

Is Linux Linux?

Contributed by Michael Felt

Linux is Linux - so they say. People say that Linux is Linux - implying that Linux within itself is more UNIX than UNIX is. I am tending to disagree.

I have been active on various UNIX flavors since 1979 with the focus on AIX flavor since 1996.

In the early 80's we spoke of vanilla or generic UNIX - and in that sense UNIX is almost UNIX and Linux is Linux. In other words, in the earlier days there were different flavors of UNIX - generic UNIX, although spoken of - did not really exist until POSIX definitions came along. There has always been one standard for what defines the core of Linux the reality of Linux is the distribution.

"I am tending to disagree with the statement 'Linux is Linux'"I played with Linux distributions in the 90's - 1997 and 1998 - slackware was my preferred distribution as I really liked that it could be installed in less than 20 Mbytes of disk space. As new distributions came with the focus, seemingly, on trying to replace windows as a desktop I lost interest. Those distributions took more resources from a laptop/desktop than I had to spare. Clearly I could not accomplish what I needed to do for my work. But that is history, and told now only as a historical perspective.

Today - in the real world, Linux is being used for large enterprise solutions and the other UNIX flavors (i.e., it feels like AIX is the last UNIX standing) versions are fading. So, while - before - I could safely ignore Linux for most things, now, as a professional, I need to know more about current the current state of Linux. As I study Linux I learn that while Linux may be Linux - in the same sense that UNIX is POSIX - noone learns either Linux or UNIX - you learn a distribution.

As this is meant to be short BLOG - I shall continue my beliefs later. For now I have learned enough to know that I cannot trust the statement from someone who says they are a "Linux expert" - I need to ask which distribution(s) they claim to be expert in - just as I know a UNIX specialist could have any combination of (alphabetical) AIX, HPUX, Solaris, etc. expertise..