

FREE SPIRIT

When God created the world, it was a formless place, but then there was light.

Fiat Lux, "Let there be light"

The way that light etches and gives shape and form to places, faces, and things is a very mundane aspect of our world that I find fascinating as a photographer. The nuances and gradual change that light provides me with every single day never ceases to put a smile on my face, as I am reminded that photography is endless, and that I can never make the same photograph twice.

Photography is painting with light. We wield the omnipotent power of the sun, treating the world as our canvas, for us to draw upon.

You can create a new world in a fraction of a second.

Freedom

What does it mean to be free?

When I consider freedom, I think about the Eagle statue in the center of the Wanamaker building here in Philadelphia, crafted of bronze, thousands of feathers wrought by hand, and its symbolic meaning here in the United States of America.

The bald eagle represents fearlessness, courageousness, and freedom. To be free is to be fearless and strong, like an eagle in flight. An eagle flies alone and is not seen with a pack when hunting for its prey, the ultimate predator in the sky.

To be free is to be intrepid, similar to our founding father, a revolutionary hero and the first president of the United States of America, George Washington. Think of the fearlessness Washington and his troops had when crossing the Delaware River into battle during freezing weather conditions, with icy waters, in a snowstorm. Washington and his fellow colonial soldiers sought self-governance and freedom,

fighting for liberation against the British, who maintained control over them at the time, with unfair taxes and military occupation. America was born through a revolutionary act and a fight for freedom.

Perhaps we must unshackle ourselves, both physically and metaphorically, both of the body and the mind, to become a free spirit. Logos

In the beginning, there was light, and then there was the word. Our language and stories are what shape our reality.

In ancient Greek, “λόγος” (logos) carries a rich and multifaceted meaning, which can be summarized in terms of its significance as “word.”

Some of the earliest written stories from ancient Greek mythology come from Homer in his works, the Iliad and the Odyssey. Following the story of Achilles in the Iliad provides the reader with the blueprint of the hero, a demigod, something transcendent to strive to become.

How to become a demigod?

Liver is one of the most nutrient-dense foods on the planet. The more beef liver we consume, the more we can strive to become like demigods. I believe increasing our physical strength and power is the path to happiness. It may sound crazy to eat the scraps, but ponder the way a wolf hunts its prey. The wolf eats the liver after hunting. The wolf eats food because it knows that it provides the most energy.

The myth of Rome was found very intriguing to me. Remus and Romulus were both raised by a she-wolf, La Lupa, in the wild. The wolf suckled the two boys and made them into a formidable force. With the power that Remus and Romulus acquired by being raised by the wolf, they went onwards to be founders of Rome, one of the greatest empires of all time.

During my recent trip to Italy, I visited Rome and Florence and had the privilege of viewing sculptures of some of these ancient Greek heroes, such as Hercules and Achilles. In the sculpture of Achilles, he is depicted in the arms of Ajax, a graceful death. When you look up at a sculpture, you revel in its beauty, grandeur, and detail,

as it sits bigger and at a higher elevation than a human. The viewer looks up at the hero and is given permission to strive to become something greater than themselves.

I believe that architecture and sculpture are some of the greatest works of art that mankind has ever achieved. When you step foot in front of the pantheon, which was originally used as a temple to all the gods of ancient Rome, you are reminded that mankind has achieved greatness throughout all of history.

These works stand the test of time, defying gravity, and becoming unmovable. The stories depicted in the sculptures and the attention to detail within the design of architecture, with its large scale, are a testament to mankind's ability to strive onwards and upwards to something greater than themselves.

The ultimate goal of art is to transcend the human experience to somewhere that has never been reached before. The artist's responsibility is to champion mankind and uplift the human spirit to a new height.

In ancient Greek mythology, Prometheus formed humans with clay. He was also punished by Zeus for stealing fire from Mount Olympus and giving it to humans. Prometheus wanted to empower humanity, making them less dependent on the gods. By giving humans fire, this divine knowledge and power, they could create technology and advanced civilization. This act of defiance caused Zeus to punish Prometheus, chaining him to a rock, and having an eagle, a symbol of Zeus, eat his liver over and over again, causing endless pain, as Prometheus is an immortal Titan. Despite this eternal torment, Prometheus did not repent for his actions and stood for humanity in rebellion against tyranny. Eventually, the hero, Hercules, came to rescue Prometheus, killing the eagle, and unshackled his chains.

The name "Moses" means "to draw out."

Moses was born at a time when the Pharaoh of Egypt had ordered all Hebrew male infants to be killed to control the population of the Israelites. Because of this, Moses's mother placed him in a basket and sent him down the Nile River. The pharaoh's daughter found Moses crying in the basket along the river and decided to give him the name Moses because she drew him out of the water. He was then raised as an Egyptian prince in the pharaoh's palace.

