

# Uncommon Sense

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Great to have you on board for another dose of *Uncommon Sense*.

We all find ourselves in awkward situations at work on occasion, and some times this has to do with the culture. The **Self-Development** column explores this issue and offers some guidance.

A lot of destructive nonsense is taking place in America with respect to racism (and the allegations are usually around supposed white hatred of black people). **The Elephant in the Room** column has something to say about this.

The **From Ara's Journal** column explores the importance of listening.

And **The World of Words** column alerts you to a word you may not hear very often, or even use very often, but when you do, you will sound, . . . learned.

OK, let's get started.

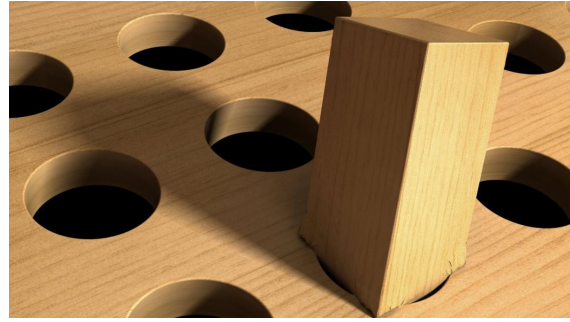
Ara Norwood



**Self-Development**

Culture Matters

*"Organizations have to have values. But so do people. To be effective in an organization, one's own values must be compatible with the organization's values. They do not have to be the same. But they must be close enough so that they can coexist." -- Peter Drucker*



Workplaces reflect the culture and norms of the people in charge. What is deemed acceptable conduct in one place of business would be seen as anathema in a different organization.

Attitudes about conduct can vary greatly, and violations of such conduct can run into the extremes in either direction.

An organization I know well based out of the San Fernando Valley outside of Los Angeles is run by (and staffed by) people who are hypersensitive to the point of the pathological. They are focused on conformity of thought and shunning any sort of conversation that may be even slightly controversial. If a person in that organization were to utter an expletive, even under her breath, those within earshot would likely soil their pants, begin hyperventilating, and run to HR in tears. In fact, if an employee were to mention in passing that a news story reported that Thomas Jefferson was guilty of rape when he fathered children with his slave Sally Hemings, the very fact that the employee used the word "rape" would cause some to imagine he himself -- the employee -- approved of rape. That's how pathological this organization has become.

Conversely, I am intimately familiar with a very different organization where profanity runs rampant at all levels. These are not just blue collar workers, but white collar as well. Almost everyone feels free to use profanity.

Language is merely one barometer. Here's another example:

Some organizations allow for the free flow of communication. A person at one level in the organization is free to bypass his boss and directly reach out to executives much higher in the organization, without informing his boss he intends to do so. Yet I know of a reasonably large financial services firm that employs certain middle managers who would consider such a thing the crime of the century,

and would punish such an employee who dared do so in subtle and not-so-subtle ways.

What to do?

My advice is two-fold:

First, employees need to understand what is considered normative in an organization and perform accordingly. That does not mean that if you are opposed to using profanity, and you are in an organization that revels in it, that you should disavow your values and start using profanity. But it does mean that you should simply recognize that the culture you are in allows for profanity and you either have to roll with the punches, or, if you simply cannot handle that culture, you must put together an exit-strategy and start looking for your next place of employment. This extends to other matters as well, including how people prefer to be communicated with: meetings, email, phone, text, etc.

Second, it is important to know yourself and your preferences at the outset, so that you know what you can tolerate and what you prefer. You have to know what conditions become a deal-breaker. And you have to know how to uncover what the norms are when you are being considered for employment with a new organization. Knowing how to broach the subject during the interview process, or knowing how to do the necessary reconnaissance, is very important.

Yes, you can be chameleonic to a point, adapting and adjusting to almost any culture, but work-life is such a large part of your overall life, that it is far more satisfying to be aligned with an organization that is not too far off of your own deeply held-values.

