

Being Unique

Why the Rebels,
the Odd Ones Out, and
the Crazy Ones Always Win!

by

Jim Carroll

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OBLIO Press, www.obliopress.com

Carroll, Jim, 1959-

Being Unique / Jim Carroll

ISBN: 978-1-0694693-2-8

Production Credits

Editor: Christa Carroll

Cover Design: Jim Carroll, Willie Carroll

Table of Contents

Foreword	7
The Crazy Ones	13
Being Different	19
The Story of Oblio	27
The Science of Uniqueness	37
The Link Between Curiosity and Uniqueness	45
The Power of Unique Thinking	55
MBI	71
Unique Rebellions	79
Sustaining and Fortifying Uniqueness: The Manual for Staying Weird	93
Why Uniqueness Wins in the Global Market	103
The Future Belongs to the Bold, the Unique, and the Different!	113
About The Author	119

Foreword

This is not a book that discusses the topic of AI at all—yet it is powerfully important in this era of AI. That is because learning the power of being unique—and knowing how to stay unique—might become the most important skill you develop!

I started taking the first steps to writing this book in the fall of 2022, about the same time our world and future changed as ChatGPT exploded onto the scene. Since then, the acceleration of AI technology, the impact it has on our skills and breadth of knowledge, and on our future career trajectory has forever changed.

If one thing has become evident, the magic of AI also leads to a crushing sameness—in the way that people think, act, learn, express themselves, share their thoughts and develop their ideas.

When everyone is empowered with the same magic, is there any magic to be had?

When I set out to write this book, I did not have the idea of AI in mind. Through four years of writing and rewrites, edits and more edits, I resisted the temptation to turn into a scribe against AI, as an antidote to the impact of AI, and as a pathway to escape the sameness of AI.

And yet, maybe that is exactly what it is.

Back in August 2016, when some deeply personal circumstances demanded that I return to the sanity of the uniqueness that lay within my soul, I began to write my Daily Inspiration. It is something that I continue to this day in June 2026. I have not missed one workday, a point of personal pride.

Looking back, it is evident that a big part of that series has been the idea of uniqueness and that I have returned to this theme more than any other.

It has never been an accident. It has always been an obsession! Here is a sampling of the exact lines I have published over those years—the same thinking that eventually found its way into this book:

- ◆ Be defiant. No one succeeds through conformity! (2018)
- ◆ Conformity kills creativity! Don't try to fit in—make your own space! (2021)
- ◆ Conformity is usually the last gasp of a failed commitment to creativity! (2021)
- ◆ Nothing great was ever achieved through conformity. To thine own uniqueness be true! (2021)
- ◆ Never underestimate the opportunity that comes from being unique! (2022)
- ◆ When everyone else is doing something, do a different thing! (2022)
- ◆ If success depends on the company you keep, choose a few oddballs, rebels, failures and freaks! (2022)
- ◆ Some people conform. Innovative people rebel! (2023)
- ◆ When everyone is thinking alike, do your own thinking! (2023)
- ◆ In a world of lemmings, be the unicorn! (2024)
- ◆ Being unique will get you to your future faster! (2024)
- ◆ Find out what makes you different. Do more of it! (2024)
- ◆ Rebel today. Define tomorrow. (2024)
- ◆ Don't be afraid to be known as the 'crazy one!' (2024)
- ◆ No one deserves to be like everyone else! (2024)
- ◆ Conformity is a curse on creativity, a creator of complacency! (2024)
- ◆ When everyone is running one way, run the other way. (2024)

- ◆ Be the person that sees the opportunities that others cannot see! (2024)
- ◆ Your inner oddness is not a flaw. It is a superpower! (2024)
- ◆ What makes you unique is what will make you successful! (2025)
- ◆ Unapologetic uniqueness: conformity is where tomorrow's greatness goes to die. (2026)

Read those quotes that defined each Daily Inspiration. There is a consistent thread running through all of them.

Conformity is the enemy. Not just of creativity, not just of innovation—but of the future itself. I have watched organizations, careers, and entire industries hollow themselves out by doing what everyone else was doing, at the exact moment they needed to be doing something different!

The safe path, I kept writing, is now the riskiest route. When everyone is running in the same direction, the opportunity is always in the other direction.

These were not motivational platitudes. They were observations from three decades of watching how breakthroughs actually happen and from watching how the failure to break through actually happens too.

The argument I kept circling back to was simpler than it might appear. If you are doing exactly what everyone else is doing, you are not innovating, you are copying. You will arrive at tomorrow at exactly the same time as everyone else, which, in a world accelerating this fast, means you will arrive too late.