As Moses got older, he witnessed an Egyptian kill a Hebrew slave. This sparked outrage in Moses, and he decided to kill this Egyptian man and bury him in the sand. Once the pharaoh found out, he sought to kill Moses, and this led to him fleeing Egypt. He then lived as a shepherd, and during one of his journeys, he encountered the burning bush, where God revealed himself to him and told him to return to Egypt and free the slaves. God inflicted Egypt with 10 plagues, Moses parted the Red Sea, and led the Israelites out into the desert, where they wandered for 40 years in search of the promised land.

I believe that many people to this day are still wandering in the desert, searching for the promised land. My thought is, we can all find the promised land within ourselves, freeing our minds, and creating paradise here on earth. When Moses rose to Mount Sinai to receive the tablets from God, the Israelites were worried and anxious as Moses was gone for 40 days. They were concerned and impatient that Moses may never return from the mountain and decided to craft a golden calf. They worshiped this idol, a golden calf, in replacement of God. When Moses returned, he was very angry, smashed the 10 Commandments, and destroyed the idol. He instructed those opposed to the idol to kill the idol worshipers, God the people, and thousands of men died.

What I find interesting in modern society is our worship of idols, movie stars, luxury brands, cars, watches, and material things. We sacrifice our time and labor in the pursuit of pleasure and worldly material things. While we all have the right to choose how we wish to deem valuable ways to spend our lives, and our time, perhaps there's ancient wisdom to gain from the repercussions that occurred while the Israelites wandered in the desert.

Creator of Paradise

I believe that we can create paradise here on earth. While paradise is seemingly a physical thing, or place, I believe that it is mostly of our minds. We can create paradise through the things that we do, but more importantly through the things that we do not do. By removing toxic things from your life, peeling the leeches off of your skin, you can become free, and live in Paradise.

One simple thought I have is that by removing the news from your life, television shows, movies, and social media, you free your mind of these poisonous bits of information that flash in and out of your life. Most of these sources of news and media promote negativity or fear. By completely cutting this out of your life, it is one step closer to Paradise.

In ancient Greek, "polis" means city.

When it comes to politics, consider your city, state, and local town. If you are from Philadelphia like me, recognize that we live in the birthplace of America, the birthplace of democracy here in the western world. This is very similar to that of ancient Greece, or Athens, the birthplace of democracy itself. We should not get distracted by world affairs and politics generally; just consider your immediate surroundings, family, friends, or city as the ultimate concern in your everyday life. Everything else that happens in the world, other states, or places, should not be on your mind. We can create paradise here in Philadelphia by recognizing the distractions and cutting them out completely.

When God created Adam and Eve, they were placed in paradise, in the garden of Eden. The serpent tempted Eve to eat the fruit from the tree that bears the knowledge of good and evil, as this would make them like God. Once they both ate the fruit, they both realized that they were naked and felt shame. Now, with this newfound knowledge, innocence is lost. With the knowledge of good and evil, humans must make moral decisions with this free will. Ultimately, Adam and Eve were banished from the garden, forced to toil, work, and carry the burden of sin. However, this freedom from the garden gave humanity the ability to create culture and advanced civilization. When they were banished from the garden, God decided to place flaming swords at the entrance so that no one can enter. They no longer had access to the tree of life within the garden, where they could access the divine and become immortal.

There's something in me that wants to pick up these flaming swords, burn down the tree of knowledge, and access the tree of life.

Because Hercules committed the crime of killing his wife and children, he was punished to perform 12 labors. Many of his labors were difficult and physical challenges. Hercules conquered the three-headed dog, after descending into

Hades, or hell. He also defeated a lion, and wore its fur as a coat. Towards the end of his labors, Hercules was cast on fire, burning his skin and all of his flesh. However, after entering the flames and enduring endless pain, suffering, Zeus granted him immortality.

When I consider the human body, perhaps it is wise to consider it like a sculpture. You are both art and the artist. When you sculpt your body into the ideal physique, imagine Hercules, standing tall, similar to those beautiful sculptures in Florence, or the drawings of the Farnese Hercules. I was privileged to see these sculptures and drawings in person recently at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Let us not just create art through photography or other means, but turn inwardly, treating yourself, your body, as the apex of art and beauty. Let us strive to go onward and upward, finding inspiration in ancient Greek heroes, through sculpture, tales, myths, and stories, and create our own.

Embrace Danger

During a recent trip to Mexico City, I practiced street photography. While most people stick to the historic district or many of the local and bustling markets, I decided to visit the outskirts, along the mountains. Typically, when I travel to new places, I find my most fruitful experiences along the outskirts, the borders, the places in between. When I looked out towards the mountains, from the city center, I knew that it was somewhere that I needed to explore, intuitively. Following my intuition, and trusting my gut, it led me up a gondola ride, into the mountainside. Here I conquered mountains, climbed to the peak, and when I reached the top, I made some of my greatest photographs during this trip. Many people along my journey, climbing this mountain, told me to turn back, to return to the ground level, and to stop climbing, as it is very dangerous, and that the people may perceive me as a threat. But gracefully I marched, and in the end, I was unscathed, through my courageous act, of marching upwards, ultimately leading me to a beautiful scene, photographing children as they climbed the cross, overlooking the entire Mexico City.

