

Pressurized: An Exploration of Identity through Personal Essays

Identity: the personal characteristics which make up, and imbue, all of us. The many identities author Jared Povanda inhabits—son, brother, friend, student, writer—make him who he is, and give him a unique perspective with which to analyze the world. In his writing, Jared examines his aggression, loneliness, chronic pain, and the ways in which he views his body, all to get to the heart of the question: “How much pressure can I stand before I break?”

Inspired by a caldera—a geographic depression which forms after a volcano explodes and the ground falls away underneath—Jared knew he needed to explore the volatile situations he has faced thus far in his life. An eruption is an incredibly pressurized event, but after a caldera is formed, and after the world stabilizes again, does that pressure simply dissipate? He is fascinated by this metaphor, especially as he stands on the threshold of adulthood.

Identity is always shifting, and the roles individuals pick up and put on can easily change, be discarded, or evolve as time progresses. To that end, Jared has written three interconnected personal essays for his senior project to try to offer a multifaceted view of his identity. Each essay confronts a different emotion, but all are bound by commonalities such as fear, uncertainty, and stress.

Flourishing as a writer and as a person, Jared wants to continue to develop the identities he holds dear, while also hoping to cultivate new identities as he enters his mid-twenties and grows further into himself. These personal essays, *Caldera*, *My Pain Is*, and *Cyclopes in the Sky*, illuminate parts of who Jared is in 2017, but each essay also offers glimpses into the future man he is primed to become.