

Yellow Joy
By Ella Seymour

The last six months since January of 2020 have been a handful of cascading events, one after another. All of them together have changed the way I think about things that happen all around me. I didn't have a very positive attitude before quarantine, and the smallest things would bother me- my sock becoming misplaced, or the butter being frozen when I wanted it to be soft, silly things like that. There were also the more reasonable things to get upset about, like it being cloudy on a beach day, or dropping my favorite sweater in the grimey public bathroom. Yet there were nearly always things to be happy about, even if I didn't notice them right away.

This summer wasn't exactly bad, but it also wasn't really good, in terms of it being 2020, and being 90 degrees half the time. You always want your days to feel as though it will be the best one of your life, but some days you have a feeling it won't be the best. That was what happened one day in July this summer. I had spent the two previous, sleepless nights on my aunt's stiff couch. We started out our day, before 11 in the morning, by going to a little pond to swim and kayak. Of course right as we arrived, a thick layer of cloud cover appeared out of thin air. I felt a pit growing in my stomach, like more and more of it was falling down my throat and pouring into a pile at the bottom, like we shouldn't have gone. The feeling was subtle, yet somehow screaming to me repeatedly we shouldn't have gone.

I de-layered and slumped down to the water's edge over the stick-scattered sand. As it slowly grew more crowded, we were forced to move off the beach and towards the woods so as to not come close to anyone. I stood still in the rippling with my arms crossed in front of me and my shoulders hunched. I tried to ignore the brisk water, observing the people around me, children with adults. I envied the five year olds persistence to have so much fun. I obsessed over the idea of my warm towel and seat heaters in my aunt's car. All the while, a girl swimming over to my left had nothing but a smile on her face. She was on the dog beach, with less sand and more rocks, swimming with her black lab. There was a very joyful essence about her. She wore a bright yellow swimsuit, which was impossible to ignore. Her smile and suit went hand in hand with what I really remember.

All I knew was that if I was in her shoes, I wouldn't have been as happy as she seemed. After that, I slowly realized that my complaints and troubles were petty. Realizing that the way I react in any situation is up to me, and however I do react, is how I will remember that moment. Now whenever I see the color yellow, it reminds me to stay positive, even when something is slightly off. I have looked back on the previous months quite a bit recently. The last 5 months since our trip to that little pond, my memories have been more positive. Reflecting back on your own thoughts and reactions in the past can be strange, uncomfortable even. Especially when you look back on a different version of yourself that wasn't yourself. Yet since I have been, I've been happier, it wasn't as painful as I thought it was going to be. Even when things don't go your way, you can make your memories joyful. It may take some looking back on your past self, and refraining from screaming at them. I did it, it's possible.