

Joshua Leader: Commemorative account for Lampard Inquiry

1. He was the last of four children, a surprise. He never stopped surprising us. A few times as a toddler he escaped, and would be found in the local sweetshop, or in a neighbour's home, or having clambered onto a stranger's parked motorbike, clutching the accelerators with his tiny hands. He loved crispy duck, hip-hop music, the films of Stanley Kubrick. He loved his family and we loved him. He is a chasm in us, our individual hearts.
2. Grown, he was 6 foot 1 or so, with thick dark brown hair, handsome with his long face and body, thin legs that curved out slightly. He loved Liquorice Allsorts, New York City, practical jokes, his son. Almost four years have passed and we are forgetting who he was and it feels like losing him again. He tried so many things, so many ways to live: intense exercise regimes, religions, courses of study, weird gadgets, professional paths. He was quickly bored or frustrated, and often crippled by his extreme sensitivity and empathy for others. He lived or tried to live in many places, towns and cities across England and France, in America, Kenya, Israel, Amsterdam, Peru.
3. He had a degree in graphic design, was always drawing things, produced startling and strange images. He was musically inclined and taught himself the piano. He loved Bach as performed by Glenn Gould. Every subject interested him: Orthodox Judaism, Thai-Chi, experimental music. He was sceptical at times, yet trusting, credulous. He could discuss Brutalist architecture, Bitcoin, black holes, Bhuddist theology.
4. These were more than enjoyable pass-times: they contained the possibility of lasting solutions to his troubles. They reflected – briefly - his deepest hopes and designs. He met weekly with an Orthodox rabbi to analyse and discuss Talmudic texts, meanwhile attending Buddhist ceremonies, investigating obscure herbal remedies and esoteric techniques to reprogram his brain.
5. Times spent with Josh were rarely dull. Smalltalk was rarer still. He would push you to say what you thought about something or someone, react with a critical or approving glint in his eye, then a chuckle and a comment you could never predict. His enthusiasms

were infectious, and we hoped they might have carried him onto more stable ground. His laughter – goofy, seismic -- seemed to rise up from the ground he stood on. He once diffused the tension of a family Christmas by jumping into the stagnant freezing water of a broken Jacuzzi, howling and giggling at the agony. In Peru Sam watched him relish a soup with a whole cow hoof in it, then a pie made from a rainforest guinea pig.

6. He was variable: at times joyful, other times afflicted with loathing for the world and above all for himself. He hated false, shallow people, half-measures, conventions followed for their own sake. He hated all blandness -- in people, music, food. He loved smoothies, pancakes, spaghetti with bolognese sauce.
7. Here is Josh in the kitchen cooking bolognese: he moves with precision, long arms reaching here and there. The room swells with his presence and the delicious aromas of his cooking. He loves to feed his friends and his family. His heart is full. Laughter bursts from him. He is on the good side of life. He takes you into his bosom, and you ride carelessly on the embrace of his happiness. His charisma is like a boat on a great river, wide enough to hold us all. Then, fears overcome him. He wants to protect his family. He says, " Let us all go and live in Israel. In a kibbutz. We will travel there by boat. We can heal together. We must make a decision. Things are wrong".
8. He wanted to be a billionaire, an M.C., a good dad. The baby was born at home. Joshua acted as mid-wife. His girlfriend's mother was in the kitchen, vigilant and responsible, nervously keeping watch behind the door as the contractions increased. She saw Joshua suffused with a sense of purpose as they waited for the midwife, perfectly calm and in control. She heard her daughter say, "I cannot do this!" , to which Joshua gently replied, "But you *are* doing it!". His voice carried her through as the baby was born.
9. Lack of sleep and the awareness he would have to relinquish his childhood dreams to make space to a new life soon turned his thoughts dark. A few days later he went away into the woods by himself. For three days he stayed there on his own, in a psychedelic delirium, desperate to fix his broken brain.

10. He could not be the man he needed to be. The couple disintegrated as his confusion increased. They could not hold together the mysterious threads of love, which little by little frayed and disappeared. She could not embrace Joshua's mental pirouettes, nor could he grasp the intensity of her disappointment.
11. I need to heal, he often said, but couldn't tell you from what precise injury to his soul. He could not accept his suffering was a matter of mere chemicals in the meat of his brain. He was glorious in his isolation - a loneliness we will never comprehend. He wanted answers, cures, solutions. He was relentless in his striving to overcome himself. He wanted desperately to find a way to live.
12. Now that he is gone we still so often reach for him from within ourselves. -- Josh, we want to say, I saw something today that would have made you laugh. -- Josh, we want to say when the world seems broken: I think I might know how you felt. -- Josh, we want to say, when we are lonely and it seems no one could possibly understand: I am sorry I wasn't there for you. I tried, I tried, but not enough. -- Josh, we want to say, I wish you could be here, to see this thing I'm proud of, to see your beautiful son, to laugh at this video, to taste this peach.
13. Joshua's absence echoes through our days. There is always someone not there, someone missing at the dinner table, the Christmas present roster, the WhatsApp thread. We are always waiting for his laughter, his strange perspectives. Moments of joy and pride are tinged with a feeling of loss, regret. That he might have found a way to live, that we might have -- should have -- helped him better.
14. We, his family, feel his loss in ways we cannot say, but we are also determined for something good to come of this. For the world to be a safer, more accepting place for people like him. For us, the Lampard Inquiry is part of that ambition.
15. Josh too had such large ambitions to the very end - not just for himself but for his family, his son. He was often confused and often confusing, incomprehensible, confounding. He embodied many contradictions. Sometimes he lied, but there was a rare

and disarming sincerity to him. He made friends more easily than he lost them. He continually faced institutional disbelief, indifference, even scorn. In the last month of his life he tried to go to America to volunteer at the Camphill Association of North America, a community for people with developmental disabilities. He felt that in helping others, he might help himself. He had secured a place, a plane ticket, had bought a good rucksack and clothes for all seasons. When the plan fell through he was crushed. To the very end he was looking for a way to live, even when it seemed to him impossible. He wanted to help others live. He wanted help to live.