



The Hallways of Denial



Dr. Darrien Jamar

FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



I can't say that I was ever one of those students who lingered in the hallways of school. A younger version of myself might have explained it as evidence of being a good student—punctual, respectful of my teachers' time, and careful to avoid a tardy. And while I believe those things were true, I now recognize there was something else underneath them: something darker, and less pleasing to admit. I was uncomfortable lingering in the halls. The hallways, in many ways, represented my fear of being seen—and my uncertainty about whether I could handle certain interactions when I was.

Perhaps that is why I find myself thinking about hallways now. They are places we move through. Places of transition. Places between where we were and where we are going.

So, as you roam through this newsletter, I invite you to take your time. Grab a cup of coffee, tea, or my favorite—sparkling water—and enjoy.

Denial is the overarching theme of this issue, but within these pages you'll encounter stories of resilience, redirection, growth, and becoming. You'll meet some of the people who continue to bring the heart and spirit of The 3:20 Scholarship to life, and you'll be invited to consider what these experiences might have to say about your own.

And finally, thank you. Thank you for your openness to examining the hallways of your own experience. My prayer is that, somewhere along the way, you encounter a fuller version of yourself—a version made possible by your courage to hold space for denial and the other unsettling experiences that shape us.

Remember: a better you = a better world. It is a pleasure to grow with you.

↓ In this newsletter you will find:

stories of denial, unexpected growth, new beginnings, and the courage to become ***immeasurably more.***



From Scholar to Mentor-Coach

A 2025 graduate of Arcadia High School, Alisha began her collegiate career at the University of Virginia last fall, where she is pursuing a degree in kinesiology. She was one of seven scholars selected during one of our most competitive application seasons to date.

This year, Alisha is stepping into a new role within The 3:20 community: Mentor-Coach. She is the first scholar in our history to return as a Mentor-Coach, making this a particularly meaningful milestone for us. We are thrilled to welcome her into this new chapter of service.

Recently, we asked Alisha: **“When life doesn’t unfold the way you hoped, what helps you remain grounded in what’s still possible?”**

Rather than just a simple phrase, I lean on a Bible verse that has guided and reassured me throughout my first year in college. The verse is found in Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

This constantly reminds me that no matter how many trials or tribulations I go through in my life, my future is still in God’s hands, and I can always be sure of that.



ALISHA POSSIEN

Tell Me I Can’t

DAVID LANDSBERGER, DONOR

I spent my career doing what everyone told me I couldn’t do -- the very fact that I was told I would fail was the engine for my success!

For over 45 years I worked in the scientific industry world -- a world dominated by HUGE corporations. I joined my father’s company in 1973 when there were 15 or 16 people there -- and our sales were quite small. To put it in perspective, our largest customer currently has annual sales of \$45 BILLION!!! Everyone told me we were too small to play in the “big leagues”. To me that sounded like a challenge.

I won’t go into the full story -- but it involved putting together a different sort of plan and pitching it over and over to people who didn’t want to listen - until finally one person did -- and from there on we grew and grew -- when I retired we had 450 people and sales all over the world!

The message is --- if someone tells you you cannot do something -- that’s a message to try something different and try harder!





The Opportunity I Didn't See

JESSICA SHOEMAKER, FORMER MENTOR-COACH FOR THE 3:20 SCHOLARSHIP



A denied job opportunity early in my real estate career changed the trajectory of my life. I would not have had the adventures, the friendships, the education or the career I have now without that denial. Looking back 20 years later, that denial was pivotal to my growth.

My first professional role was as a market research analyst for a real estate firm. After two years in this role, I became interested in becoming a financial analyst. I diligently took real estate classes on my own time and earned good grades. After scoring well in a real estate finance class, I asked to be considered for an available financial analyst position. My request was denied. Additionally, I was required to vacate my cubicle to make room for the person they hired instead of me. I was quite angry the day that I moved my desk. Although I took additional classes and performed well, I did not have a business degree. I vowed to earn a masters degree in business administration (MBA) and qualify for a financial analyst position in the future.