One of my most significant journeys was taking the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. It was in Jericho that I found my most fruitful photographs of all time. This small town, located on the border between Israel and Palestine, the city of the moon, the

lowest elevated city in the world, and the oldest inhabited city in the world, is where I found some of my most memorable experiences of all time. Here I lived amongst a Palestinian family, slept on the floors of mosques, learned about the way of Islam, and was even converted at the end. I traveled from mosque to mosque, home to home, making friends along the way. Through embracing the spirit of play, with courage at the forefront, I moved through this dangerous place, or seemingly a dangerous place, without much care in the world. I believe that when you set your body in motion, without preconceived notions, you can go through the chaos, unscathed, and come out with some of the greatest experiences of your life. You must move through the strife, openly and honestly. I would often spend the days beatboxing, making music, dancing, climbing mountains, and having flocks of people follow me around the streets. I never presented myself as a serious documentary photographer or journalist, but sheer wander, filled with curiosity. I am no threat, but I am dangerous, and not afraid to go to new places. Without fear, anything is possible. I photographed at the front lines of conflict between Israel and Palestine at this border. I've been shot at with live ammunition, ducked behind barriers, and came out with some of my favorite photographs that I've ever made. I believe that when you have no fear, everything else disappears, as you are right there, right now, in the moment, safe and sound. But you must go forward with that curious, childlike state of play, then I believe, you will come out unscathed.

Water is Magnetic

There's something about water, and its magnetic pull. I start every morning, walking along the Schuylkill River, where I am reminded of my childhood memories, playing along this very body of water.

Schuylkill means "hidden creek," and my old neighborhood, where I used to play, in Manayunk, means "where we go to drink."

The Leni tribe lived along this beautiful river, here in Philadelphia, which was right in my backyard, the Wissahickon forest. When I was a child, I remember building teepees with sticks, building bridges with stones, sharpening spears, and attempting to hunt deer, climbing trees, swinging from vines, discovering caves, and

even finding a totem pole after climbing a mountainside. My friends and I would fish in the river and live like we were Native Americans, and a spirit of play, from a very young age.

I lived alongside Lake Pingu in Zambia, Africa, as a Peace Corps volunteer working alongside the Department of Fisheries as a rural aquaculture promotion specialist. In the village, the people of the Bemba tribe are very dependent upon the water and the lake as sources of vitality for them. In the village, there are a few wells or boreholes where people go to drink. You will see women coming home with babies on their backs, firewood on their heads, fathers building homes, boys building bricks with sand and mud, girls sweeping the floors, and preparing food for the day. These activities occur after multiple trips to the well. At the well, people gather with large buckets on their heads, filling them with water. I remember returning from the well each morning, filtering the water through a gravity filter, boiling the water, and even adding iodine so that I could safely drink it. Here in the United States of America, I can simply turn on the tap and have fresh, clean, drinking water. Water is the source of life, and something that we take for granted here in the States. There are some places where people spend entire days hiking through the sand just to bring some water back in their hands. Not to mention, protein is very scarce in these villages, and it is the reason why fish farming and fishing are very important practices to these people.

There is a hierarchy in a village, or in my opinion, a functioning society generally, and that is God, tribe, and land. The way in which the people in the village come together, sharing the land, is something that I learned very quickly. Every man is a farmer. Every man is a fisherman. Everybody has a role to play. You'll see men and young boys heading out on the lake with a boat and a net. Sometimes they come home with big fishes, but many times they are small. The small fish we consumed each night for a year straight, eating every part of it, the head, the eyes, the tail, and I even ate the bones. We consumed the fish guts, creating a soup with it, that I found delicious. Because protein is more scarce, the Bemba people rely heavily on carbohydrates. The staple food in Zambia is maize. They harvest the corn, mashing it with a mortar and pestle, and creating a powdered form of maize, adding water, and creating nsima. This dish is served with every meal, and especially with fish. You eat with your hands, picking up the fish with the nsima, together, dipping it in fish guts, and perhaps have a small side of greens with the meal. You mostly eat the carbs in the morning to fuel your body with that sense of fullness because of the lack of protein. This is why I'm such a big proponent of the carnivore diet. I believe

we should eat as much red meat as possible and focus on protein and fat. Some places have to depend on carbs to get by. Carbohydrates fill your body, but I believe that we should remove them from our lives here in the United States. Many of the carbohydrates that we consume make us addicted to food. Carbs break down into sugar, sugar spikes our insulin, and the cycle repeats. There is a reason why bread is given for free in a basket every time you visit a restaurant. By the time you are at the end of the meal, and your insulin has spiked, and the sugars are broken down, you will be more enticed to order food and dessert. Let us remove carbs from our lives, and embrace more protein as the primary dish in our diets. To become the strongest version of yourself, consume more meat, more flesh.

I remember making the sacrifice of flesh when I first arrived in my village. I was given a knife, and was greeted by a goat, hanging from my tree, that was presented by my host family. I slaughtered the goat, and we feasted all week.

