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Glad to have you back for another dose of *Uncommon Sense*. I tackle some difficult topics in this issue.

Starting with the **Self-Development** column, we explore the distinctions between victimhood and hardship. Should be an interesting read.

The Elephant in the Room column continues with the theme of the previous issue of *Uncommon Sense*, that of the erosion of Western Civilization. It's a bitter pill to swallow but we have to put truth before all else.

The **From Ara's Journal** column shares some of my deeply personal thoughts about staying safe in an otherwise challenging world.

The **World of Words** column serves up a nifty word you'll be delighted to add to your ever-expanding vocabulary.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood

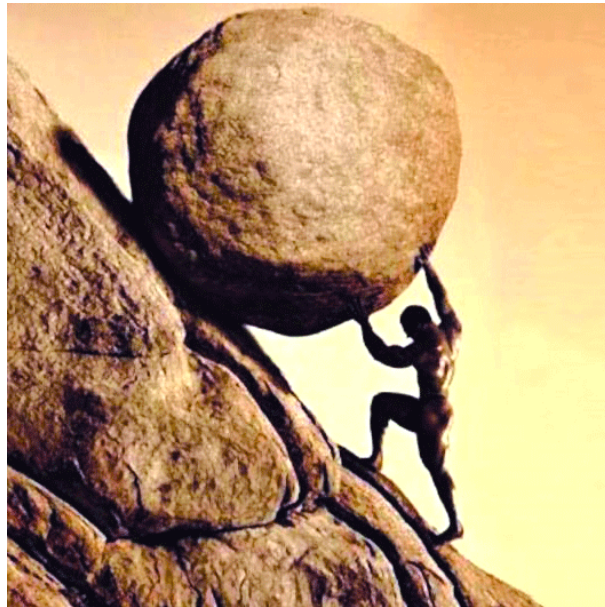


Self-Development

Hardship is Not Victimhood

A lot of people out there seem to believe that they are victims and are, therefore, owed something.

While there are instances where someone has truly been victimized, a lot of people mistake hardship for victimhood. There's a world of difference between the two.



- With victimhood, a person has been trapped in a cycle of abuse.
- With hardship, someone has found themselves in a set of arduous circumstances, many of which strengthen them.
- With victimhood, a person has been cheated in some way.
- With hardship, a person has faced the natural circumstances of life.
- While victimhood is unfair and morally wrong, there are often avenues to justice, such as with the criminal justice system.
- While hardship is unpleasant and unfortunate, it fosters perspective and can imbue one with humility and even gratitude for whatever good fortune they do experience, either past, present, or future.
- People who stay focused on victimhood, real or imagined, end up placing an albatross on their souls, preventing them from rising above those dark moments of their past.
- People who recognize that their hardships have strengthened them often find doors opening for them which they are now prepared to pass through.

Don't ever allow yourself to see yourself as a victim. Even actual victimhood of the past need not remain one's focus in the present or the future.

I know this to be true from personal experience.

The Elephant in the Room

Western Civilization is Unraveling, Part 2 of 2

Let me methodically walk you through something that is happening throughout our country. I will use San Francisco as my prototype of a trend I am noticing.



First, the thoroughly self-destructive trend of defunding the police takes place because Left-wing, "Woke" city leaders bow to criminal groups like Black Lives Matter and Antifa (the fascist group that claims they target fascist groups). Thus, San Francisco Mayor **London Breed** made the insane decision to pull \$120 million from the law enforcement budget to fund other non-essential initiatives.

Next, due to the shortage in funding, San Francisco finds itself facing a 12% shortage of police officers between their 2019 numbers and their 2022 numbers. Police officers are simply not hired because there is no funding to hire them. Other police officers, facing dangerous conditions as well as new levels of disrespect never before seen, simply leave the force and go into brand new careers, making the shortage numbers even worse. Thus, as of January 2023, SFPD should have had 2,182 police officers on the force. They only had 1,537 – that means there are 645 police officers that are needed to be on the force that are not there. That is a shortage of about 30%. This leaves large gaps within San Francisco that do not have any police officers patrolling.

