

Quinnly Raducha
graducha@une.edu
Prof. Paterson
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The Unfolding of Identity

"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken." Oscar Wilde.

When we accept an imposed identity, we are acknowledging and adopting the identity others assign us. It could be based on characteristics like race, ethnicity, nationality, or a person's past, and it can negatively affect how we see ourselves. In Patrick Stumps' "We Liked You Better Fat: Confessions of A Pariah," we see how he struggles to deal with people holding his eighteen-year-old identity to him as an older person. It depends on who you are if you decide to accept what identity you have been given, or to steer away from that identity, like Trevor Noah describes in "Born A Crime." When we reject an imposed identity, we disagree or disassociate ourselves from the identity others are trying to give us. A large part of steering away from an imposed identity is self-discovery. When you are able to define your own identity and express how you disagree with what identity you have been given, you are rejecting that forced identity.

Being given a forced identity is more likely when in the public eye, and what that also comes with is having to deal with the forced identity in the public eye. Dealing with an identity others give you behind closed doors allows you to deal with it yourself without thousands of opinions from others.

In the essay "We Liked You Better Fat: Confessions of A Pariah," Patrick Stump deals with social judgment of him leaving Fall Out Boy to become a solo artist. Throughout the essay Stump talks about how he dealt with the hate from fans who did not like him because they were all stuck on who he was at eighteen years old. At eighteen, Fall Out Boy produced an album that did really well. But when he wanted to start a career as a solo artist, people did not like that, and

they liked him the way he was when he was a part of the band. As Stump says, “The reality is that for a certain number of people, all I’ve ever done, all I ever will do, and all I ever had the capacity to do worth a damn was a record I began recording when I was 18 years old.” Stump also talks about how he had been going through a hard time and ended up gaining a lot of weight but ended up losing the weight and was excited to get on stage and show them the man he is proud of. However, he did not expect the reaction he received from fans: “What I wasn’t prepared for was the fervor of the hate from people who were ostensibly my own supporters (or at least supporters of something I had been part of).” He dealt with the hate of people saying, “We liked you better fat.” This essay represents how Stump had to deal with this new identity in the public eye where people made him feel not good enough, rather than dealing with it behind closed doors where he was proud of his new and improved self. Being in the public eye has the power to change how you see yourself.

When we learn to steer away from a forced identity we tend to go into the journey of self-discovery. Without the opinions of others, we are able to figure out who we truly are.

In “Born a Crime” by Trevor Noah, He highlights the struggle of navigating a racially divided society. But rather than accepting the limitations that he must fit into one category, he resists that categorization and embraces the fact that he has a unique position, which does not fit perfectly into either side of the racial divide. In the essay, Noah supports how his life forced him to be by himself which created this way of self-discovery and finding out how likes to be alone and that he can be his own best friend. “I wasn’t a lonely kid—I was good at being alone. I’d read books, play with the toy that I had, make up imaginary worlds. I lived inside my head.” (Noah, 2016). Throughout Noah’s “Born a Crime,” he resists the categorization that society is giving him and that leads him through a journey of self-discovery. Noah's relationship with his mother, Patricia, is also a theme in how he goes on with life. “My mom did what school didn't.

She taught me how to think.” (Noah, 2016) He shows how love can encourage self-growth by teaching people lessons about others' humanity and creating relationships in which people can fulfill their potential.

For me, my parents never gave me any idea that I couldn't do whatever I wanted to do or be whomever I wanted to be. This type of support they gave me shaped me into wanting to be a formula 1 journalist. Throughout the years of my dream to work in Formula 1, I have dealt with the shocked answers of people who I shared my dream with. Most of them are taken back by what I have said and always ask how that started. While it does not bother me to answer the question of how that dream got started, the stunned looks on people's faces are what makes me question my dream. Women in motorsport is not something as common as seeing a man in motorsport. A part of me wants to change that. I want to be a woman in a male dominated sport. Only recently a Formula 1 team hired a woman race engineer. She is now the first women race engineer in formula 1 and it is 2025. Most boys my age, if I ever mention Formula 1, will start asking me questions about the sport, not in a way that they are interested in but in a way that they want to test my knowledge as if they don't expect a woman to be interested in the sport. When I look back on these questions, I think of how different it would be if it was a man standing in front of them sharing their dream. Women in motorsport are labeled as people who are not fit to be in what is called a “Male dominated sport.” These labels have affected my identity today. They make me question if I will be able to achieve my dream of working in motorsport. Being able to relate to these readings showed me how almost all of us are given an identity throughout our lives.

Throughout all these essays about dealing with your past or trying to steer away from limitations. Reading other people's stories about a given identity makes you able to realize you are not alone in these situations. You have the power to discover who you are without the opinion of others.

Once you are able to navigate life without an identity that may haunt you from your past or try and fit you into a category, you will be able to look in the mirror and love who is looking back at you, knowing nobody has the right to give you an identity but yourself.

Sources:

Noah, Trevor. *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*
Spiegel & Grau, 2016

Stump, Patrick. *We Liked You Better Fat: Confessions of A Pariah*
Alternative Press, 2012