In Jericho, I witnessed the Day of Sacrifice, Eid al-Adha, where hundreds or even thousands of sheep were slaughtered all throughout the villages. The blood covered the floors, stepped in. But through fasting together as a community, there is a sacrifice made. At the end of the fast, everybody feasts in the evening after the sun sets. The sacrifice of flesh, and sacrifice generally, is something that I've learned along my journey.

When you consider a village, specifically my village in Zambia, there was a Seventh-day Adventist church in the center of the community. Everybody from the community visits this church on Saturday to study and remind ourselves of the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. At the center of the altar, there is a place of sacrifice, where we break bread, share wine, and remind ourselves of the sacrifice that Jesus made.

When you wake up in the morning, you hear the sound of the mosque, Allahu Akbar, in a beautiful song, it sounded across the speaker, spreading the good word that God is great across the entire village. The people come together five times a day, submitting to God. There's a sacrifice made during Ramadan, and Eid al-Fitr, fasting. I believe that these notions of fasting should be considered more in the West, where we have an abundance of food. We have unlimited yummy food options, TV shows, media, and entertaining things to distract us. We often chase lust, and gluttony becomes our motive operating, consistently snacking on junk

throughout the day. We also pursue hedonistic pleasures generally, through pornography, or even casual sex. By abstaining from these things, removing these toxic patterns of behavior in our lives, we could become closer to God himself. I believe that there's a reason why they say that we are created in the image of God. I believe that we have a beautiful soul deep within us, but you have to remove and subtract more from your life in order to reveal that. My belief is that the soul is just an outward projection of your mind and your body. There's a connection that exists between your gut and your mind that we may overlook. I believe that there's also a reason why they say to trust your gut. Perhaps our gut is more intelligent than our mind. When you have no food in your belly, and there's nothing digesting, you become laser-focused, and have a sharp mind. Perhaps this is a spiritual journey for me now, as I believe that you can tap into the divine.

Elevate Your Body

When I start my day off at an elevated view, I feel abundant. Up, at a high vantage point, that fuels my lust for life. When I look out at the horizon, I am reminded how open this world is. You could live until you're 120 years old and still not see everything on this earth. This feeling fills me with abundance and gratitude for simply being alive, right here, right now, with another day, another opportunity, to go beyond the horizon. The simple pleasures in life, such as walking, sunlight, and water, fuel me with this feeling of gratitude for the simple things in life. Abundance is something that flows through me each and every day when I elevate my body to a physically higher position. I'm reminded of memories, stories, and experiences that I've had throughout my journey in life. All of these feelings flow through me when I visit the Cliffside behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, or walk to the top of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge.

Health is Wealth

At the end of the day, perhaps your health is the ultimate source of wealth. Your physical body is a representation of what you are, who you are, and how you carry yourself. If you have an ugly body, you have an ugly soul. A beautiful body is a beautiful soul. Contemplate this idea, and put your body in motion, and start to elevate it to its highest level. Also, as much as health is in our control, it is also

spontaneous and can be very unpredictable. This means, at any moment, your health could be in decline, you can get sick, injured, or even die. Nothing else really matters if your health is in decline. Consider yourself blessed if you are in good health, your loved ones are healthy, and you are becoming stronger. Perhaps this is the ultimate good, the ultimate virtue, and the ultimate good thing to strive towards, is optimal physical health.

Also, your body is art. Treat yourself like the sculptor and the sculpture, and chisel away each day by shedding fat and gaining muscle.

I highly suggest building a home gym and working out each morning first thing when you wake up. By working out at home, you are no longer dependent on gym memberships, and can do things on your own time. I personally purchased a rogue squat rack, barbells, plates, and Nobel dumbbells. These dumbbells are really great and adjustable up to 80 pounds. On my squat rack, I have a pull-up bar and a dip bar. I also have a yoga mat, foam roller, and spiky massage ball for my feet. I have a few resistance bands if needed for stretching, and keep my routine very simple. My routine is as follows:

- Yoga/stretching
- Pistol squats
- Farmer's walk
- Pull-ups
- Chin-ups
- Push-ups
- Dips
- L-sits
- Lateral raises
- Follow the Sun

My theory is that the body is a battery, and the sun is the charger. The more time I spend under the sun, the more energy and power that I have. I often hear people complain that the sun drains their energy, but I believe that this is a product of modernity, and the way in which we live our lives, in the cave, the darkness, the shadows, with air conditioning. We mostly live a sedentary lifestyle, indoors, for at

least eight hours per day. For me, I spend the maximum amount of time under the sun, all day, standing, walking, under the sun, until it sets, and only sit down to eat and then go to sleep.

Why?

As a photographer, I thrive outside. I believe that when I'm inside, my soul slowly dies, but when I'm outside, moving my physical body, I exist outside the passage of time, and thrive. Life will pass by if you live on standby.

