

Rites Interrupted

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I have always been a huge fan of a strong portrait and how it can tell a whole story about someone with lighting, composition, and its place in the culture of the time. When [Sam Comen](#) reached out to me with this body of work I was excited – his award-winning photographs are currently hanging at the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, and have been collected by LACMA .

This [series](#) of images resonated with me personally thanks to my seventeen-year-old graduate, dealing with this same situation. The project shows us how this collective experience is shaping this generation of kids across the US and how it will likely affect all of our futures.

Sam created Rites Disrupted while he was exploring COVID-19’s impact on our fundamental social institutions. High school graduates were entering the home stretch of their K-12 education when the pandemic derailed the pivotal rites of passage that conclude childhood in America.

Over the course of two months and with the help of numerous teachers and administrators who went above and beyond to help make this project happen, he photographed forty students in the LA region from nine high schools—public and independent, charter and magnet.

Sam writes “By placing the series with Getty Images, we can share a story of young people’s resilience at a time when deliberately uninformed or distorted narratives weigh heavily on our national conscience. These graduates have come of age in an atmosphere that questions hard science, both exposes and gaslights history, and feels the pressure of our current political climate. Their insightful interviews from quarantine revealed a sadness—but also creativity in the face of profound health crisis and defiant hope in the drive toward racial justice lighting up America.”