

8th April 2021

Maladjusted

“Gentlemen, include me out.”

Sam Goldwyn

Resigning from the Motion Picture Producers and Distributers of America, 1933

Whatever the reasons for Samuel Goldwyn’s resignation, I have always been taken with his clever use of English. What appears to be a “malapropism” is, in fact, a powerful statement of intent. Whatever you think of me, he’s saying, here’s what I think of you – from now on I choose to be counted among those who are *outside* this organisation and not within it, to be included among those who are out there and not in here.

It hard to choose to be outside something that appears to be successful, normal and inclusive. It takes courage to stand outside society’s accepted norms, for example. But where would we be without those who have done just that: from Suffragettes to Gay Rights; from equal pay for women to institutional racism; from anti-slavery campaigners to prison reform? There are those to whom we own a huge debt of gratitude because they have lived by the mantra “Include me out” when being “in” was to accept injustice, discrimination and inequality.

Martin Luther King described it as being “maladjusted”, and in an address to the Western Michigan University in 1963, said this:

There are certain things in ... which I am proud to be maladjusted and which I hope all [people] of good-will will be maladjusted ... I say very honestly that I never intend to become adjusted to segregation and discrimination. I never intend to become adjusted to religious bigotry. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism, to self-defeating effects of physical violence ... It is no longer the choice between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence ...

I stand on the side of peace and not war, acceptance and not discrimination, inclusiveness and not bigotry, equity for all and not privilege for the few. If that makes me maladjusted like Martin Luther King, then I think I’ll keep saying, “include me out” too.

A prayer for today

Loving God, you can count on me to be inclusive in sharing your love. Amen.

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