I believe that there is an art in walking, and for the last two years, I've been enjoying walking barefoot, wearing the five-finger, ELX shoes. Maybe shoes these days are like condoms, you don't feel the sensations because there is so much padding and a thick rubber sole between you and the earth. By removing traditional shoes and embracing the barefoot shoe, I've not only been increasing my foot, leg, back strength, and posture, but I feel as though it enhances my practice of street photography. I feel more intentional with each step I take, feeling the sensation of the ground below me, I become more aware of the present moment. There's something very meditative and enjoyable about walking barefoot, feeling the sensations, and connecting with the street itself. Not to mention, walking on grass, or a dirt path, feels so great. Modern shoes make me feel like my feet cramp up and are very uncomfortable now. I'm very glad to have made this transition to wearing these shoes, despite the way they look. I think that we must break free from social norms, and stop caring too much about how others perceive us. If anything, people think it's pretty cool when I wear these shoes, give me compliments, and question me. It's quite fascinating because you become the only person in the city that is walking around barefoot, and I enjoy the spectacle.

Also, I feel as though since I removed my shoes, I've embarked on a spiritual journey. It reminds me how little a human being really needs in a world that's abundant with luxury and comfort. We came into the world without shoes, let's leave without shoes.

Get Out of the Box

It seems that modern humans love boxes. We work in boxes, in office buildings, within a cubicle, looking at a box, a computer, and spend the majority of our time here. The box becomes comfortable and is a place where we go to rest, work, and play. We go to the gym, in a box, to the treadmill, that nice, comfortable, hamster wheel, AirPods in, music blasting, running in place, moving nowhere. I believe that we must unshackle ourselves, go beyond the box, think outside the box, and go off the grid. Don't allow anyone to force you to sit down, take orders, or put you in a box, both physically and metaphorically. The choice is yours, freedom is a choice.

I remember when I was in public school, for high school, feeling confined to the box of a classroom, like it was a prison. When you entered the school, you had to enter through a metal detector, and send your bag through an x-ray machine. It felt like a prison because of this, as all security guards lurk the halls, the doors are locked, and you are not permitted outside. For hours per day, you must go from room to room, learning information that is practically useless, memorizing things, sitting down, shutting up, rinse, and repeat. You listen to the bell ring, and move to the next classroom. You move to the next box. However, I saw through this experience at a very young age, as it was unhealthy, not feeling like the best way to spend eight hours a day. I couldn't believe that you weren't allowed to go outside during lunch, and had to stay inside. Because of this, I found ways to sneak outside, skipped class, found doors, unlocked them, and explored the park, in the green space nearby, and the neighborhood surrounding my school. Perhaps at a very young age, I was hard to tame, and to this day, I refuse to obey.

Consider time, and our relationship to the alarm. We usually wake up to the sound of an alarm, or wear a watch, and become slaves to time itself. My suggestion is to start setting your circadian rhythm, by allowing the sunlight to enter your eyes, first thing in the morning, by watching the sunrise, and before the sunset. This will set your body, your natural biological clock, to rise and sleep with the sun. After I eat my meal at night, I feel my body slowly shut down, and ready for bed, as the sun sets, I rest.

Embrace Nature

I recently went on a walk to Penn Treaty Park here in Philadelphia. I learned through reading a plaque outside of City Hall that William Penn's hand that is seated on top of the building is facing towards the northeast, towards Penn Treaty Park, where he made a treaty with the Leni tribe that inhabited Philadelphia, to acquire the land and the city. One of the greatest aspects of living in Philadelphia is the green spaces and parks. The land of Fairmount Park is actually bigger than Central Park in New York City. We have the Schuylkill River Trail, which is essentially endless, for walking, running, and biking.

When I walk on the trail, I often contemplate why people run. I find that running is merely rattling of your bones and your brain. If you're running at a moderate pace, jogging, there really is no point. Maybe the only useful form of running is sprinting or running up hills. Everything else seems meaningless. I think a lot of people run or participate in cardio because they believe they can burn calories. This may be true, but burning calories is not the goal, it is to lose fat, not weight. I think we get caught up in these basic notions in health and fitness, and become hamsters, endlessly on the wheel, never seeing results. Not to mention, running seems to lead to leg injuries, or knee injuries, down the road. Every runner I've met always complains.

I remember when I was in college, and I decided to run a half marathon. During the half marathon, they were handing out beer, and afterwards, everyone disappeared to the bar, drinking, and eating junk. It's kind of a strange thing, the way that runners usually run to eat, or drink. Maybe a lot of runners are alcoholics. My definition of alcoholism is if you have more than one beverage per week. I think even if you have one per week, there might be an increase in the chance of you acquiring cancer. I suggest avoiding alcohol at all costs. Most people that consume alcohol have to do it in dark caves, in bars, and socialize with people that they do not even know, where the alcohol, the poison, becomes necessary to even tolerate being around these people. If you wind up in a situation where people are drinking, drink sparkling water. Otherwise, just avoid it at all costs. Also, is alcoholism even real? I think a lot of these addictions and things are very much made up. Maybe there's no such thing as an alcoholic, but just a weak person. If you need a drink at the end of your day to tolerate going through your basic motions and routine, this is a problem and weakness of willpower. People often complain that it's a genetic thing, that alcoholism runs in the family, etc., but this is just an excuse for poor behavior patterns.

