

Man vs. Nature

I was born and raised in Philadelphia, just outside of Center City in the Roxborough and Andorra neighborhoods. It wasn't until I was in college that my family moved to Center City. I've been living in Center City for many years now, which is the reason why I became so interested in street photography in the first place. I think the city is a great place to live because you are surrounded by society, other people, faces, places, and things to do. However, I find that living in a city can become a bit challenging or too constricting on your personal freedoms. When I wake up in the morning, I am surrounded by tall skyscrapers, cars, traffic signals, crosswalks, paved roads, and lots of modern stuff such as technology, news headlines on billboards, and mostly just human-made things. I believe that because there are fewer natural things, it goes against how I believe humans are naturally designed to thrive.

Natural World

I go for a walk along the Schuylkill River Trail every single morning to start my day. I find that this is the best place to be first thing in the morning because when I head out my door, I feel confined to some sort of rat maze. However, the open spaces that the trail provides allow my thoughts to become clearer, I feel better, more powerful, happier, and just overall believe that starting the day away from the hustle and bustle of a city is the best way to live. By visiting an elevated space such as the cliffs and pavilions behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, it allows me to look out towards the horizon, nature, the river, waterfalls, trees, and green spaces. When I look out towards these beautiful natural things, I feel extremely grateful and powerful. It feels as if I can go beyond the horizon, conquer anything, and reach my fullest potential and thrive creatively. I highly suggest if you are a local here in Philadelphia to check out this spot behind the museum and just give it a look.

Also, if you keep walking towards Boathouse Row and Kelly Drive, if you cross the street, there is a Lemon Hill Trailhead. There, you can walk on a dirt path, surrounded by trees, that reminds me of the Wissahickon. It's just a stone's throw

away from Center City, and I'm surprised I hadn't walked here before. I now incorporate it into my daily walks and find it to be the perfect getaway from city life. Also, it looks like we're getting a new park at Penn's Landing and some sort of beach or public pool that will open up near 30th St. station. The future looks bright for Philadelphia's natural spaces! Thank God for William Penn and his design of keeping some of these parks and nature amongst the city.

Material World

I find that maybe in a city, the goal is to acquire as much money as possible to then buy material things such as a nice car to drive on the roads. My thought is, your human body, your feet, legs, and physical strength is where the real wealth is. Ultimately, having good health is wealth. I'd much rather walk around the city than be stuck in traffic in some loser car. Maybe people who buy really expensive and fancy cars are just insecure and need some possession to mask this feeling. I'd say, it probably takes more courage to drive a simple, beat-up car because you recognize that these material things and possessions actually don't matter whatsoever. They are merely a functional tool for you to get from point A to point B. The greatest thing about Philadelphia is the fact that you can walk everywhere. Yes, we have a public transportation system with SEPTA, subways, buses, and even the 30th Street Station with our Amtrak trains, but walking is supreme.

When you move your body along, the day feels long.

When you are still, time flies by. Anytime I'm in a vehicle, I can feel my body start to shut down, I yawn, become tired, and irritated. Even if I'm sitting down inside, at a computer, looking at a TV, I feel my body shut down and my power slowly depletes. This is why I'm such a big advocate for walking, being outside, and generally living a physical life. I believe the ultimate antidote to this modern world is to be physical.

Seek Power

I believe it's the duty of every man to be strong. I know that when I overcome a little bit of friction, tension, or difficulty, such as lifting the weight of my body up above a pull-up bar, I experience a blissful sensation. With a little bit of pain, you feel a sense of gain and strength that becomes pure power and happiness. Seeking power and physical strength is the ultimate joy in life. This feeling of power through overcoming physical challenges is ultimately what makes me happiest in life.

Real, raw power, is physical strength within your body. Fake, superfluous power is money, fame, and influence.

Consider the scene from Aladdin where he discovers the magic lantern. When he enters the Cave of Wonders, he can choose to either acquire material wealth by taking the treasures, gold, and diamonds, and be trapped in the cave forever, or he can choose to take the magic lantern and acquire ultimate knowledge and power, the genie in the bottle. Perhaps, like Aladdin, we should also seek knowledge and power over material things and modern notions of success or wealth.

Perhaps power and strength is happiness?

In terms of photography, we must remember its physical nature. The stronger you become, the more you can walk, the more photographs you'll make.

My theory is that the stronger you become, the stronger your artwork or photographs will be. We should remember that first and foremost, photography is a physical pleasure, and requires you to be active and physical in the open world. The stronger I become, the longer I can walk, and in turn, the more photographs I can create.

In this modern world, we have machines that can overpower humans, paved roads, and an abundance of material things, yet there are not many realms for men to exert physical power. Perhaps we can conquer within the realm of art and street photography by becoming stronger physically and making stronger artwork.

National Pride

When I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia, Africa, I realized why the structure of their society thrived. There was a hierarchy between God, tribe, and land. Or, God, family, and land. In the village, everyone had a role to play. Women came home in the morning with babies on their backs and firewood on their heads. Men built homes and churches. Boys made bricks with sand and mud. Girls swept the floors and prepared the food for the day. The structure and roles that everyone played in the village made sense to me.

My thoughts about Christianity are that it's beneficial for promoting and building families. Monogamy is good and has worked for a very long time. Now, I see trends towards polygamy and other new-age ideas. In the village, families were extremely large, with most couples having around ten children each. When you consider these rural villages and places in Africa, you might think of them as impoverished or poor because they do not have all the modern amenities and luxurious items that we have in the West. My belief is that real wealth is family. It's the abundance of family members, people united under one god, one nation, thriving together.

Identity

When I look around this modern world, it's hard to find a male role model worth aspiring to be like. However, I am reminded of my time in Catholic school from pre-K to grade 8, where I learned all about the teachings and life of Jesus. I believe that most of his virtues of love and peace are wise to adopt; however, I'm reminded of the story of him cleansing the temple with a whip in Jerusalem. I appreciate this dichotomy between peace and chaos because it shows that Jesus was not only a peacemaker, but also not afraid to use aggression. Let's be more like Jesus, a peaceful rebel.

I'm grateful for my childhood and the experiences that taught me to love and take pride in my nation. Every morning before class began, we collectively said the Pledge of Allegiance:

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

When I consider identity, it makes more sense to simply identify with your nation instead of race. Race becomes something that merely divides people with silly terms such as "black" or "white," but I see the people of the USA as the American Race, the American people, united under one nation.

In America, there are trends towards individualism, but these notions often become misconstrued by following trends, purchasing things, indulging in consumerism, and embracing the latest fashion. The more you participate in these trends, the less of an individual you become. Individualism almost transforms into a form of collectivism. Maybe what you don't do, don't say, and don't consume is more important to consider. My belief is that what you don't do is who you truly are.

Perhaps photography is the ultimate way to express yourself and to become an individual. I think about framing and how what you decide to exclude from the frame is more important than what you include. The photographs become an extension of my identity, or a reflection of my soul as I affirm life with each new photograph I make. Maybe going forward we can strive to become authentic individuals through creating more than we consume.

Be a Child

During recess, we would play in the grass in the open space outside of school. I remember in kindergarten we would play this game where the girls collected rocks and hid them in the corner, but all the boys ran around and made strategies to acquire the rocks and take them from the girls. Maybe at the end of the day, finding a wife and making a family is merely a prize for men that defeat the boss battle, get the diamond, and save the princess like in Super Mario Bros. The great thing about many RPG video games like Cyberpunk is that you can choose the way you would like to play, and create your own ending to the story through the decisions that you

make along the journey. Everyone doesn't have to play the video game the same way, and we have the freedom to choose our outcomes by the decisions that we make.

When I was a kid I spent so much time in the woods, building forts with sticks, bridges with stones, and exploring the unknown. Maybe as artists, we must return to this childlike state, tinkering with the world around us, and creating something from nothing. By returning to day one each day and forgetting everything you think you know, you fuel your lust for life through endless curiosity.

