

DAREL

why is it i love school? you wonder why i love school, a prison of fake smiles, friends and drama, whose chant for the finish drags me to keep attending, the indescribable amount of stress it brings is more than i've ever encountered. and i love letting these obstacles get me behind in school work.

you wonder why it is i love school, i love to be meaninglessly dragged into drama against my will, i love watching people fight over nonessential reasons, i love to see their dearest friends recording and witnessing their buddy get kicked out of school, and when a question emerges about their presence at the altercation the friend acts as if he needs to be in school more and i love letting these obstacles get me behind in school work.

you wonder why it is i love school, i love stressing over if my girlfriend is having second thoughts on our relationship, i love the feelings of butterflies in my stomach, i love the feeling of not being able to text my lover while in class with out being told "PUT THE PHONE AWAY DAREL!" and when i go to class dejected because of my squabble with her and i love letting these obstacles get me behind in school work.

i love the pressure of being embarrassed to answer a question out loud, the fear of being intimidated by classmates for being dumb i love the thought of the girl i liked guffawing at me in her cute little corner i love being asked to try again after i have gotten the answer wrong, just to be tormented again and i love letting these obstacles get me behind in school work.

you wonder why it is i love school, and why i love letting these obstacles get me behind in school work.

it's because i'm a teenager.

poem and photo by darel williams

WILLIAMS



On his 18th birthday, over 25 cars full of Jaden Shemesh's friends drove by his house so he could celebrate while socially distanced. | photo courtesy jaden shemesh

Jaden Shemesh is keeping things **moving**

Senior year is stressful, fun, chaotic, nostalgic, disappointing, satisfying and 100 other emotions, but most prominently, senior year is memorable. Quarantine, at least personally, has been stressful, fun chaotic, nostalgic, disappointing, satisfying and 100 other emotions, and similarly, is going to be a prominent memory for the rest of my life. Therefore, it is arguably fitting that this would accompany the end of my senior year.

Like many, I am currently meandering through a range of emotions: apathy, joy, appreciation, dissatisfaction, anger, depression and more (sometimes all at once). On some days I am productive, but on most I am not.

I'm happy to be around my sisters and parents most of the time, but sometimes I want to lock my bedroom door and never leave. I binge-watched "Tiger King" in about a day, but most days I feel too bored to even watch anything. Some days have structure, others consist solely of me in my thoughts. I usually tell myself, "My homework will eventually get done, but not tonight." My mind goes everywhere and nowhere, all at once.

At first, I pictured myself being productive. I researched free college classes I could take and new hobbies to pick up, but eventually I just dropped all of that for YouTube. Soon after, however, my dad's small business

needed help. I began devoting much of my time to helping him. My boredom turned to lingering stress.

In addition to helping my dad, I started delivering for DoorDash. Ensuring that my sealed mask, gloves, sanitizer and wipes are always prepared in my car was a hassle, but it has become my new normal. The job is much less stressful, but it can be very frustrating to hear so many comments such as "thank you for helping out," and then get no tips from the very same people.

Some days I make way more than minimum wage, but other days it feels I'm wasting my time. Nonetheless, it keeps me busy and mostly happy, so I'm thankful for having the job.

My experiences haven't all been so gloomy, however. I'd like to briefly share one positive moment that has come out of this quarantine. Not many would picture their ideal 18th birthday as one without any friends, trapped at home with a family they've grown somewhat annoyed with, but that was how I envisioned April 6. I kept putting off the thought of how sad the day would be, and I kept trying to be the positive, yet slightly passive aggressive Jaden that people recognize.

However, when I walked outside of my house to find a parade of over 25 cars of

friends lined up in my neighborhood, I had never felt more loved. Friends from the last 18 years of my life showed up to wish me a happy birthday (even as the police were called on them)!

If that wasn't enough, my parents and sisters decorated our backyard and threw me a "Club Quarantine" birthday party. It was truly the best birthday I've ever had, and I'm sure I'll never forget the amount of love and warmth I felt during such a dreary, tragic time in our lives.

In moments like these, where we are most distant from one another, we have the opportunity to connect with those around us and feel more loved than ever. Rather than stay isolated (virtually), reach out to that friend you haven't spoken to in a few years. Ask your second cousin how she's doing.

Earth has given us as close to a pause on life as we're going to get, and it is OK to feel whatever you're feeling. But don't forget that there is still a whole lot of love on this planet and you have an opportunity to spread it.

On a less emotional note, DM me @jaden_shemesh for cooking recipes because I've become addicted to air frying in the last few weeks!

essay by jaden shemesh