Seriously, just think about it this way, you are injecting poison, consuming alcohol, surrounded by people that you do not know, in a dark cave, at the bar, in the club, just so that you can tolerate putting up with these other losers that are around you.

Fasting

I remember the first time I fasted was when I was living in Jericho. I slept on the floors of mosques during Ramadan, and fasted all day. At the end of the fast, we would break this sacrifice together, through feasting, on one shared plate. We primarily ate pigeon, rice, potatoes, and very satiating foods.

I was also in Jericho for the Day of Sacrifice, Eid al-Adha. Hundreds of sheep were slaughtered throughout the village, and the stench of blood filled the air. Everybody fasted throughout the entire day, making a sacrifice, and at the end of the fast, came together as a collective, and feasted. This was very similar to Ramadan, but much more biblical, as this is a story from the Old Testament and Genesis. A lot of these stories are reality to this day and shape the way that we perceive the world. I believe that there is a reason this is one of the oldest tales of time, the sacrifice, fasting, and the way the community can come together.

Maybe God is in your gut. And your gut is also more intelligent than your brain. When I have no food in my belly, I have a clear connection between my mind and my body. I believe that we all possess a God-like intuition, and fasting allows us to tap into this. I feel more sharp, like a hunter when I'm on the streets, fasted. I enter a Zen zone, recognizing the patterns in human behavior, and nature, with clairvoyance, predicting things before they unfold.

Also, there is this notion of fasting that gets you closer to God and spirituality, such as Christianity and Islam. I'm starting to believe that there is something about fasting that unlocks the divine connection between you and God. They say that we were all created in God's image, and maybe by fasting and removing all of the toxic poisons from our body, we reveal our pure soul, in the image of God.

Calories are a Scam

I think that we need to remove the word calories from our vocabulary when it comes to health and fitness. Just use this thought experiment:

Person A: eats 2000 calories of Oreos Person B: eats 2000 calories of red meat

Which person will be healthier and stronger?

Obviously, the person who is eating the red meat and avoiding the processed junk. Perhaps this is the main point when it comes to health and fitness, to remove the processed junk, carbs, and sugars, that keep you addicted, and increase your fat. Think about fat, not calories. We want to shed the fat from our bodies, while simultaneously eating more fat and protein to give us more energy.

Carnivore Diet

I believe that the carnivore diet is the best solution, as it is an elimination diet, removing all options except for one. Think of the food pyramid, and a study from Harvard University, they described that eating red meat should be eaten sparingly. If this is what they promote from a reputable university, such as Harvard, maybe we should become more skeptical of everything generally. When you eat red meat sparingly, you become hungrier, and crave more food throughout the day. However, when you maximally eat red meat, not sparingly, you will be satiated. That is the key, satiation. We want to eat more satiating food, such as red meat, liver, and eggs.

One Meal a Day

One of the biggest benefits of the carnivore diet is that I no longer have to think about what to prepare for the day. I can simply throw a lamb leg in a slow cooker, set it for eight hours, add some water, salt, and call it a day. I come home and have a delicious meal ready for me to eat. I am no longer dependent on snacking,

breakfast, or lunch. I am extremely satiated, filled with power, and only need to eat before I go to sleep. This is the ultimate life hack that I found, and simplified my life in a very streamlined and efficient way.

For 20 months now, I've been on the carnivore diet, without cheating once, and I've not felt sick one time. Maybe meat is the ultimate medicine.

Also, cholesterol derives from the word sterol, or steroid, and I believe that this is the key. Cholesterol is a natural steroid and not something to fear. The more cholesterol we consume, the stronger we become. The goal is to become stronger and more muscular. Perhaps the quickest way to upgrade your life is to eat more red meat.

Once you start eating red meat, you realize that a lot of the things that you work for, where we work these jobs that we hate, above is shit we don't need, buying food we don't need.

Just look in a grocery store. Most of it isn't real food. The only real food is the flesh, and the animal-based protein, that you can find on the outskirts of the grocery store. Anything that's in the center, under the fluorescent lights, with the popping colors, cartoons, and yummy-looking branding, is not real food.

On the box of Cheerios, it says that it's good for your heart health and lowers your cholesterol. Well, it may be true, but eating this processed food, from a large corporation, produced in a factory, will technically lower your cholesterol, there is no way in hell that it is healthy for you. It is quite deceiving, the advertisements, and food industry, generally, and you should consider why, and what you should truly be consuming and worried about.

Also, just walk down Walnut Street, around Jefferson Hospital here in Philadelphia, and look at all the obese nurses. If the nurses and doctors are mostly obese and unwell, are we really going to trust them? The only doctors worth trusting are the surgeons.

Eating more meat will make you become the strongest and most beautiful version of yourself. Don't be a slave consumer and eat foods that actually fill your belly.