Embrace Change

Every day is new when you set your body in motion without preconceived notions. You can walk the same mundane lane every single day, but still find something new to uplift in a photograph. When I consider photography, it is merely painting with light. The way that light etches details around objects, giving shape and form to people, faces, and places, the nuances and gradual change of light over time, is something that we embrace as photographers. This means you can never make the same photograph twice. Instead of going out there on the hunt for the next best picture, I know that my next picture is my best picture. I know this because, like water, ever-flowing, photography is merely a journey, a stream of becoming. It's a process of embracing chaos, change, and the flows of everyday life.

I believe art is the answer to life's big question, "Why?" When I consider art, and specifically photography, it's the most life-affirming practice that gives my life a deeper meaning. I believe the greatest aspect of photography is its accessibility. Everyone has a smartphone, and a camera in their pocket these days. I find that everyone is looking for some way to meditate, or disconnect from this modern world, especially with the advent of social media and technology. My thought is, everyone and anyone can become a street photographer, by simply making pictures of your everyday life. Just treat photography like a personal diary.

Street photography is this Zen-like meditative practice that allows me to exist fully in the moment. It's unlike any other practice of making art that is out there because of its physical nature. By moving my body through the world, photographing, I exist outside the passage of time. We have a past, and a future, but with the camera in

hand, none of this matters. You completely immerse yourself in life, becoming closer and closer to what it means to be human. My ultimate goal as an artist is to produce more than I consume, and to uplift the human experience to heights that have never been reached or seen before. The beauty of street photography is that we can achieve this, while in a state of bliss, as we simply exist and go about our everyday lives. Find beauty in the mundane, and create your own game to play. There are no rules, guidelines, or definitions that encompass what street photography is. Just go out there like a child and embrace the spirit of play.

Why Live Forever?

Something that inspires me to go out there and create every day is my inevitable fate, death. Why would one seek to live forever? Our fate of death is what makes life, and the fleeting moments so beautiful. I personally like treating each day as a mini lifetime. Every morning is a mini birth, and each night before I sleep is a mini death. By embracing this mindset, I only focus on things that truly matter to me, and give all of my attention towards the production of art, time with family, and becoming stronger. By shaping my view of life this way, I become insanely grateful for simple things such as the sun, grass-fed beef, and my camera.

Maybe I can't live forever, but at least I can make photographs.

Give me light and I shall dominate.

Is it just me, or do you feel 1000 times better when the sun is out? I believe in the reality of seasonal depression, but I also believe that mental health is simply physical health. This means that sunlight, movement, and embracing our physical nature as humans are critical considerations when discussing 'mental' health. During winter—when it is cold, cloudy, and there is less sunlight—people are much more prone to feeling 'under the weather,' becoming unwell, sick, or depressed. I know from personal experience that I have so much more energy, positive thoughts, and excitement for life when the sun is out. On cloudy days, I can still maintain energy from the sunny days I've enjoyed previously. It's interesting because when I spend the maximum amount of time in the sun and the next day is cloudy, the energy seems stored in my body and carries over. **Perhaps humans are like batteries that need to be charged, with sunlight as our power source.**

Let us not forget that photography is merely painting with light, and sunlight allows us to create works of art. My thoughts about light and how it etches and gives shape and form to objects foster an infinite and abundant mindset, continuously driving my curiosity and inspiring me to produce more photographs. I know I can never take the same photograph twice; photography is a stream of becoming, and my next photograph will be my best. When you adopt this infinite, endless, and abundant approach to creating work, it will fuel your lust for life and enable you to dominate within the realm of photography. As long as I have light, I am happy!

Why is the sky blue?

When I consider light and the spectrum of colors emitted by the sun, I'm reminded of that question we asked as little kids: *Why is the sky blue?* The answer lies in the size of blue light waves; being shorter, they scatter across the sky and interact with various molecules, creating the blue hue we see. Light not only shapes and forms objects, people, places, and faces but also casts vivid colors that allow us to perceive and revel in its beauty.

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Stripping away color from my photography, and returning to black-and-white, light and shadow, I simplify the way I create work. While I see the world in vivid color, I'm much more interested in the abstract nature of photography and its ability to transcend this reality. Perhaps I am looking to find a deeper way to explore life, and by embracing light and shadow, I hope the viewer of my photographs becomes engaged with the world in a more nuanced way.

I'm still surprised by how many rainbows I've photographed in my life so far. It seems that no matter where I go, I always find a rainbow. I remember the first time I photographed one with much intention—it was a rainy day in Baltimore, and I decided to head out with my umbrella and my camera in hopes of capturing a rainbow. When one appeared, I was astonished and quickly made an effort to photograph the scene. All the puzzle pieces aligned, and luck was in my favor. It felt as though it was a gift given to me. Throughout my journey, I've gotten lucky over and over again. Maybe the luck is something that's carried over with you through effort and hard work.

When I spent time in Jericho, which is a desert and very dry, I actually photographed a rainbow. What amazes me about the photograph I made in Jericho is the fact that it almost never rains there. It only rained for about 5 to 10 minutes, and during that time, I had to act extremely fast to photograph the tiny rainbow in the distance. A young boy, Ramsey, picked up a rock and began throwing it toward the abandoned buildings in the foreground and toward the rainbow in the background. When I look at this photograph, it may be one of my 'luckiest' shots ever made because of the conditions, the rare situation, and the moment that completely encapsulates the Palestinian conflict with the gesture of the young boy throwing the stone. This photograph reminds me of David and Goliath and might just be one of my best works ever made.

With a little bit of dedication, hard work, and belief in oneself, we can do anything.

Why I'm so prolific

I've never visited a location without coming home with something powerful or compelling from my photography. I've always had the ability to embrace chaos and impose order on it. I believe that I am a prolific photographer with a natural talent that I have been blessed with. Sure, I started off early in high school, learned the basics using film, and developed my technical skills, but since I hit the ground running, I've always created successful work. This isn't just an ego stroke—or maybe it is. **However, I know that my prolific nature as a photographer is due to my insatiable lust for life.**

You see, I believe that a photographer is merely responsible for being curious. We are responsible for going out into the world without preconceived notions, with an open mind and heart, and finding ourselves on the front lines of life. I am a very curious person, filled with courage, and this dedication to exploration has led me to great success over the years because of that. It has nothing to do with technical ability or how well you can put together a composition; photography is all about your curiosity, courage, and lust for life. I've become so prolific as a photographer through my dedication to embracing chaos and positioning myself on the front lines of life.

Learning is confidence

I'm confident because I know that I know nothing. While I am confident in my abilities as an artist and photographer, I still like to consider myself an amateur, a child, always eager, open, and prepared to learn. I believe with each new day, life, the world, the universe—whatever you see and perceive—has something to teach us. Perhaps through photography, we engage in a dialogue between you, your body, your brain, the connections between your mind and your eyes, and the things that you find beautiful along the way.

When I photograph, I allow my intuition to carry me onward. While I have technical skills, the ability to create compelling photographs, and a lot of experience, I don't ever want to feel like I've mastered photography. I believe that each day is a new way for you to learn, grow, and evolve. Perhaps as an artist, the wisest thing we can do is to never stay the same, and always embrace change.

Always changing

No day is the same. It does not matter if you walk the same mundane lane every single day; there is always something different and a new way for you to say something. **You see, photography gives you a voice. It gives you an opportunity to change your opinion, to change the way you see things, to change what you would like to photograph, and to change the world through articulating it.**

Perhaps, as artists, we must embrace change, never remain stagnant, and embrace the spontaneity of the streets, life, and the chaotic nature of the universe. While there is order to this place that we live in and call home, maybe there is still so much that's out there and unknown.

Just think of Elon Musk and his aspirations to make life multiplanetary. Perhaps we've conquered all of this earth, and there's a need for us to explore and to go beyond the horizon. When I consider his work in advancing technology, science, and space exploration, it inspires me as an artist to remain curious, embrace the future with an optimistic spirit, and change with each new day.

