

Neither Here Nor There

Nobody asked but ...

We are desperate for labels and niches. In an ever-changing world, we humans want consistency, certainty, warmth, guarantee, comfort, predictability, safety, and assurances. We often partially calm the whirlwind by convincing ourselves that we are in a protected shelter, labelled “safe,” a niche we can call our own. When we find a shelter, we can become very chauvinistic about it.

Some of the labels, niches we strive for are those of political identity. Are we right, middle, or left? Are we religious, agnostic, or atheistic? Do we wear school colors, or those of a professional sports team? How many of us wear tee shirts and hoodies with the names of exotic places, where we have vacationed? Are our closets full of designer clothes with logos? Are those closets in homes that make statements about social status.

I must admit that I am a product of a culture that lets its freak flag fly, yet that culture makes such a fetish of it as to create normal appearing gangs. Almost any day, you may see me wearing the blue of the University of Kentucky or the green of Ireland or the black of the New Zealand All Blacks national rugby team. You may hear me claiming small-l libertarianism, or voluntarism, non-partisanship, or even anarchism. I will readily confess to being a philosopher, a farmer, a software engineer, an educator, a bookworm, a railfan, a lighthouse aficionado, and a polymath. But I will reject being known as only one of any of these.

As you can see, no one person is captured by a single label or group. But politicians, news media, and the least secure among us find it a lazy shortcut to group and label individuals into collectives. This richly diverse country is now being riven by exploiters to destroy our heritage of individualism, to make us all toe the lines of various self-serving collectives. The current wave is to get everyone to think of themselves as rightwingers or radical lefties. If persons can be convinced of the urgency of this, over time we will become two armed camps, certain that there is no room for individuality. Some would have us believe that there are only republicans and democrats. All other distinctions are insubstantial and are only explained as gradations of democrats or republicans. The old saying goes, “there are two types of people in the world; those who divide people into two groups, and those who do not.”

I challenge anyone to find any human who fits only into one or the alternative oversimplified, misrepresented category.

— Kilgore Forelle