I worked for the same company for an additional year. I spent the next 12 months preparing for the GMAT (entrance exam for graduate business schools) and working on graduate school applications. After I relocated cubicles, I became friends with the person who sat next to me, which was an unexpected perk of relocation!

I was admitted to the University of Wisconsin-Madison's MBA in Real Estate program. I left behind everything comfortable in Washington, DC and moved to Madison. I learned how to be a well-rounded business professional and made wonderful friends. I traveled the world on school sponsored trips, including excursions to Europe, Africa, and Asia.

While I was in graduate school, my former cubicle neighbor moved to a different real estate company. She recommended me for a financial analyst position at her new company, and I got the job. We continue to work for the same company and remain close friends.

The denial taught me that after hard work and determination are exhausted, recognize what life is presenting, make the best of it, and be open to opportunities you had not yet considered.

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WWW.THE320SCHOLARSHIP.COM



I wish you...

THAO VO, 2026-27
MENTOR-COACH

"I wish you the courage to try things before you feel ready, and the patience to trust that growth rarely moves in a straight line."

WELCOME OUR 2026-27 SCHOLARS ✨

Ashley Austin (she/her)

Arcadia High School – Class of 2026

University of Virginia

Biomedical Engineering

Garrett Pierson Daisey (he/him)

Chincoteague High School – Class of 2026

Shenandoah University

Exercise Science

Gavin Dashiell Ricci (he/him)

Northampton High School – Class of 2026

Virginia Tech

Animal Sciences

Juan Luis Gonzalez Miranda (he/him)

Arcadia High School – Class of 2026

Virginia Tech

Mechanical Engineering



I Never Felt Alone



I'TA'NASHIA JACKSON

2025-26 3:20 SCHOLAR

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

"My life has been significantly impacted by The 3:20 Scholarship."

It can be overwhelming and stressful to be a first-generation college student. Although the scholarship helped me pay for my college expenses, it also prevented me from experiencing financial hardship. I didn't have to stress about paying for textbooks, class materials, or tuition, and thanks to The 3:20 Scholarship, I didn't take on any student loans during my first year of college. My mom also benefited significantly from having me covered while attending college, as she has six other children to take care of.

The mentor I was given was another especially meaningful part of the scholarship. My mentor supported me every step of the way, particularly during my challenging fall semester. I always had someone to text, so I never felt alone. He frequently encouraged me and went above and beyond to assist me when I needed help.

I am incredibly thankful to God for this opportunity, and I also want to thank Dr. Darrien Jamar for checking in with us each month, giving us a book to read that was extremely inspiring, and being there to email me during times of difficulty.

Where Are You Looking?

PRACTICING DRISHTI



In yoga, **drishti** is a focused gaze—a point where we intentionally place our eyes and attention during practice. When everything around us feels distracting, uncertain, or unsteady, drishti invites us to return our attention to one thing. The same practice can be useful off the mat.

When you experience disappointment, denial, uncertainty, or simply one of those days when everything feels like too much, pause and ask yourself: **Where am I placing my attention?**

You may not be able to change what has happened. You may not be able to control what happens next. *But you can choose what you give your attention to in this moment.*

Try this:

1. Pause.

Take one slow, intentional breath.

2. Look.

Choose one fixed point in front of you. Let your gaze rest there.

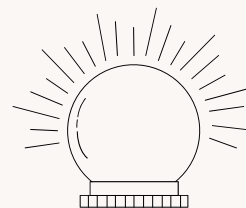
3. Notice.

What is pulling your attention away? Name it without judgment.

4. Return.

Bring your attention back to your chosen point—and then back to what is actually in front of you.

You can practice drishti anywhere: before an important conversation, while sitting in traffic, during a difficult day, or whenever your mind begins racing toward everything that could happen.



WHAT COULD \$5 DO?



\$5 MORE

SMALL GIFTS. LASTING IMPACT.



IMAGINE WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF 100 PEOPLE DECIDED TO GIVE \$5 EVERY MONTH.

That's \$500 every month.
\$6,000 every year.