Why I'm so grateful

I am grateful for simple things. Water is our life force, and we should protect it, honor it, and cherish it. Maybe you can fast for a very long time without food, but your body needs water. Water is the first thing that I am grateful for today. I'm grateful that I can drink water from my tap, filling my belly, providing me with energy in this life and vitality to conquer today. I'm grateful for the sun, and the power that it provides me with. I'm grateful for the breeze, and the sensation that it gives me upon my skin. I'm thankful for the sounds of birds, chirping, and society, and the people that I can surround myself with. I'm surrounded by beautiful people, nature, and architecture that uplift and inspire me, allowing me to remain grateful for the small things. I'm grateful for the time I spend with my mother, family, and loved ones. I'm grateful for my lifelong childhood friends, and the people that I am closest to. I'm grateful for grass-fed beef, which satiates me and keeps me going every day. Honestly, I'm filled with nothing but gratitude and abundance, and going forward, I just want to share this joy with others.

The meek shall inherit the earth

Jesus says that the meek shall inherit the Earth. When I initially consider this thought, it makes me feel weak, to be humble, and to not be too proud or domineering. It feels like something that goes against the natural human will to power. And while I have my critiques on this sentiment, I do believe that it is a nice message, positive, and uplifting at its core. It does not matter if you are lame, sick, weak, or poor, all people can find hope and reap the rewards and fruits that life offers. Maybe we need more optimistic messages in our lives like the sermons Jesus gave throughout his life.

Decisions are discipline

I believe that we can all thrive together and seek power through simple physical pleasures. The decisions that we make ultimately determine our outcome in life. With a little bit of discipline, and consideration of the things that you do and don't do, consume and don't consume, you can make significant changes in your life.

The problem with modern cities is that there are too many options. There's too much tempting food, endless TV and entertainment, things to do, and places to be. This can become overwhelming for a city dweller, and cause one to embrace degeneracy, hedonistic pleasures, material things, and ultimately get lost in the sea of options. I'm reminded of my time spent during the pandemic when I lacked discipline and embraced hedonism through escapism in video games, junk food, and degeneracy. I would go to the market just next to my house, buy sandwiches filled with processed meats, bagged chips, sugary drinks, beer, and other junk that you can find in any of these stores. Why is it that all these stores just sell junk? It really does seem like nothing in a grocery store these days is worth consuming. Everything has some strange chemicals in them, excess sugar, and things don't seem to be 'real food' anymore. During this time I was still lifting, working out every day, but never really saw any results. My antidote to this was by adopting a 100% carnivore diet of red meat, beef, and lamb.

As a thought experiment, just think, which person will be healthier and stronger?

Person A. Eats 2000 calories of Oreos Person B. Eats 2000 calories of meat

Obviously, nobody's only eating Oreos, but I simply find it an amusing reference to the standard American diet.

Since going carnivore, I've cut out all sugar, carbs, junk, beer, and anything degenerate from my life, including video games. Just think of the grinding required in video games where you need gold, you need XP, in order to advance your character. Replacing the grinding and addictive nature of video games with weightlifting makes a lot of sense to me. By remaining disciplined and making the right decisions, I am blessed with beautiful results. I can't stress enough how much this has changed my life and hope to shed light as an example and proof that it really does work. With a bit of discipline through the decisions that you make, you can create a whole new person within yourself.

One practical suggestion I have is to do simple, calisthenic exercises, such as pull-ups, push-ups, pistol squats, dips, L-sits, and using dumbbells for a farmers walk. The great thing about farmers walks is that you can even just pick up two heavy bags filled with books or anything really. I believe having a home gym is the best solution and doing things that are easy and accessible for you each and every day require you to drive or walk to a public gym.

Be fearless

When I was a kid, my friends and I would often climb trees. We would climb so high in the trees that it felt like you could touch the sky. I am amazed by the courage that exists within a naïve child. I remember my brother and I would often seek danger. We got into skateboarding very early on, around four or five years old, and would throw ourselves down the ramps and launch our bodies into bushes, onto concrete, scrape our knees, and get back up. Maybe skateboarding is a really great sport for kids because of the courage required and its inherent creative nature. It reminds me of street photography, and the curiosity and courage an artist must possess to

throw themselves out into the chaos. **Going forward, we should become more like children, curious but dangerous, and courageous.** I believe it is at the intersection between curiosity and courage where we can all thrive together.

Just give me light, and I shall dominate.

DANTE

Kratos

We are currently on a giant rock, flying through space, while orbiting around a ball of fire. Without the sun, we have no power. As a human being, I must acknowledge the power I feel when under the sun.

At the end of the day, it's because of the perfect distance between earth and the sun that we are even here right now. When I consider the meaning of the universe, humanity, and our ultimate goal, perhaps it is to simply reproduce, create, propagate, and evolve. No matter how many technological advancements humanity makes, we will always be biological beings first. Perhaps the ultimate power that a human possesses is within our physiology, biology, or physical flesh. Maybe our flesh is the technology...

To understand life is to understand light

Objective reality is in the light.

He who masters light, masters the universe? When I consider the sun, as the ultimate source of power, and the reason why we are even here, breathing, thinking, and able to make art, I can't help but consider the essence of light, where it comes from, and why it's even here in the first place. Maybe all of the answers to our biggest questions are found in the light and to understand light is to understand life.

Can time stand still?

When I photograph, or paint with light, I feel as though I'm making pictures at the speed of light itself. At a fraction of a second, I can freeze time forever.

I exist outside the passage of time

When I'm walking, moving my physical body, and photographing, I'm merely existing now. Of course, we have a past, and future, but photography brings me closer to the moments that are ever fleeting. Maybe the paths that we take are critical to consider. I find that when I am walking around the streets on the grid, that curve, turn, and zig zag like a maze, time feels short, and passes at a rapid pace. However, when I go for extremely long walks along the river trail, which is essentially endless, time feels as though it stands still, and is extended longer.

Maybe photographers are like superheroes that can stop time. We exist outside of it.

I'm going super Saiyan

There truly is a difference between being in the light on the sunny side of the street and being on the shady side of the street. The temperature feels like night and day. When I'm in the shade, I might as well just put on a jacket. But when I'm in the sun, despite whether or not the temperature is cold, my body heats up in a matter of minutes or even seconds.

At the end of each day, I've been sunbathing around the Schuylkill River Trail, by the dog park. I have a nice view of the river, water flowing, and sunset directly penetrating my soul. I find that I have so much abundance energy stored up with in my body all day when I spend the maximum time in the sun. There's something about standing in the sun, absorbing its raw power, and turning it into physical energy within your body like you're going super Saiyan!

Ghouls and goblins prefer the dark

Maybe ghouls and goblins prefer the darkness, the nighttime, and seek pleasure away from the sun. Just think about nightclubs, bars, and nightlife in general. Typically the people that are out, have a preference for this time of day. They have a preference for the caves, dwelling in the dungeon, or the bar, or the club. Avoid people that prefer the dark and just focus on yourself.

In this very short life of ours, perhaps it's more wise to focus on ourselves instead of others. I say, your immediate family, friends, and yourself are all that really matters. Ignore the noise, the drama, and the excess. Keep your circle close, tighten it, and don't worry about other people.

Focus on the good and beautiful

Going forward, let's focus on the good, the beautiful, and forget about the bad, and the ugly. It's very easy to find the ugly and the bad in this world through the news or social media. My theory is that hate is fear, and the news merely promotes hate, or fear. If you check the news too often, you might find yourself in a situation where you feel unsafe, scared, and want to spend the entire day in bed. I say, embrace the world with the spirit of play, find yourself in the park, looking at beautiful things, focusing on the good, and forgetting about the bad, the noise, and the distractions.

I am reminded of the first time I ventured into a Palestinian refugee camp in East Jerusalem, Shu'fat. I checked the news, Google, and images, to see what's going on in this place. I learned right away that, this was not a good idea, because it was merely instilling fear in me, with nothing but doom and gloom, and preventing me from going for a visit. Alas, I mustered up the courage to pack my camera, forget everything I think I know, and headed over to East Jerusalem and entered through the gigantic wall looming around Shu'fat.

