

Why You Should Stop Putting People in a Box

I read a news story today that completely wrecked me. That's not entirely true, it was in fact the accompanying YouTube clip that turned me into a blubbing mess.

It was a story on Donald Gould and his beautiful gift of music, you can read the article and watch the clip [here](#):

Other than the beautiful music, what struck me was the wording of this article, in particular the headline: Homeless Man Donald Gould Amazes locals with beautiful piano performance.

Oh how we love to categorize!

I get it. Headlines are meant to grab, they're meant to pique your interest, and pique it did. But leaving behind the context of media, isn't this exactly what we do in 'everyday' life?

'She's a single mom ...'

'He's a drug addict ...'

'They're alcoholics ...'

'He's been in jail ...'

'She's an adulteress ...'

'He's got cancer ...'

'She's bulimic ...'

We define by scandal.

We define by difficulty.

We take the lowest point of a person's life and if not indefinitely, at least for a time, we define them by this life stage.

Quick disclaimer: I know that my clustering of these labels may cause offense, it's not intended to. I myself have been a

single mum, this certainly was not my lowest point or even a low point. For me it was the polar opposite—the ignition of redemption! It was, however, still a label people used to define me at that time. The above labels were chosen simply for example purposes only, and in no way am I trying to link or compare any of the labels to each other. A gifted or eloquent writer would be able to paint a picture for their reader without the need for clunky disclaimers. I am neither, so clunky it is.

I don't think for a even a second that there's any malice behind this kind of labeling for the majority of us who have caught ourselves (myself included) doing this. I think it's just how we relate, how we memorize. We search our memory cache and we fit people comfortably into their allotted space.

There's a few problems with this though, the glaringly obvious one being that people change!

We all have a story. We all have a complex series of events, chosen or otherwise, that have led us the place we find ourselves in today. But unless you drop dead right upon this sentence, and it is my sincere hope and prayer that you do not, your story is incomplete. There is much still unwritten!

A pregnant woman does not forever remain pregnant, nor is she described as such. She hopefully goes on to birth more of her story, to add to it, to introduce a new character, a character who will evolve, entwine, enrich, expand and add complexity to the initial story, a story that was never really initial, but instead merely the flow-on from another's story, and theirs before it, and so on.

This is how we must view our fellow journey persons; as incomplete stories, great and intricate works in progress. After all, isn't this how we would have others view us?

I am greater than my lowest lows.

I am more than the collective sum of my mistakes.

I am more than my highest highs.

It takes divine grace to see ourselves for what we can and will be. It takes that same grace to see others the same way.

Given that I have a not-so-secret penchant for clunky, here's my rewrite of the above headline:

"Donald Gould amazes community with his musical gift, proves there's always more than meets the eye!"

What headlines will you rewrite today?

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