## **The Elephant in the Room**

### Some Observations About Racism

While the subject of racism doesn't hold a lot of interest for me personally, primarily because I am not a racist in any conceivable sense, there is so much unwarranted blathering about



racism in America today, I find myself unable to ignore it. It's time for a candid discussion on the matter.

*Has America ever been racist?* Yes. The very fact that slavery was practiced in some parts of America makes it undeniable that portions of white America saw black people imported from Africa as inferior. It is perhaps the single most shameful and regrettable aspect of our nation's history. But it must be acknowledged that the Founding Fathers who practiced slavery (George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, to name a few) did not invent slavery. They were born into a world that practiced slavery. Slavery was the norm for them. It was part of their accepted culture. And often overlooked is the fact that some of the very Founding Fathers that owned slaves tried on quite a few occasions to repudiate slavery through legal channels. It was a Republican, not a Democrat, that was willing to go to war to end slavery once and for all.

I should also hasten to add that even after slavery was abolished after the close of the Civil War, black people (and other races and ethnicities) were often the target of certain prejudices. Such behaviors were wrong, unfair, and uncharitable on every level. Even today, I am not in a position to claim I know first-hand the lived experience of any other person, regardless of skin color. We all have our own stories of deprivation, unfairness, cruelty, etc. Almost no one is immune. What matters, however, is how we handle the misfortunes of our life. We should never let them define us.

*Did America invent slavery?* No. Slavery has been around since time immemorial. Most all nations have practiced slavery at one time or another, and most all races have been slaves at one time or another. Slavery is not something that was exclusively forced on black people by white people.

*Is America today systemically racist?* Not even close. The claim that America is systemically racist today is one of the great lies of our time, a lie that is perpetuated by people who hate America (i.e., white Leftists) and by people who seem to need an excuse as to why they are not responsible for their station in life (i.e, some blacks who believe the propaganda of the white Leftists). There are race-hustlers among the black population (**Al Sharpton** quickly comes to mind) and there are race-hustlers among white Leftists, which is ironic because if racism is systemic in any sub-culture in America, it is surely systemic among white Leftists, the very people who scream about racism on a daily basis. Yes, there are individual pockets of racism in America today, but such persons are immediately discredited and marginalized for being kooks once it becomes clear they are racist.



Racism, where it exists, is both evil, and stupid. Most decent people understand that racism is evil. But many overlook just how moronic it is to judge a person as "bad" (or "good") because of the color of a person's skin, an attribute that says *nothing* -- absolutely *nothing* -- about a person's value. In other words, to use but one random example, **Alvin Bragg**, the District Attorney in Manhattan, is an awful human being. Alvin Bragg also happens to be black. While he is a positively loathsome man, that has nothing whatsoever to do with the fact that he is black. Conversely, radio talk-show host **Dennis Prager** is a perfectly decent human being. Dennis Prager is also white. But the color of Mr. Prager's skin has absolutely nothing to do with his decency. What I just said is unintelligible to a racist.

*How can one be certain racism is not systemic in America today?*  
There are lots of indicators. Here are some things to consider.

First, we have to understand the word *systemic*. When you hear the word *systemic*, it means something has permeated the entire system. It's similar to Stage 4 Cancer. It is malignant. It has spread throughout the entire system, hence the term *systemic*. If our country was a systemically racist country against blacks, how is it that We The People elected, and then reelected, a black man to be our President in 2008 and 2012?

Further, if the country was systemically racist against blacks, how is it that we have a black Justice of the Supreme Court (**Clarence Thomas**)? How is it that one of the most successful and wealthiest media figures is a black woman (**Oprah Winfrey**)? How is it that the person we called The King of Pop (**Michael Jackson**) was black? And what about other entertainers such as **Prince**, or **Jimi Hendrix** who to this day, in spite of their untimely deaths, are considered among the best of the best? Some of the greatest athletes in the world that have been revered by millions of fans include **Jackie Robinson**, **Muhammad Ali**, **Michael Jordan**, **Pele**, **Tiger Woods**, and **Jesse Owens** -- all men of color. Other notable figures who were either wildly successful or deeply beloved include **Toni Morrison**, **Martin Luther King**, **John Coltrane**, **Booker T. Washington**, **Sojourner Truth**, **Maya Angelou**, **Colin Powell**, **Duke Ellington**, **Quincy Jones**, **Morgan Freeman**, **Stevie Wonder**, **Condoleezza Rice**, and, prior to his fall from grace, **Bill Cosby**. A systemically racist country would not have enabled such talented and driven people to rise to the top of their professions or causes.