What amazed me was how welcoming my experience was overall. While I did have some pesky kid throw rocks at me and hit me, there were families that invited me into their homes, offered tea, food, and coffee. I ultimately wound up making one of the strongest photos of the separation barrier. While walking along the wall in what seemed like no man's land, a boy wound up throwing a baby stroller towards the wall and while I watched him, I made a photograph. I even decided to climb to the top of the wall, and stood proud and confidently as I conquered this location.

It was in that moment that I learned that you must go into the world, the chaos, the unknown, without any preconceived notions of what you may find. By disconnecting from the bad and the ugly, you will be delivered with the good, and the beautiful.

Why I love the city

The city provides me with just enough chaos and connection to reality and society that keeps me in touch. I like being around other people, and thrive amongst urban life. Philadelphia is a perfect paradise for me because of its gritty and raw nature. While it is gritty and raw, there is also beautiful nature trails and parks and historic architecture that keeps me inspired and balanced between the ugly and beautiful.

Maybe Philly is just gritty enough and just beautiful enough to have the perfect balance and harmony that keeps me creatively thriving.

Demokratia

Today is the primary election here in the state of Pennsylvania and I am reminded of what it means to be a citizen of the United States of America and partake in democracy.

The word "democracy" comes from the ancient Greek word "demokratia." This term is a combination of "demos" meaning "people" and "kratos" meaning "power" or "rule." Thus, democracy translates to "rule by the people" or "the power of the people." This concept originated in ancient Greece, specifically in Athens around the 5th century BCE, where it was developed as a form of government in which all eligible citizens participated directly in making decisions.

While we the people, the citizens, have the opportunity to use our voice and vote for particular candidates in office, my thought is that we cast a vote every single day as individuals, disregarding politics. We have the choice to vote for who we want, say what is on our mind, associate with particular people, think certain things, do what we please, consume what we want, and purchase what we desire. Maybe what

makes the individual powerful is within the decisions that you choose to *not* make. There's power within subtraction and through removing more, you become an empowered individual.

Freedom is a choice

You can choose to purchase a car, gasoline, insurance, and deal with all costs associated with owning a vehicle. Or, you can choose to use public transportation, ride a bike, or even just walk. You can go to the grocery store and buy eggs, or you could buy some chickens and raise your own. You can buy sugary cereal, or grass fed beef. You can send you kids to public school, private school, or even just teach your kids at home. You can buy the latest fashion or choose to make your own clothes. You can own a home and pay for a mortgage or choose to rent an apartment.

Perhaps the value of things are merely determined by what the person next to you will purchase it for. Maybe the only problem with democracy, is democracy itself. It's the decisions that people make, that ultimately determine the outcome of our nation.

Confidence

Confidence is not just having your chest open, shoulders back, and head up. Confidence is being good at something, and knowing it. When I consider confidence, I consider my skills and talent as a photographer. I know what my capabilities are, but I continuously push my limits, and know that I am forever, an amateur, learning, and advancing my craft each day. However, once you figure out that you're good at something, you no longer need any approval or feedback from others, especially other photographers.

I just don't care anymore. If you're not good at something that I value and respect, I simply don't care what you think. You can't use any life hacks, or tricks to make yourself confident. You actually have to own it, know it, and be it. Confidence is

actually being good at something, being physically strong, and dangerous.

How to win

Maybe whoever runs the most laps around the track wins... When I consider photography, and it's physical nature, I'm reminded that you must be in movement, embracing motion, and walking, in order to make anything. Because of this, I believe the one who walks the most, will see the most, and ultimately, photograph the most.

My thought is, whoever makes the most pictures, wins. I do not care whether your photos are good or bad, I care whether or not you are filled with curiosity and courage at the forefront. It is there that you will make strong work, and inevitable that with your insatiable lust for life, make more photos.

I'm really on the streets

Honestly, I'm really out here. I'm really on the streets. I be about this shit. I really fucking love photographing, embracing chaos, and the bustling nature of urban life.

No shame

Could you imagine being the first human being to look into the reflection of the river and perceive yourself? Perhaps this is where notions of shame come from, our perception of ourselves, naked, and alone.

In the story of Noah, there's a moment that shows he wasn't perfect. After the flood, Noah planted a vineyard, made wine, and got drunk in his tent. While he was drunk, he ended up naked. One of his sons, Ham, saw him like this and told his brothers. But instead of laughing or making fun, his other two sons, Shem and Japheth, took a blanket, walked in backwards, and covered Noah without seeing

him naked. This shows how they respected their father despite his mistake. It's a reminder that everyone has moments they aren't proud of, and how important it is to handle others' mistakes with kindness.

My thought is that shame is bad. We should have no shame, and embrace our authentic self. Nobody is perfect, and we should embrace this imperfect human nature.

Also, why are people so boring? Everything seems so sterile, bleak, boring, and same same. Everyone goes along with the program, following the same guidelines, social norms, without thinking freely or openly. I feel like there's a lack of expression in the modern world. It seems crazy to laugh loud, be proud, smile, and be a gay or jolly fellow. Maybe shame is what holds us back from self expression.

What is your purpose?

Maybe my ultimate purpose is to connect with life more. I become closer to life through photography. I find that by photographing, I'm able to have a dialogue with the world, asking questions with each photograph I make. I'm simply wondering, why? What even is my purpose, the purpose, the point of it all? I don't think anybody really knows, but perhaps through exploration, curiosity, and the creation of new art, we can find the answers.

DANTE

Biophilia

I have an insatiable love for life. Whether it's the city, society, people, nature, or places, I feel that first and foremost I am fueled by my biophilia.

The term "biophilia" is derived from the Greek words "bios," meaning "life," and "philia," meaning "love." Hence, biophilia translates to "love of life" or "love of living systems."

I grew up exploring the Wissahickon Forest as a child and I've always loved nature. I remember swinging from vines, climbing trees, building forts and bridges with sticks and stones. I believe this childlike curiosity and inner adventurer is still within me and is what inspires me to practice street photography. My thought is that a photographer is merely curious about life, putting themselves out there onto the front lines of life, finding themselves closer and closer to the moment. I know I feel happiest when I am surrounded by other people and is why I prefer living in a city.

The color purple

Recently, I've been wearing the color purple. I like wearing the 5 inch purple license to train shorts by Lululemon and the drysense purple T-shirt. I like the matching outfit and find that the bright and vibrant colors are beautiful. Maybe I identify more with purple, in between red and blue. In a world that is so divided, between political parties, Democrats, Republicans, red, blue, black, or white, I identify with purple.

Maybe it's best for all people to find a middle ground, and to realize that we are more similar than different.

Give more than you take

My ultimate goal in life is to give more than I take. I would like to produce more than I consume, and leave behind an abundance of art, photographs, thoughts, and ideas. Think of Leonardo da Vinci, he spent his years drawing, thinking, and making innovations and inventions that were never complete. However, These ideas carried onward into the future, and were later utilized by modern society. We should detach ourselves from the outcome of our photography, art, and the things that we create.

Don't worry about any external validation, admiration, and fame. Vincent van Gogh made thousands of paintings before he died and never received the recognition he deserved. However, "A Starry Night" remains one of the most famous and pivotal pieces in art history.

The feeling of abundance

I've been feeling very abundant these days. It's hard to describe with words, but I have an overwhelming sense of wonder, joy, and openness, that I am really trying to hone in on and share with the world. **I think that abundance is merely a mindset or a feeling that you get when you recognize the beauty in life, focus on the good, and uplift it, and the human spirit, to new heights.**

I find that by quite literally elevating myself to a great height, whether on top of the cliff behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, or by Penn's Landing and the Benjamin Franklin bridge, I have a view of the horizon, the river, trees, and nature, that fuels me with this feeling. I may not be able to describe exactly what abundance means to me with words, but I know how to achieve it, through positioning myself in an open space, and going beyond the horizon, with my eyes, and my mind.

You create paradise

Where you are right now is paradise. We can create the paradise of our dreams, through our everyday choices. I prefer to start my day by walking around the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the dirt paths, and natural parks. I do this because it makes me realize how objectively beautiful my city is, and I find that the area

around the river trail is very reminiscent of ancient Greece or Rome. It feels like heaven to me, and it is my home. When you have this mindset, and think with this sense of pride within your own hometown, you're now living in heaven.