Next, due to the police shortage, the criminal element within San Francisco becomes emboldened. Knowing that law enforcement is compromised, the criminals realize that their odds of not being caught or arrested are in their favor. They know they can probably commit violent crime with impunity. And so they do. Roaming mobs of teenagers gather at Stonestown Galleria Mall in San Francisco and just begin brawling, clashing with rival mobs, and randomly attacking innocent bystanders who are at the mall to shop (as seen in the photo above). They punch people, they stomp on people, they pepper spray

people. Between March 15 and March 17, this took place at the same mall on three separate occasions. Inside a Target store, a gang of teenagers singled out one random man who was shopping and pounced on him, beating him brutally, then body slamming him to the ground. Imagine you are in Aisle 13 looking at dog food when 8 or more teenagers walk up to you, punch you in the face, head, neck, and stomach in an unprovoked attack. You fall to the ground, and then they take turns stomping on your head, kicking you in the neck and back, stomping on your legs and ankles before picking you up and body slamming you and leaving you there, battered, covered in contusions, and bleeding, requiring hospital treatment. And you don't even know why they attacked you. But I know why they attacked you: because they could. They needed no other reason.

Next, we get the usual meaningless statements of outrage by various officials, followed by empty happy-talk regarding what they are going to do about the violence (which, truthfully, is nothing). Here are some examples of such pabulum, along with my commentary:

Mayor London Breed said: "There are no excuses for violence, but there are steps we can take to prevent this kind of behavior from taking hold in our schools and our City." **Translation:** "We give the necessary lip service to condemning violence, but truth be told, we are not going to take any steps to curb crime. We are content with merely talking about steps we *could* but *won't* take."

Mayor Breed also said: "As City leaders, we are committed to working together with the School District to make sure our kids are safe and have the support they need, especially after the incredible strain on our young people caused by the last few years." **Translation:** "We will pretend to work with the School District, but in actuality, there is nothing we or they can do to stop teenage monsters from acting out. We just want you to think we are doing something to stop the chaos. But there is nothing we can do, and even if we could, we probably would not do anything. We are too busy enjoying our power."

Police Supervisor of District 7, Myrna Melgar said: "The majority of the youth at the scene are bystanders who have been recording this violence live and posting it on social media, eliciting likes, and more followers." **Translation:** "I realize that my statement actually said nothing of value, but I had to say something."

An unnamed spokesperson for the Stonestown Galleria Mall had this to say: "We are outraged by the unacceptable behavior

that occurred at Stonestown Galleria which was a clear violation of our Code of Conduct. We are working closely with school, city, and law enforcement leadership to address this issue." **Translation:** "We say we are outraged and we call this violent behavior unacceptable in order to make it sound like we care and can do something about it. But we can't do anything about it. We don't even comprehend what we could or should do about it, other than to issue empty statements as I just did."

The unnamed spokesperson added: "The safety and well-being of our guests and tenants is our top priority and we have zero tolerance for this disruptive behavior." **Translation:** "We like to pretend that the safety and well-being of our guests and tenants is our top priority because, frankly, we need their money to be spent with us and not elsewhere. But we really don't have any top priorities other than making money. If we really believed that the safety of guests and tenants was our top priority, then we would do something about it, such as hire much more security, arm them, and invest in top-of-the-line security systems that have facial recognition. But that costs money and we do not wish to spend any money on safety or security."

And last, the leadership of San Francisco (or any Democrat-run city) go back to their cocktail parties and forget about what happened, until the next outbreak of violence begins the cycle anew.

What is the result of all of this mayhem? For starters, when you analyze homicides in San Francisco, you discover that homicides increased by 20% between the start of 2019 and the end of 2020. (As a point of reference, **George Floyd** died on May 25, 2020.) And when you compare 2021 homicides to 2020 homicides, they increase in San Francisco an additional 17%.

And how many arrests did the police make from the violent anarchy that took place at the Stonestown Galleria Mall between March 15 and March 17?

Zero.

What is happening in San Francisco is a prototype of what is happening in Philadelphia, in Los Angeles, in St. Louis, in New York City, in Chicago, in Baltimore, in New Orleans, in Portland, in Seattle, and in every big city that is Democrat-run. Why? Because the Democrat Party has been commandeered by Leftist radicals, and

Leftist radicals are committed to destroying the United States of America.