The unique thinker, the oddball, the rebel who refuses to conform—that person sees what others cannot yet see, and gets there before the crowd even knows there is somewhere to go. Unique people do not just survive change, they define the change that everyone else scrambles to catch up to.

What surprised me, as the years of posts accumulated, was how the argument kept sharpening itself. It moved from a creative argument—be different, think differently—toward something harder-edged and more urgent.

Uniqueness, I came to believe, is an acceleration strategy.

It is not about being quirky or artistic. It is about getting to the future faster than the people and organizations around you, those who are too busy fitting in to notice the future has already arrived.

As I complete this book in an era where AI has given everyone the same tools, the same information, and increasingly the same output, that argument feels less like an observation and more like a warning.

Your ability to be unique might be the very thing that saves you in this moment of sameness!

Don't be like everyone else.

Be your own self!

—Futurist Jim Carroll—

July 2026

The Crazy Ones



The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.



It is probably one of the most brilliant observations of all time. Part of the 1997 Apple advertising campaign, narrated by Steve Jobs, it made a very valid point!

BE DIFFERENT

“Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They’re not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can’t do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.”

It was certainly an accurate assessment! In one short paragraph, it manages to capture everything that lies at the fundamental importance of “being different.”

It is a celebration of nonconformists: “*Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers*” which recognizes and

honours those who do not fit into the traditional norms and at the heart of it suggesting that being different is not only acceptable but commendable. Being different matters!

Being different involves challenging all the traditional standards. *"The round pegs in the square holes"* manages to get across that innovative thinkers are clearly those who do not fit within the traditional boundaries defined by the society around them.

Why? Because they have unique perspectives, they are *"the ones who see things differently,"* which highlights the fact that it is the ability to have a diverse viewpoint that is so critical. What is at the foundation of that type of thinking? A total disregard for conformity! *"They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo."* It is pretty clear that it is the natural tendency of innovative individuals to challenge and redefine existing norms and conventions.

How do others view them? Most rebels know they are up against an often impermeable wall of conformity of those who view them with suspicion, worry and concern. *"You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them."* And in that vein, it captures the idea that regardless of what you think about them, it is the rebels, the misfits and outliers who have a significant impact on the future regardless of how their actions are perceived by others.

That is because they are agents of change. *"Because they change things. They push the human race forward."* These unconventional thinkers invent things, move society forward, chase new ideas, and accomplish more than their fair share of great things. And that is why it is important to see them for who they are: *"... while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius."*

They might be crazy, but wow are they important! It is undeniable that they have an impact because they believe in the power that they hold. *"Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do."* That simple statement encapsulates the whole message by suggesting that it takes extraordinary belief and ambition to bring about real change.

This manifesto captures the essence of innovative and creative thinking. When you take it apart, you realize that it is a celebration of those who dare to think and act differently, and a reminder that these are often the people who drive the most significant changes in our world. The message encourages embracing unconventional thinking and the pursuit of bold ideas, which is fundamental for advancement in any field.

We cannot force ourselves to be different. But we can begin to learn about why it is so important, and how we might best use the unique differences that might make up our mental DNA.

The Unique Mindset of Steve Jobs

There is just so much wisdom to be found in the things that Steve Jobs has said, the attitudes he has carried, and the mindset that drove his passion—all of which somehow relate to the idea that he was truly unique.

What is it that was unique about him and what can you learn from this uniqueness? Dig into just a few of the nuggets of insight that he has shared over the years.

A unique ability to challenge yourself with change:

“For the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: ‘If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?’ And whenever the answer has been ‘No’ for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something.”

Acknowledge that there is never any right answer:

“Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle.”

As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it."

Understanding the importance of disruptive change:

"I've always been attracted to the more revolutionary changes. I don't know why. Because they're harder. They're much more stressful emotionally. And you usually go through a period where everybody tells you that you've completely failed."

A unique perspective on the power of deep personal failure:

"Getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life."

Belief in your path:

"You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something—your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life."

The uniqueness of powerful determination:

"I'm convinced that about half of what separates successful entrepreneurs from the non-successful ones is pure perseverance."

The unique power to believe in your inner self:

“Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow know what you truly want to become.”

The unique power to bounce back:

“Sometimes life is going to hit you in the head with a brick. Don’t lose faith.”

The unique power of being true to your unique self:

“Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma—which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition.”

And last but not least, the most important goal of being unique came about when he said:

“I want to put a ding in the universe.”

Being unique?

It means putting your own ding in the universe.