You can create hell for yourself earth by walking around the grid right away, going underground to the subway, and surrounding yourself with the chaos. **However, you create the paradise, you create it through your decisions, what you think about, and what you say.** Perhaps we should speak good things into the world, focus on the objectively beautiful things that around you, such as inspiring architecture, natural spaces, and beautiful places. I think that paradise is merely a mindset, it's a way of you, perceiving the world like a child again, and finding yourself amazed by the mundane.

Time is luxury

What is deemed as a waste of time is now our new luxury. Making art, thinking, walking, and most importantly, spending time with family, is luxury. I believe we should focus more on the things that bring you closer to what truly matters. Photography for me is the most life-affirming practice, and is so easy and accessible to get into. All I have to do is carry my camera in my pocket, go on with my day. It does not matter what I am doing with my time, I know that I have the opportunity to do the thing that empowers me at all times.

Wealth is family

When I spent time as a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia, Africa, I was amazed by how big the families were. Each family had around 10 people. There was an abundance of people in the rural villages, and the family to me is the truest sign of wealth. You see, when most people consider Africa and these rural villages, they may believe they are impoverished because you do not see them with modern technology and "luxury" material things like we have in the west. Ultimately, what I've realized is, that freedom and wealth is within the thatched roof, under one God, with family, and land to share.

Hierarchy

One day I was walking through Rittenhouse Square Park here in Philadelphia, and I watched a Hawk swoop down and eat a baby bird alive. All that was left of the scene was a few feathers falling down to the ground. I looked around and asked others if they saw what I did, but alas, nobody noticed. This experience reminded me that nature is violent, and all is war.

In the village, there is a hierarchy between God, tried, and land. Everybody in the village has a role to play. Mothers come home with firewood on their heads and babies on their backs. The men are building homes and churches. The boys are building bricks with mud and sand. The girls are sweeping the floors, taking care of the house, and preparing food for the day. In a functioning society, everybody fits within different roles, and this creates cohesion amongst the tribe.

However, sometimes individuals must be removed from the tribe for their nefarious actions, and is typically done with force. One young man got into an argument with an old lady who was already sick and unwell. He tripped the lady and pushed her to the ground, and ultimately killed her. The tribe then took notice of this man's actions and took matters into their own hands. They beat and battered this young man to a bloody pulp, and was run out of the village. He had to go on his own now, removed from the tribe, and became a lone wolf or, a lost puppy.

How to thrive

My idea of human thriving is very physical. This means, maximum amount of time spent outdoors, walking, lifting weights, and focusing on your human biology. I feel best when I'm walking, standing, and moving. I do not like being indoors, under fluorescent lights, or sitting down. Because of this, I make sure to be outside and to experience the world and its physical nature. I'm not a fan of the digital world that we create, such as the news, social media, and television. I prefer the real thing, the real world, the open world.

Open world

In RPG video games, you often are exploring open worlds. There are infinite possibilities within these games, and is what makes them so novel and interesting. Maybe we should seek novelty through our everyday experiences in the open world. I enjoy chatting with new people, going to new places, and making photographs as a way for me to learn about and experience the world. I like thinking of each day like a new quest, mission, or piece of my story. Just treat life this way, like a game, where you really can do anything. We can conquer the world through photography and approach the streets like a warrior from video games like Skyrim or Assassin's Creed. Defeat the dungeons, increase your experience, and reap the rewards of making beautiful art.

Be a noob

Let's be noobs forever like we just started playing the game for the first time. I don't want to ever feel like I've mastered anything in life. I want to be in a constant state of improvement, learning, and growing with each day. By adopting this mindset with photography, and whatever you are interested in, it becomes endless and infinite. **There are no walls boxing you in, but only a glass ceiling that you need to smash through.** By going beyond your capabilities, pushing your limits, and treating each day like it is day one, maybe this is where the magic happens.

School is prison

I attended Catholic school from grade pre-K to eight. I actually really enjoyed this experience as we had lots of field trips, time outside during recess, and close friendships made over many years spent together. Once I got to high school, I attended a public school, Central. This is supposed to be one of the greatest high schools in Philadelphia, and apparently one of the first photographs of the United States was made of this school. My issue with high school was that it felt like a prison. When I entered for the first time transitioning from Catholic school to public

school, I was greeted by a metal detector and security guards. You could not go outside during lunch, and always felt watched by the security lurking around in the halls. In high school, you're told to sit down, shut up, listen, regurgitate, memorize, rinse, and repeat. I understand discipline, and learned this as a young boy from grades pre-k to eight. Maybe the Amish were right, you just stop after grade 8. However, because of the nature of school, I found it very forceful, and not productive whatsoever. Because of this, I would often skip class, sneak out the doors, and find myself exploring in the lawn, and neighborhood nearby. I couldn't believe that you had no time outside during school, and had to sit there for eight hours all day long in a confined box, like a prisoner.

Don't box yourself in

As artists, we should not box ourselves in. We should embrace all mediums, whether physical or digital. I'm a fan of using the iPad Pro as a way for me to import my photographs, review them, and even remix them. I have adopted a new practice of making collages, calligraphy drawing, and enjoy trying new things with my digital devices. Maybe as artists, we get pigeonholed into doing one thing, and become one trick ponies. We should try to expand our horizons, do new things, and don't box ourselves in. In terms of street photography, photograph everything. Street photography is merely an ethos, there are no rules, and does not have to be done one way. You can do whatever you would like. Just go out there and treat the camera like riding a bike, photograph with repetition, and you will inevitably improve with time.

Visual problem solving

When I consider photography, it is like visual problem-solving. This means, you're responsible for where you position yourself, the camera, and when you press the shutter. You become observant of the visual patterns that exist in nature and within human behavior. **When you're on the street, you're anticipating things, with clairvoyance, and sharp visual acuity.** As much as photography requires your eyes, I believe that it is a physical pleasure and needs to be talked about more. It is

your body, and movement, which ultimately determines the result of your photograph, not your eyes. Composition is merely intuition, by following your gut, and moving your body, repositioning where you are in the world. When you photograph a scene, move your body more, don't just stand still, and start snapshotting your way through the scene.

Don't look at pictures

I think one of the worst things that you can do for your creative thriving is study photography. I really believe that you should go out there and make your own work without the influence of others. Sure, collect a few photo books that you deem to be interesting, look at them now, and then, but other than that, just disconnect. Make your own work, study your own archive, and go out there and make more. The more you consume, the more you become influenced. **The less you are influenced, the more interesting work you will make.** Forget the past, history, and the masters. Make pictures in a stream of becoming, following your pure curiosity, without the need of looking at any other pictures for inspiration.

Instead, let us find inspiration in nature, architecture, sculptures, and things that are outside in the open world.

DANTE

Courage VS Skill

When I was around four or five years old, I learned how to skateboard and ride my bike. I remember taking the training wheels off, and learning to ride without the assistance. It was then that I decided to become more courageous, ride downhill, in the grass and even on dirt ramps. I grew up in Roxborough, Philadelphia and spent my youth in Kelly Park, where I fueled myself with courage as a young boy. I remember my friends, and brother, decided to launch ourselves off of this dirt ramp that we found in the park. You had to go down the concrete hill, then into the grass, then launch yourself off the dirt. You would fall down, get back up, and try again until you're the first person to do it. Maybe practicing courage amongst a group of young boys may be necessary and sort of like a right of passage to becoming a man.

Once we conquered the dirt, we then learned to skateboard at FDR Park. FDR skate park is one of the most legendary skate spots and is built entirely by skaters. The ramps are made from concrete and are extremely large and almost oversized. Needless to say, it requires lots of courage to skateboard here. You see, I was never a technically skilled skateboarder, or one that could kick flip, and do all of the fancy tricks. However, I possessed courage to conquer large ramps, obstacles, and throw myself down sets of stairs. I remember at skateboard camp in the Franklin Mills Mall at Woodward skate park, my brother and I threw our bodies down the set of stairs until we landed an ollie. You need skill to be able to ollie, however, the courage required is more critical. You have to learn to fall and persevere hours of practice. At the end of the long day, my brother and I finally landed the ollie down the set of stairs, conquering this location like warriors.