Not because one person carried the weight—but because a community decided to carry it together.

Would you join us?

Give \$5 a month.

Help us continue providing scholarships, mentorship, care, and community to the next generation of Eastern Shore scholars.



"Some of us thrive because we are nurtured and encouraged, others because we are stymied, denied." -Laura Glen Louis, Man Crossing an Ice Field

Under the Heaven of Darkness

BY DR. DARRIEN JAMAR (THEY/THEM)

I'd walked by REWILD plenty of times, admiring their aesthetic and plants from the window as I rushed by. Today I was eager to add two new plants to my healing space. After entering the shop, I passed by a beautiful bird of paradise and a fiddle leaf fig. I admired other ones that seemed overly priced. When I squeezed past a group of curious teens, I instantly recognized two plants that I have at home. These two plants stood out because over the years (since 2018) they have given me the most "trouble" and anxiety. They have these random moments throughout the year when their bottom leaves will begin dying off. It's never one or two leaves, it's usually a handful for a few weeks at a time. I immediately begin to panic, thinking the plant is dying.

I shared this with the plant specialist there and she asked me follow up questions: *Is it just the bottom leaves?*

Yes, I replied.

And have you noticed if these two plants have grown taller, too, over the years?

Yes, I replied.

Oh, great. Yeah, all of that is very normal. As long as the leaves aren't dying at/from the top then that's normal and healthy. Those types will actually go from plants to trees – just like this big one over here (she points to the biggest "tree" in the store).

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I often see the little kid I once was, moving about the world. I watch as they timidly navigate school, avoiding certain social groups, learning to make themselves invisible in times when they felt most vulnerable and afraid. I see that little kid caught in a world then that was constantly pushing a culture of "boy-dom" upon them. I think about the words I didn't know I was craving to hear from my parents or anyone for that matter, words that would awaken me to a seemingly safer and brighter world.

I remember the day I opened my letters from Duke University and UVA. I rushed to the bathroom, fell to the floor, and cried out without making a sound. I'd already known fear, shame, and insecurity, but that day, I met someone new: denial.

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They were hot summers much like this one. They were the innocent days when we lived off of Twin Pops popsicles and huggies juice. After I'd tire from being around my twin siblings, I'd find reprieve over at my Grandma Hattie's. She lived in the sky blue house on Greta Road, everyone knew Grandma Hattie. It was hotter in her house than outside, so I knew she'd be in one of three places: on her porch in the rocking chair, in the gazebo in a rocking chair, or picking apples from her apple tree.

That day, I found her dressed in all white linen at her apple tree. When she'd finally look up from what she was doing, the biggest smile would spread across her face. I can still remember the day I heard her say it, I remember the place I went to in my heart, somewhere foreign, yet familial...a place that felt like home. "Ohhhhhhhhhh, you so beautiful. Come here and give me a hug." It was there that the power of her words and the love in her heart collided with everything that didn't make sense about my world. It was but a glimpse, but the picture was clear: I saw myself.

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After we washed the apples off, we'd sit together on her front porch. My legs and feet would dangle as we rocked and swayed. I'd eat as many crisp, sweet apples as my tummy could handle. Eventually, happier and full, I'd lean my head all the way back. With my eyes closed, the warm sun beaming down on my face, I found peace and solace with both the darkness behind my eyes and the comfort of my grandma Hattie's presence and words, as she retold stories I'd no doubt heard many times before.

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Those two plants are shedding again. But this time, I'm not worried. I'm encouraged. I turn to them and speak words of encouragement: "Let it go, let it go. You're growing."

I thank them for reminding me that this, too, is part of becoming more.

I finished crying, grieving the direction I thought my life would take by being accepted by two universities I had needlessly envied. I wiped my tears and got up from the bathroom floor. I tucked those letters away, and then, I wrote my own. I decided that day I would have the final say.

Looking back, I realize that I only knew one version of those apple trees. I only knew them for their seasons of bearing fruit. But they too were once plants. And before they became plants, they were simply seeds, buried under the heaven of darkness.

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