

## 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. 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.

## **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. 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.