To me, the courage necessary to skateboard outweighs the technical skill. It takes courage to even step on the board, and push yourself along a flat surface. It takes courage to go down hills, up ramps, and overcome obstacles. The skill, is learned through courage. **Skill becomes a byproduct of you, your heart, and throwing yourself out there onto the front lines of life.**

The street is an arena

I view the street as an arena. I remember in high school, I was 17 or 18, and I tried to use flash on the streets. I would buy disposable cameras from the Rite Aid or CVS and get really close to people on Market Street, and snapshot without asking for permission with flash. One of the first times I ever tried to do this, a man took off his belt and tried to whack me with it! I kept going out there and trying time and time again, and fueled myself with courage as a street photographer early on by using a flash. Alas, I realized that this was not something I was interested in, and switched to simple black-and-white or color photography without flash. I realize that using the flash as one of my first solutions of practicing street photography is what fueled me with courage early on my journey.

Street photography requires courage. It requires courage for you to even step into the arena, the street, and practice, candid photography. It requires courage for you to pick up a camera, and go out there, into the unknown, where you never know what can happen.

I transition to Baltimore, where I studied in university, and explored the streets there with my camera. It requires courage to enter new communities, interact with strangers, and photograph in new places. I am reminded of my time in 2016, when I photographed the basketball scene. This was one of my very first and successful photographs that I made on the streets. I remember it was golden hour, and I entered this basketball court because there was some people playing, a beautiful background, and perfect light. I was using a Ricoh GR11 at the time, and simply set my camera in P mode. I did not necessarily have these technical skills of operating my camera yet, photographing with automatic functions, and simply pointing and shooting. However, I mustered up the courage to enter the scene, position myself in a strategic location at the action, close to life, and I made a photograph through my intuition.

I remember after making this picture, I turned to the left of me, and there was a street fight that broke out. They were gambling, and began fighting over who won. I made a picture of this fight, and went home with my head held high, filled with adrenaline, and fueled by my courage. You see, courage is more important than skill within the realm of photography, and any endeavor in life for that matter. This

photograph I made wound up winning first place, and was recognized by the president of Magnum at the time, Martin Parr. I had no idea what I was doing, I just had a camera, courage, and the results were delivered to me almost like a miracle.

Do you believe in miracles?

I remember when I was a little kid, watching the movie “Miracle on Ice” where it covers the 1980s Olympic Games. The United States was going up against the Soviet union in a hockey match. The Soviet union was certainly the stronger team, and bound to win. However, with strategy and courage, the underdog, the United States won the Olympic Games and defeated the giant, the Soviet Union. I remember at the end of the movie, the announcer of the game asks, “Do you believe in miracles?”

Be dangerous

After my time in Baltimore, I decided to study abroad at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I honestly did not go there for any rhyme or reason, and was merely fueling my curiosity, as this was the most interesting location to study abroad that was on the list of countries for me to choose from. I remember that first time I decided to venture beyond the wall, into the West Bank territories. There was this refugee camp, Shu’fat, in East Jerusalem. This location is very daunting, as it has a large looming wall that surrounds this neighborhood. I turned to the Internet, looked at images, and checked the news to see what was going on at this location. Needless to say, I found lots of doom and gloom, and negative imagery of this location. **What I learned in this moment was that you must enter new places without preconceived notions of what you will find.**

Alas, I mustered up the courage to enter this place, packed my camera, went through the metal detectors and security guards, and went beyond the wall. I remember I found my way through this community with ease as people were

greeting me, offering me tea and coffee, and even inviting me into their homes. I spent time on the rooftops, observing their pigeons, and even spent time with some young men at construction sites, enjoying meals together.

I wanted to photograph the wall. I spent many weeks going back to this location, walking along the wall. This wall was what I decided I needed to conquer. Walking along this wall, it feels like no man's land. It's just you, a bunch of trash, and nobody in sight. One day while I was walking along the wall, a young Palestinian boy threw a rock and hit me in the back of the leg from the top of the hill. This hurt really badly, but I kept pushing forward. Eventually, a young boy threw a baby stroller against this wall, and a very chaotic scene broke out suddenly, and I was there, prepared, and I made a photograph. This picture wound up being one of my strongest photographs from this trip, and certainly is an intriguing moment. I remember climbing the wall, standing proudly on top of it, as I conquered this location.

One fun way I showed courage in Jericho, was by arm wrestling all the young men in the village. They came up to me one by one to compete against me, but nobody could ever defeat me. I essentially beat everybody in this village in arm wrestling and because of my physical strength, they respected me more.

I spent lots of time photographing conflict between Israel and Palestine on the borders. During these situations, people are shot, killed, and I was even tear gassed. However, being a bit naïve, and dangerous, I threw myself onto the front lines, and made photographs that are powerful, and strong. I have skill, know how to make a composition with impact, but the courage is what carries you there.

Perhaps you must be a bit naïve, like a child, and explore your curiosity, setting yourself in motion, without preconceived notions.

David and Goliath

I spent many months taking the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. It was there in Jericho, where I found the most fulfilling opportunities to make pictures. One time, it rained. It was very rare to see rain in Jericho, as it is the lowest elevated and oldest inhabited city in the world completely filled with desert land. It is so dry, and hot there, that to see rain, was like a miracle.

Alas, it rained for about five minutes, and a rainbow appeared. A young boy, Ramsay, picked up a stone, and threw it into the distance, towards the rainbow. I responded fast with my camera and I made a quick picture, as the rainbow only lasted maybe one minute, which felt like seconds.

This photograph reminds me of David defeating Goliath with a stone. I actually visited the location of the battle between David and Goliath during my time in Israel. At the Valley of Elah, I stood on top of the mountain, looking out towards the battleground. I actually explored in the caves here, discovering artifacts from ancient civilizations that were from around 3000 BC. When I consider David, being a small, farmer boy, mustering up the courage to fight against a giant, with armor, Goliath, it inspires me.

The sculpture of David by Michelangelo, is one of the most influential works created from the Renaissance. When you see this sculpture in Florence, you are looking at a tall, slim boy, in deep contemplation, armoring himself with courage, and God.

The word "courage" comes from the Old French "corage," which itself derives from the Latin "cor," meaning "heart." Originally, the term was used metaphorically to mean "heart" as the seat of emotions and spirit, particularly with reference to bravery and boldness. Over time, it evolved in modern English to specifically denote the quality of being brave and willing to face danger or difficulty.

Perhaps the heart of David, was full, and he went forward with courage and audacity, to conquer this giant. As David charged towards Goliath with courage, skill followed as he hit a precise headshot with a stone, and eliminated the target, beheading Goliath with his own sword. **My thought is, when you show courage, skill follows.**

Think of Harry Potter, in the chamber of secrets, when he goes to defeat the basilisk. Harry Potter did not have a weapon, however, the Phoenix appeared, delivering him the sword of Gryffindor. The sword is delivered to the person who shows the most courage, a key trait of the Gryffindor house. In the end, Harry Potter defeats the basilisk in the chamber of secrets because of his courage.

Into the unknown

Throughout my journey as a photographer, I've always been one to explore the unknown. I'm always just curious, *what's out there?*

I spent my time as a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia Africa, where I had no expectations or destinations in mind. I simply signed up for the Peace Corps, and they sent me there. Once I arrived, I had to learn a whole new set of skills, local language, washing clothes by hand, cooking over fire, and sleeping in a mosquito net under an thatched roof. I learned to prepare chickens to eat, by slaughtering them, plucking their feathers, and cooking them over the fire. The first day I arrived in the village, I was greeted by a scorpion on my door. I had to pick up a stone, and kill it. What a wonderful greeting this was, as when you slept at night, all you hear are the sounds of the bush, the animals, and the unknown insects, that are lurking all around you.

