best:



capitalize on Black suffering.

Professional race-baiters like former ESPN talking head Jemele Hill rushed to blame White supremacy — a charge that many found not only tired but ludicrous considering all five officers charged in the slaying of Nichols — Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Emmitt Martin III, Desmond Mills Jr., and Justin Smith — were Black.

Despite this reality, Hill wasn't alone in her lunacy. CNN's Van Jones echoed her sentiment, as did Democrat Reps. Maxwell Frost, of Florida, and Mondaire Jones, of New York, and Black Lives Matter activist Bree Newsome, who made headlines in 2015 when she scaled a flagpole outside the South Carolina State Capitol to remove a Confederate Flag.

Newsome even went so far as to say that it didn't matter if the officers were black because "racism is what policing is."

For decades, the left has tried desperately to brand racism as the single biggest threat to the safety, prosperity, and progression of the Black community. And this hasn't been done by mistake; it has been done by intent. It's been done to divert attention away from reality — a reality visible to anyone not blinded by ignorance but instead driven by truth — the reality that the most serious threat to Black America is neither racism nor White supremacy.

The truth is that the most serious threat to Black America is Progressive America.

And as we step into Black History Month, this is a threat, upon reflection, that I realize is no way new but instead one that has been a constant throughout the course of American history.

It was the left that founded the Ku Klux Klan. It was the left that fought to preserve the institution of slavery. It was the left that sought to relegate my Black great-grandparents to the back of the bus.

And it was the left that founded Planned Parenthood — an institution responsible for the extermination of millions of Black unborn babies.

And while the left denigrates leaders like Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis for banning so-called Black History, this is the Black history that the left doesn't want young Black men like me to know.

And the racism of the left hasn't changed, instead, it's only gotten worse.

While those on the left are quick to blame so-called White supremacy for the events that took place in Memphis, what they are less eager to point out is that Memphis is a Democrat stronghold: with a Democrat mayor, a Democrat City Council, and a Democrat-led police department.

What they're even less eager to discuss is the state of Black Americans unfortunate enough to live in a city under Democratic rule. Just look at Chicago, where 80% of homicide victims are black. Or Baltimore, where 77% of high school students can only read at elementary levels.

Progressive policies haven't just hurt Black America; they have decimated it.

What I learned about the left, I didn't learn in school, at my university, or in the curriculum of "Critical Race Theory." I was left to learn the truth on my own.

But unfortunately, the rest of Black America often never does.

* * * * *

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

From Ara's Journal

An Unsettling Occurrence

The lion's share of my professional work at this time is with a Fortune 50 corporation. I spend many hours within their corporate walls churning out some of the best work of my career.



This past weekend, a horrific occurrence took place about 50 yards from where I sit. It was a case of workplace violence that left one employee dead, another employee hospitalized, and a third employee in jail held on capital murder charges.

While many in the organization are, understandably, spooked to the point that they are staying away from the office, even though the perpetrator is behind bars, I empathize with their angst.

I recognize from this event that Security staff are simply not equipped to stop something so sudden and so violent. There are thousands of employees, contractors, consultants, and suppliers stationed at this facility. It's like a small city in its own right. There are, of course, a small number of individuals that have unstable or violent tendencies. Security staff can only do so much. One can show up for work and never return home. Life is very tenuous.

While every new day of life is truly a gift, it is a fact that one day in the future will be our last, whether we were expecting it or whether it came upon us suddenly and without warning.

Therefore, I will attempt to live every day I have remaining to its fullest. I will strive to squeeze every drop of meaning, of opportunity, of joy, of discovery, of pleasure, of love out of every day. That will be my striving. That will be my orientation. That will be my sensibility.

The World of Words

Emolument

Building Your Power of Expression

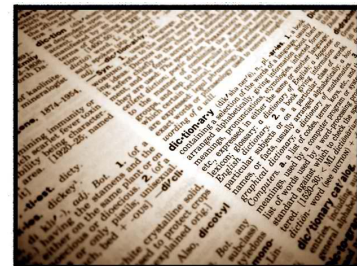
Emolument, n.

Pronunciation: ə'mäljəmənt

Meaning: An emolument (often used in the plural) refers to a salary or fee or some sort of profit or benefit from one's employment or from the office one holds.

Usage:

- *The annual emolument for the director of the charity is officially only one dollar.*
- *His emoluments were very considerable, betraying his high station in this community.*



- *In politics he maintains an independent course nor has he ever sought the honors and emoluments of public office.*

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