Finally, the fact that so many black people stage hate crimes -- completely fake hate crimes -- tells all of us that if racist attacks

against blacks were happening regularly, there would be no need for people such as **Jussie Smollett** to engage in such pathetic shenanigans. No German Jews in 1938 had to stage fake attacks on themselves because there were real attacks taking place against them at that time.

*What are the consequences of an unhealthy obsession with racism?* What happens is that a victim mentality sets in and the alleged victim sets him- or herself up for failure with a self-fulfilling prophecy. And something more: things that have nothing whatsoever to do with race are all of a sudden deemed to be racist -- things that enter the realm of the pathological. Thus, the following things have recently been labeled as racist against blacks by some black people who are obsessed with racism:

- [Police Dogs](#)
- [The car exhaust from white drivers](#)
- [Exercise](#)
- [The word "field"](#)
- [Daylight Savings Time](#)
- [School Discipline](#)
- [Alzheimer's Disease](#)
- [Museums](#)
- [The holiday known as Thanksgiving](#)
- And my personal, all-time favorite: black people! I'm not making this up. A former DEI official, a black woman, insists that black people [are racist against black people](#). It doesn't get any more pathological than that.

(Note: for an even lengthier list, see *Uncommon Sense* Issue #255, published in March 2022).

What we should learn from this insanity is that when someone sacrifices their critical thinking and common sense on the Woke Alter, they relinquish personal responsibility as they accept, uncritically and without question, that they are not responsible for the results they attain in life. They buy into the lie that black people cannot succeed in America, in spite of the mounting evidence to the contrary.

And the Leftist lapdogs among us regularly try to stir contention and acrimony by fanning the flames of alleged racism, perpetuating the lie that the America of today is systemically racist.

The vast majority of what little racism there is in this country comes from the Left.

\* \* \* \* \*

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

## **From Ara's Journal** Listening As A Technique Is Not Listening

The importance of listening cannot be overstated. We learn so much more when we are listening than when we are speaking.



So important is the skill of listening that some have turned it into a cottage industry. Such practitioners and

trainers have turned the art of listening into a skill set with discrete steps. Google search the following terms "the steps to effective listening" and you will garner over 83 million hits.

Personally, I don't preoccupy myself with steps. Instead, I merely adopt a desire that sees great value in listening. I'm not overthinking it when someone is speaking to me. I just listen. My mind is relaxed. If a thought enters my mind that would serve as a response from me, or a contribution to the conversation, I quickly put it on the shelf and continue listening, gleaning new insights, confident that I will remember my contribution when the time comes.

Trying to follow a technique has one's focus on the technique and not on the words being uttered by the person or persons we are in conversation with.

## **The World of Words**

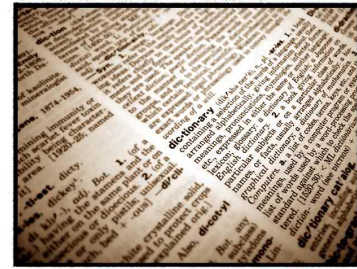
### Enjoin

**Building Your Power of Expression**

## Enjoin, v.

**Pronunciation:** injoin, enjoin

**Meaning:** To instruct or urge someone to do something. To prescribe a course of action. Sometimes it refers to a prohibition against taking an action.



### Usage:

- *The code enjoined members to trade fairly.*
- *He embraced such yeoman service to others due to the charitable deeds enjoined on him by his religion.*
- *He was enjoined by his conscience from telling a lie.*

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