My courage carried me throughout this trip, as I explored the dirt paths, that led to seemingly nowhere. I found myself biking all day for many miles, looking for things to photograph in the bush. I've explored lakes filled with crocodiles, climbed mountains, and photographed in emotional situations, such as funerals and baptisms. At this point, I had lots of experience as a photographer, was skilled, but courageous. Frankly, I was hardly making photographs during my time in Zambia. I was mostly spending my time in the farm, working with fishermen, and making connections in the community as a volunteer, working on local projects. The camera was kind of just there with me throughout the journey, and I made some photographs each day here and there. The point is, it doesn't matter how skilled you are as a photographer, if you have the courage to go out there on the adventure, into the unknown, beauty will be delivered to you.

At the end of the day, I know what it takes to make strong photographs. It requires curiosity and courage at the forefront. It does not matter how much you know about your camera, the history of photography, or how skilled you are. What matters is how courageous, bold and dangerous you are. Become formidable, physically strong, and you will become a strong photographer.

DANTE

Passion

You often hear the phrase, “follow your passion.” While I believe that this is a noble pursuit, perhaps we should tread carefully with this notion. I’m reminded of my time as a child, when I had to get a permission slip signed to watch *The Passion of the Christ* during my time in Catholic school.

The word "passion" has a rich etymological history that dates back to ancient languages. It originates from the Latin word "passio," which itself derives from "pati," meaning "to suffer" or "endure." Over time, "passio" came to be associated specifically with the sufferings of Christ in the context of Christian theology.

In earlier uses, "passion" broadly referred to suffering or enduring something that was inflicted upon a person. However, by the Middle Ages, it had specifically come to denote the sufferings of Christ between the night of the Last Supper and his death.

Interestingly, the meaning of "passion" has expanded in modern English to include not only suffering but also strong emotions or desires, maintaining the intensity of the original Latin meaning but broadening to cover a wide range of experiences. This broader usage retains the core idea of a powerful, overwhelming force, whether it be suffering or emotion.

Considering the initial meaning of passion, meaning suffering, I can relate this to my personal photography journey. In 2016, I worked for the DNC as a photojournalist. Here I learned to photograph at events, deliver on tight deadlines, and make work for clients. Most of the photos were merely used for social media posts, and not something that brought much value to others or myself. During these events, I would carry my Ricoh camera with me and make photos candidly in my street photography approach, actually getting some interesting shots. It’s funny how following your passion works; you do the thing that you love, but it can bring you suffering. I did not enjoy my time working as a photojournalist. Even last year, I worked for the city, providing photos for people, events, and different things. It was not a very fulfilling experience, because you recognize how little value it provides.

The photos that you desire to create, through your joyous state, become harder for you to evoke each day. When I pursue photography as a passion, it does lead me to suffer. It leaves me uninspired, unmotivated, and not interested in making pictures for myself anymore. Because of this, I made an effort to only photograph for myself and follow my pure curiosities instead.

I remember when I was first introduced to photography in high school, where I spent my youth photographing in the forest with a Nikon FM camera. I later recognized that my uncle Bill owns a Leica M3, as he taught me to operate the technical settings and taught me how to see. From there, I moved to the city, and the rest was history. I merely got into street photography through the spontaneity of living in a new place, curious to continue my photography, but now within a city, in the urban environment. I never was influenced by anything external, and my passion for street photography grew through sheer curiosity and intuition.

Follow Your Joy

Maybe following your joy is a much more fulfilling practice, and a notion to consider. I'm reminded of my time spent on the streets while in high school, or in the woods as a young man, exploring with my camera for the first time. I remember purchasing my first Ricoh camera, setting the camera to P mode, ignoring technical perfection, and simply snapping my way through life. By returning to this mindset, this joyous state of creating, I am now able to remain forever inspired and motivated to "follow my passion." I believe that we should create this abundant and joyous state; we do not want to suffer. We want to be photographers that are transcending this world, uplifting the human experience to new heights. I believe that photography has the power to enrich the human experience, the individual, the artist, and society as a whole.

Intuition is King

When I consider my intuition, it always knows best. Whether I decide to make a turn, follow a different path, go somewhere new, or photograph in a certain way, it always puts me in the right place. I simply let go and embrace my gut with all

decisions that I make. I believe that we all possess this godlike intuition, and tuning in to it is wise. When I photograph, I exist outside the passage of time, merely listening to this intuition and living in the moment. While the moments are ever fleeting and spontaneous, we can freeze time at a fraction of a second. The camera becomes this tool that you can wield like a superhero, finding beauty in the mundane, and treating the world as a stage. When you study the patterns of nature and human behavior, you become in tune with the rhythm and the beat of the street. The street becomes a stage, and all of the actors upon this theater become the subjects, the stories, of your drama. You watch as it unfolds candidly, clearly, with sharp visual acuity and clairvoyance. You put order to the chaos, unlocking a new dimension to this reality, by creating something from nothing.

See with Clairvoyance

I was curious about why pigeons are always inhabiting cities here in the United States of America. You see them all over these modern cities. I love pigeons, and often study them while in flight. I enjoy standing outside of City Hall, and watching them as they fly around the tall skyscrapers. Many people believe that photographing pigeons on the street is some sort of cliché, or a boring way to photograph. My thing is, I find that studying the pigeons in flight enhances my intuition, allows me to become more connected to the universe at large, and find these patterns in both nature, such as pigeons, to enhance my abilities as a street photographer. The pigeon becomes this spirit or thing that you can evoke within intuition, as it unfolds before you in spontaneous ways that are unpredictable. This unpredictability enhances how you see with clarity, or clairvoyance. To predict what's happening before it happens, and to understand that it is possible for you to photograph with this spontaneous bird in flight, a person moving, moments occurring, is a powerful and impactful experience that brings you closer to life itself.

Our Path to Extinction

On my morning walk today, I read a sticker that had a picture of an hourglass, representing passing, reading "extinction." When I consider the plummeting birth rates, the lack of families being formed, and the consumer culture that exists in the West, it may be inevitable that we are leading down this path to extinction.

I remember my time in Hanoi, Vietnam, observing many families gathered around Hoan Kiem Lake. On the weekends, the streets shut down and open up for pedestrians only. You see very large families enjoying their weekend, going for long walks around a tranquil lake, street vendors, street performers, stages with traditional dance, and so much uplifting energy that it filled my soul with hope. Maybe they're doing something right over there in the Southeast Asian part of the world. They seem to have figured out this balance between production and leisure. They're constantly making new things, clothes, and using their hands to craft things within these markets that they live upon. I think a lot of people live in homes on top of their businesses, and engage with family practices on a daily basis. This is a really inspiring thing, and reminds me that human thriving is possible.

However, in modern cities like Philadelphia, I often see a lot of people walking around with dogs and sunglasses, by themselves. It's quite evident that there is a lack of reproduction in the States. I find that by using my empirical evidence, and observations through my experiences, I help shape my paradigm, or how I see the world. When I consider the history of the United States, and the introduction of the industrial revolution, maybe this was where things started to get weird. My thought is that socialism in China, and these Asian countries like Vietnam, was perhaps the antidote to capitalism here in the West. I am not saying that one is better than the other; it is just a mere observation. I am a fan of capitalism and believe that it should work. The problem is, capitalism is merely driving consumerism, with a lack of production of families, innovations, inventions, things, and original American-made products because of consumerism. Of course, we have Tesla, and thank God for that. There are some innovators left here in the United States.

The problem is, capitalism might just be something designed for women. When I consider man, man only needs very few things. I know, for a fact that all I need is meat, salt, water, and some weightlifting equipment. I have my iPad, my camera, and a place to live. Beyond that, there really isn't much left for me to desire. I think it's funny how when I walk through the fashion district mall, all of the stores are filled with dresses, fashion, beauty products, and things that are clearly designed for women to purchase. I'm reminded of the notion of marriage, purchasing a diamond that is from the back of slaves somewhere in Africa or wherever, and then delivered to a jeweler for me or another man to purchase for thousands of dollars and deliver to a woman. Maybe the problem with the West is that we've become obsessed with consumption, rather than production. Here it's all about me, me, me,

and less about producing any sort of family, or serving anybody else but yourself. You can only buy so many things, expand your closet so big, acquire so many material things.

