

Merit, but in whose eyes!

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Many of us have reflected over the shock passing of Professor Jason Arday. It has been over a week, since he passed, and I have seen various discussions and dedications, mostly respectful, but some horrible and unacceptable ones as well. He had nearly 250 articles published about him, by media, in 22 days. They were nearly all, against him. People, especially media, forgot that he was a human being and were relentless in their prosecution of him. I wonder if any of these people looked within themselves and thought the old saying “let one who has not sinned cast the first stone”. They all were, almost certainly, perfect individuals

It is a standard requirement that all appointments, especially academic ones, should be made on merit. I agree with that, but there is a “but,” at least in my eyes. I wonder who decides what merit is, because I have seen situations, mainly within the national health service, where merit is a nod or a shake of the head. It is a whisper into someone’s ear, or phone calls being made unofficially in the evening, in which backslapping amongst the “in” crowd takes place. I have seen it happen in 2026. So merit and meritocracy basically depends on who makes the decisions on a given issue. Even when strict criteria and rules are followed, these can be bent, to accommodate the desired individual.

In an almost reverse argument, if Cambridge wanted to break the rules in appointing Professor Arday, for his “out of the box” thinking, why should they not. That is how we encourage diversity, of thought, and everything. True diversity.

If merit is not an issue, or we can find a way to ensure that merit is level between candidates, then there is something else. That is about classification. Many people who committed all sorts of offences, even crimes, have been discussed in our media, but how many of them had so much written about them for perhaps even a more severe cause, in so few days. So this is about the level of classification of an individual. It appears to me that Jason Arday was taken up by everyone in the media, some more and than others, like a toy to be trifled with. It reminded me of Roman gladiators and people being thrown to the lions while the crowd enjoyed and feasted, while all the time, a poor human being was being torn apart. Are we just like that Roman society? Are we also approaching our

end? Like they did? Many of us who speak sweetly and well, on the outside, enjoy seeing people being pulled down and mistreated. Our social media feed has often demonstrated cruelty, which is so difficult to see.

Seven years and a few months ago, George Floyd (RIP) died in the USA. It led to an uproar the world over. This is another moment just like that. But this is happening here, at home, our home, in the UK. We need to look into ourselves, quickly, and act. Each one of us. Don't wait for the government. That is like abrogating our personal responsibility.

There have been many professionals within the National Health Service who have been held back, even mistreated by NHS organisations, people who worked very hard without recognition, and faced discrimination of all sorts. When I had enquired about these issues, all I found was silent walls that pushed back, including those who I thought were my "friends". This is where I question our society! Merit, but in whose eyes!! It's all a matter of opinion.

It has also come to realise, that what the outside world thinks of you matters little. So let bad, and good things flow off you, like water off a duck's back.

Rest in peace, Professor Jason Arday.