

“Be Cool to the Pizza Dude” by Sarah Adams

MICHELE NORRIS, host:

NPR is reviving the 1950s radio series "This I Believe," and we've asked for your help. We're collecting your statement of personal belief. Today, we feature our show's first listener essay. Here's the curator of the series This I Believe, independent producer Jay Allison.

JAY ALLISON reporting:

Sarah Adams told us she heard our invitation and liked the fact that everybody was included, not just heads of state and other famous Americans. Adams teaches English composition at the community college in Bremerton, Washington. She has never published or broadcast anything before, but this essay, she said, had been rattling around in her head; she just needed the assignment. Here is Sarah Adams with her essay for This I Believe.

SARAH ADAMS:

If I have one operating philosophy about life, it is this: Be cool to the pizza delivery dude. It's good luck. Four principles guide the pizza dude philosophy. Principle one: Coolness to the pizza delivery dude is a practice in humility and forgiveness. I let him cut me off in traffic, let him safely hit the exit ramp from the left lane, let him use his blinker without extending any of my digits out the window or towards my horn, because there should be one moment in my harried life when a car may encroach or cut off or pass and I let it go. Sometimes when I have become so certain of my ownership of my lane, daring anyone to challenge me, the pizza dude speeds by in his rusted Chevette. His pizza light atop his car glowing like a beacon reminds me to check myself as I flow through the world. After all, the dude is delivering pizza to young and old, families and singletons, gays and straights, blacks, whites and browns, rich and poor, and vegetarians and meat-lovers alike. As he journeys, I give safe passage, practice restraint, show courtesy and contain my anger.

Principle two: Coolness to the pizza delivery dude is a practice in empathy. Let's face it. We've all taken jobs just to have a job because some money is better than none. I've held an assortment of these jobs and was grateful for the paycheck that meant I didn't have to share my Cheerios with my cats. In the big pizza wheel of life, sometimes you're the hot bubbly cheese and sometimes you're the burnt crust. It's good to remember the fickle spinning of that wheel.

Principle three: Coolness to the pizza delivery dude is a practice in honor, and it reminds me to honor honest work. Let me tell you something about these dudes. They never took over a company and, as CEO, artificially inflated the value of the stock and cashed out their own shares, bringing the company to the brink of bankruptcy, resulting in 20,000 people losing their jobs while the CEO builds a home the size of a luxury hotel. Rather, the dudes sleep the sleep of the just.

Principle four: Coolness to the pizza delivery dude is a practice in equality. My measurement as a human being, my worth, is the pride I take in performing my job, any job, and the respect with which I treat others. I am the equal of the world not because of the car I drive, the size of the TV I own, the weight I can bench press or the calculus equations I can solve. I'm the equal to all I meet because of the kindness in my heart, and it all starts here with the pizza delivery dude. Tip him well, friends and brethren, for that which you bestow freely and willingly will bring you all the happy luck that a grateful universe knows how to return.

ALLISON: Sarah Adams, an English teacher from Port Orchard, Washington, reading her essay for This I Believe.

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