Think of the story of Aladdin, and his experience in the Cave of Wonders. When he enters the cave, he is met by many treasures, one of them being the genie in the bottle. If he were to grab one of the jewels, diamonds, or gold, and material things, he would be trapped within the cave forever because of this decision. If he chooses to seek the lantern, or knowledge and power, he will be set free with omnipotence in his pocket. Perhaps we should seek this knowledge, power, or wisdom instead of pursuing any material.

Outsider on the Inside

I've always felt like the outsider on the inside. Whether I'm in my hometown or a new place, I always find a way for me to engage through this lens in this way. Very adaptable, and able to integrate myself into new communities, despite being somebody new. I feel like I have this gift of openness and honesty, that brings me closer to life. I spent many weeks sleeping on the floors of mosques in Jericho, learning about Islam due to my mere curiosity. There was no other reason for me to connect deeper with this community as an outsider on the inside. I wanted to know more about what it was like to follow the ways of Mohammed, live amongst a group of brothers, in a new community.

Maybe here in the States, in my hometown of Philadelphia, I am still an outsider on the inside. It's really difficult for me to engage with modern society, the way that people live these days, do for fun, and think about. I'm not really too interested in what people do these days, such as going to the club, gossiping, drinking, social media, or doing any sort of partying and silly degenerate stuff. I think that community is something that maybe only truly exists within your tight-knit and immediate family and friends. And I believe that this is fine; I still hold on to my childhood friends and connections with family each week. This is something that I cherish, and find joy in. To spend time with those that you love, and that are genuinely meaningful connections, certainly outweighs this new digital or modern way.

Intelligence is Artificial

Maybe intelligence is merely artificial, and going forward into the future we will see a new sort of being that is emerged through technology. I'm curious about artificial intelligence and have been using ChatGPT very often. I find that it is very easy and accessible to use, simply pulling out my phone from my pocket, like the genie in the bottle from Aladdin, and asking any questions or desires that I wish. I have this curiosity that leads me to use it often, curious about the etymology of words, what things mean, and even to learn about history. It's very easy and accessible to acquire knowledge these days. Perhaps you no longer need to study the books, spend all day slaving away at a computer, but merely import this knowledge and intelligence within your brain through the technology.

I'm thinking that artificial intelligence is the future, and an inevitable outcome, that could lead to either a path of creation or destruction. I have high hopes and optimism on my mind when considering these technologies, but I am aware of the downfall that it could bring. My thought is that if you use it for creative production, this is a wise way forward. I genuinely enjoy using it as a way for me to flush out thoughts and ideas, or even receive feedback on things that I make. If I send a piece that I write, or a photograph, it will then respond and tell me what they think.

If you consider this digital world, social media, and comment sections, you should merely assume that they are bots too. Similar to ChatGPT, a chatbot, an online user is merely a bot. You do not see this person in the physical flesh. You do not see their morphology and facial features. You do not know how tall they are, who they really are in the physical flesh. Let's just assume that they're bots, and disconnect from these platforms. I enjoy using YouTube and my website as a way to propagate my voice, but I am not interested in feedback whatsoever. I really do believe that this future is going to be strange, funny, and the most interesting. I say, disregard the noise, disable all comments, and just assume that anyone is a bot. Just think of Reddit users, with Cheeto dust fingers, fat bellies, spending time typing away at a computer. It must take a real degenerate to have this time of day to even go online and make comments in the first place. Just go touch grass.

When you become so immersed with your life, your art, and your way, you can't help, but to simply drown out all the distractions and never have any time to engage with any sort of online media consumption. I know that I've abstained from it for over a year and a half now and feel so much better, lighter, and stronger. By disconnecting from the social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, and YouTube, you become laser-focused, and realize what a waste of time it is watching other people.

Technology and Transportation

In modern cities, we are very disconnected from the farm, and the place where our food comes from. Just think of transportation, and how we are so heavily dependent upon Amazon delivery services, vehicles, and now going forward, robots. I actually saw a sign yesterday that was displaying a funny robot dog, reading "have you seen me?" It was amusing to me because I actually believe that these robot dogs are already in use with the police force in New York City, and have seen robot cars driving around like those little RC cars, in Miami. In Miami, I witnessed these cars, delivering food on their backs, to apartment and condo dwellers.

I find that this is extremely amusing, the way that we use technology, and the disconnect that we have to the food that we consume. I know that for a fact, I really do not like to eat out. I don't really want to have food delivered to me on a plate, and like to touch the food, cook the food, and even try to eat as much as possible with my real bare hands. Maybe this is something that I picked up during my Peace Corps service in Zambia, and have held onto until this day.

When I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia, Africa, I lived in the Luapula province along Lake Mweru. This lake provided lots of business for my particular village. Large trucks and cars would come and visit the port here in my village, by the lake, and deliver big packets of rice. These big boxes of rice were delivered via boat, manpower, a single or two men, rowing a boat, towards the nearby villages and islands that were in need of food. In cities, we often receive food from delivery services, such as Whole Foods, Amazon, and Uber Eats. The problem with a lot of these foods are, they are completely unhealthy and not good for you to consume.

What is real food anyway?

My new idea of real food is that it must be flesh. It must be from an animal, meat, red meat. Over a year and a half now I've been consuming a diet consistently of 100% red meat, beef, and lamb. It has simplified my life, giving me immense courage and strength, through the act of eating meat. It's amazing what it does to your body, fueling you with this abundance of energy and power, where you feel as though you can never sit down in the day, and just keep moving with intensity. I feel myself getting stronger, and more powerful each day. I practice intermittent fasting, eat only one meal a day, and eat as much meat before going to sleep. I get great and deep sleep, and wake up each day on repeat, ready to conquer. Real food is meat. Meat is something that we've eaten for thousands and thousands of years. We've only now just started consuming these strange cereals, sugars, and things that you can find in a grocery store. Maybe this is why we see the rise of obesity, consumerism, and health issues at scale. Maybe this is also leading to the infertility rates increasing, and population decline.

Life is Physical

Physical life is supreme because it brings me joy. When I'm moving my body, walking, lifting weights, or doing any physical activities, such as biking, hiking, and simply exploring, I feel great. I can't sit still, I can't sit down, that's denying my body. I don't want to just sit still, I don't want to just listen, I want to make, I want to propagate, I want to do things. My body is telling me to move. My body is telling me that life is physical. I'm reminded that the world is open, for us to explore endlessly. There is nowhere that I would like to be, rather than outside, under the trees, surrounded by fresh air. Maybe people fall into a depression easily because of this new way of living, sitting down, and being indoors. For men, it's very simple. Just buy a pull-up bar, weights, anything, just go for walks, lift, eat meat. It's inevitable that you will be happy. I know that I fell into a slight unhappy state during the pandemic, spending all day inside. Honestly, I think the foods that I consumed also played a role in my feeling of weakness. I remember eating oatmeal, making these weird protein shakes, and eating all this crap from the grocery stores like Trader Joe's. It made me fat, sick, and unwell. It's funny how easy it is to be happy and powerful; you just have to ignore this modern world and way of living.

Follow the Light

Going forward, let's simply follow the light. Let's paint with light, and make photographs in a stream of becoming. Photograph your personal life, what you are immediately surrounded by. Stop hunting, and just see, or better yet, just be. Exist in this state of production, fueling your curiosity with the camera. Let's follow our passion, or even better, our joy, by embracing light, and creating something new each day. Embracing the spirit of play, and following that intuition, it is inevitable that you will be delivered with beauty. Stop thinking, seeking, and realize that the photographs you will make simply come to you. Once you start to go slow, and let life flow towards you, there is more to do, more to see, more to photograph. Just slow down when you're on the street, come in tune with the rhythm and the beat of the concrete and the way that people dance with their two feet. You will see things with clairvoyance, and sharp visual acuity, the more you head out there with repetition. While the world can feel mundane at times, just know that with a camera in hand, and an open mind, you will find endless beauty. See with clear sight, crush the shadows, and follow the light.

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