The Cave of Wonders

In the movie Aladdin, there's a very critical scene where he enters the cave of wonders. In the cave of wonders, this is where Aladdin discovers the genie in the bottle. However, the cave of wonders is filled with treasures, gold, and jewels that he could choose to take. The problem is, if you were to take one of these treasures, he would be trapped within the cave forever, surrounded by luxurious material things. But alas, Aladdin chooses the golden lantern, the omnipotent power, and all-knowing wisdom of the genie in the bottle. Perhaps we should choose wisdom over material things. One fun thought is that now with the power of ChatGPT, the genie is quite literally out of the bottle, the possibilities are endless, and we can start utilizing this technology to increase our wisdom and knowledge. Just download ChatGPT on the App Store for your iPhone and give it a try.

Just think of the way in which the Israelites worshiped the golden calf when they were waiting for Moses, in search of the promised land, stranded for 40 years in the desert.

I remember a scene from Spy Kids 2, when the two young spies enter a cave filled with treasures. They were trying to escape this endless maze, but one of the spies decided to pull one of the treasures that the two skeletons were fighting over. This was a very beautiful necklace and very enticing. The sister warned him not to take it, but he decided to grab this treasure. Once he grabbed the treasure, the skeletons kept fighting against the spies and were immortal. You cannot kill the skeletons. They just keep respawning over and over again. I find this to be a powerful metaphor towards a lot of the things that we strive for, such as jewels, gold, luxurious cars, etc. that wind up simply owning you.

They are also as valuable as the golden calf, that you could simply smash, and it would not change anything, similar to the way that Moses smashed this idol.

Subtraction of Superfluous

Consider your body is a skinsuit, a bag of bones. We should shed our skin like snakes, through the subtraction of the superfluous, and become anew. Some simple suggestions include, disconnecting from the news, media, TV, don't watch

any shows, listen to celebrity gossip, even the weather channel, literally anything that's distracting, remove from your life. Keep your circle small, disconnect from toxic people, and focus on yourself. By subtracting more things from your life, you will lighten your load, and now have the ability to fly upwards.

Equality is Mediocrity

While equality sounds like a good thing, could you imagine if everybody was at the same base level of mediocrity? I find this to be the threat of equality, as everybody will become the same, and nobody will stand out. However, I'm reminded of the Greeks, and the Olympic Games, and the physical excellence required to participate. Perhaps we should strive to be more like the Greek heroes, Olympians, for excellence, and rejection of mediocrity and equality.

Danger is the path to truth

The dangerous path is the most interesting path, and will lead you to the most growth in life. The fulfilling experience of conquering a mountain, traveling to a new place, and trying a new thing, unlike anything in life. There is something special in the unknown, That keeps calling me back out there, With a lust for battle. I believe through overcoming obstacles, and embracing danger, we can discover truth. Through pain, suffering, and overcoming these difficulties, we can come out, with a better understanding of ourselves and the world around us. I remind myself of my time, traveling the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, photographing all throughout Israel and Palestine for that matter. I found that by spending time in this dangerous place, I've grown a newfound understanding of the conflict. I believe that you must truly visit a place or experience a thing in order to even have an opinion about it. Many people sit on the sidelines of life, making commentary about things that have never experienced before, but when you go out of your door, and brace danger, you will learn much more.

Thrive on your own

In this digital world where we are so connected, it is quite easy to be alone while entertained by other people. Whether you're watching a show or even participating in social media, you can simulate what it's like to be with others. However, I believe we should thrive on our own, without the need of entertainment from the external world. I dive inside my mind and know that I can travel endlessly within. The abundant feeling I get going for a hike, listening to the sounds of the birds, making photographs, riding my bike, brings me closer to the moments that are fleeting, and help me appreciate the details in life. It's very easy for me to thrive on my own, in solitude, and I actually love it. As much as I love society, walking through the city, and being surrounded by the chaos and other people, there is a need for solitude in my life. When I was a peace core volunteer in Zambia Africa, I lived in a remote village, on my own, surrounded by people that I did not know. This was the ultimate test of my Independence, as I had to learn a whole new language and culture, but still learn to thrive. I think this experience is what taught me to thrive on my own. I think we should stop distracting ourselves, and embrace them now, even if it's just you, on your own.