Will a strong leader arise and take command of the mayhem and actually do what it takes to destroy the destroyers?

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

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From Ara's Journal

The Descending Violence

It's very interesting to reflect on what is happening in the world around us. Clearly we are facing much commotion in society. Some people, not everyone of course, but many people are meaner than they used to be.



Other people are actually more violent and crazed than before. Some of this is due to untreated mental illness, but I think a lot of the time people who are not necessarily mentally ill have given up on being civil and law abiding. It's not uncommon for a person to sucker-punch a random stranger walking by. It's not uncommon for thugs to suddenly attack and assault a person -- even in a public place (as I describe in ***The Elephant in the Room*** column above). Homicides are up (and readers may recall I talked about a brutal murder that took place not 50 yards from my work station a few months ago. I won't go into the new details I recently learned about this murder, except to say that it was savage, brutal, and depraved.) We read about killings every day. Right now, this moment, as I type this, I turn

to my phone to look at the Fox News app. I counted 48 stories total. 8 of them involved some form of violence, about 17% -- and I'm certain this was a slow news moment. It's usually much higher.

How does all of this chaos impact the rest of us?

I can't speak for others, but here is what I have noticed in myself: I now have the habit of locking my car door the moment I get in my car. It's the first thing I do. Consistently.

Also, when I am in a public place, such as a restaurant, or a mall, or at Costco, or the bank, etc., I am not on automatic pilot at all. I am not lost in my thoughts. I am on alert -- hyper-alert. I am watching the people around me, both those in close proximity and those farther away. Part of this is due to my interest in people-watching in general. But part of it is for another, much darker, reason. The state of affairs of this world at this time is such that I am actively looking for what might be an active shooter, or a violent hooligan.

Even when I am walking down the street, when I see people walking in my direction I assume that such a person might sucker-punch me (even though I understand the reality is this: the odds of that happening are rather low.) So in my mind, I am in a state of readiness in the off-chance that I am attacked. I think in terms of being ready to throw a hard block against their punch, of leaning away from the trajectory of their blow (what martial artists refer to as a "zone of sanctuary," or of otherwise maneuvering in an evasive manner, and then launching a fierce counter-attack.

People might surmise I am wasting a lot of energy worrying about something that has only minuscule chances of happening. But that's no longer true. Shootings or other acts of violence happen much more frequently than in the past. Assaults are far more commonplace than before. Therefore, I am willing to sacrifice the luxury of calm and tranquility and instead put the necessary mental energy into a state of readiness so that if something horrid were to happen, I might have a jump on the situation by reacting a bit faster than others who are lost in their thoughts.

Is it worth it? Is it worth giving up the tranquility and calm I might enjoy in favor of a state of readiness that has me on edge? Yes, it is worth it because a mall shooting is a dealbreaker. It's not like the unpleasantness of getting audited by the IRS where you find it a big hassle. It's not like losing a friend because that friend has disdain for your politics. It is a life-or-death moment and therefore, I'm willing to

sacrifice the calm and tranquility I would have liked to enjoy in favor of having an edge in terms of readiness that others may not have.

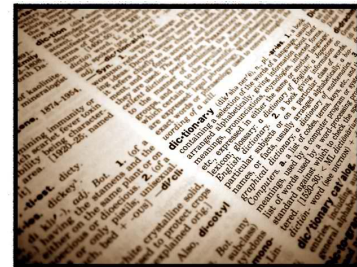
And I should hasten to add that I do not undergo any undue stress or anxiety. I'm not paranoid. I am simply realistic to the zeitgeist of the times. None of this means I am immune to harm. But it bends the odds in my favor that I will more likely survive many types of attacks.

Readiness has its costs. But it also has its benefits. And I believe the benefits outweigh the costs.

The World of Words

Slathered

Building Your Power of Expression



Slather, v.

Pronunciation: ślaTHər

Meaning: To spread or smear.

Usage:

- *He slathered the gravy over his dish, flooding the circumference of the entire plate to the point of overflowing!*
- *I'll be ready in just another minute; I have to slather some beauty cream on my hands and face.*
- *Good God, man! You're not supposed to slather it everywhere! Just use small drops on the surface!*

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