Find what works best for you

As much as humans are similar, we do have differences and preferences, that distinguishes from each other. I personally cannot spend time inside, I need to be outside for the entire day. Because of this, I've decided to design my life in a way that I am always outdoors, even for work, or I just started a new job in Horticulture. It is a very fulfilling job, because I can be on my own, tending plants, Outside, surrounded by nature, with the sounds of birds, and a beautiful place, for the beginning of my day. The great thing about this job is that it's from 7 to 3, and still gives me plenty of time to work on my photography. I personally do not work for the money, but genuinely want to be outside, doing some thing, besides photography. I worked in Horticulture when I volunteered on Wood and Israel. I enjoyed my time in the summer working on the farm, tending plants, and doing hard work. I may be a physical person, That likes to work on my own, and see a physical result from my effort. You could pay me \$1 million to sit down on my butt from 9 to 5 in the Comcast tower, to operate a computer, dealing with other people, faking a smile, putting on a suit or tie, Sort of environment. I've worked in an office before, I've

even tried working in photography, but none of this is fulfilling to me. I feel like I've been to nature, and my intuition, but doing things in life that actually fulfill me, and work best for me. Start to understand more, your preferences, and how you can design your life, in a way that works best for you. At this point, at 28 years old, it actually kind of feels like I'm retired. I decided to design my life in a way where I consider life in reverse. I thought to myself, what do retired people typically do? And then I came to the conclusion that they'll be in the garden, nature, going for walks, tending plants and things. So I decided that's what I will do! Not to mention, I have such a peaceful place to read philosophy, write, poems, essays, think, and practice a new art form, Horticulture.

The pursuit of a career just always sounds basic and boring and best to me. It also almost feels like modern day slavery. Work until you're 65, retire, and then you have another 10 years of life to live? And be free? Sounds like a bad deal to me.

Don't drain your battery

Well, the sun chargers are battery, and feels us with power, we must be aware of our social energy. Don't allow other people to drain your battery. If people aren't aligned with your lifestyle or goals, maybe it's best to not even associate with them. Perhaps we must peel the leeches, the parasites, and free ourselves from social contagion. Most people these days find entertainment through drinking alcohol, and my numbing, entertainment, but we seek to become, the best version of ourselves, and transcend, in creation of a higher culture. In order to do this, we must not become influenced by others, indoctrinated to dogma, and ways of life that negatively affect us. Even if I surround myself with people, who are hunched over, with bad posture, bad attitudes, people that gossip, etc. They completely drains my battery, and I do not want to give anybody my time of day. Sometimes it feels like you have to take care of others, and that's too much for me. Just go your way and keep your battery alive.

Why I'm so prolific

I've become such a prolific photographer because I spend the most time out there doing the thing itself. I'm always out photographing, no matter what I'm doing. Everything around me becomes a potential photograph to make, as I treat the world as a canvas. I'm constantly in the state of production, moving my physical body, Observing life and all of its complexities. I'm so prolific because I have the dedication of a Spartan, waking up early, before the sun rises, just to go out there and photograph the light as it casts across the river. I'm always so eager to get out there, and is the first thing I do at four in the morning, is grab my camera, slam my espresso, and go. This journey has been nonstop for a decade now, and I don't see myself ever stopping. The goal is to strive for greatness, and nothing less, even if I have to die trying.

Freedom is a mindset

Freedom is to be playful, to be like a child, but also dangerous like a lion. To be free is to be as to be like a bird flying in the sky, without any care in the world, dancing in flight. There's a blissful feeling that you get through naïveté and optimism. Think of the way in which a bird is flying with such courage, through the sky, landing on water, gracefully. We too, should move forward with courage, similar to that of the grace of a bird, and the ferociousness of a lion. I love walking along the Benjamin Franklin Bridge here in Philadelphia because it is a very dangerous path, with my body elevated, I feel like a bird. When you find a pan on view of the world, the city, or your town, with 360° view of the horizon, you feel so free, like you can conquer anything.

Treat life like a video game

Consider Skyrim where you start off on your journey, loading the game, designing your character when you're naked. You select your facial features, height, size, etc. perhaps we too, should strip down to the naked state, and design our character from the ground up. Remove your shirt and your shoes, and consider what your ideal hero would look like.

In Tony Hawks pro skater on the PlayStation your character develops overtime from acquiring stat points and assigning them to your skater. You must assign the proper stat points. I always chose to max out speed and air right away because I knew that it would allow me to advance in the game further, at a much faster rate. I believe that we can relate this to photography, and the process itself. I find speed to be a critical role in my practice, and choose to use a compact, digital camera, with small JPEG files, and the black-and-white built-in, with an iPad Pro so that I can keep producing and move onto the next one.

Think of grinding in Minecraft for xp or while mining in the dungeons for diamonds. It's a part of the game that you have to get out of the way in order to advance to the boss, to get to the ender dragon. You need diamonds, in order to get there. To find the diamonds, you have to grind. There's this period of time in the game where you're just banging out stone and searching for that valuable and rare item in the game. In order to get there, we must go forward with speed.

Your first 10,000 photographs are typically viewed as your worst photographs. Let's get them out of the way, at a faster rate. Let's advance our character. Let's advance our photography along our journey by moving with speed and using tools that will allow us to get there.

However, the most fun part of the game in Minecraft is fighting the dragon and going on the adventure. The most exciting part is dropping into the nether, descending to hell, conquering the castle, coming back to the surface, finding the portal, and fighting the ender dragon. Now you get wings if you beat the boss in Minecraft. I never even acquired the wings because this is a new update in the game. What if we don't get the wings? What if we never reach the top? At least you'll enjoy the process in the attempt of trying to acquire the wings.

Let's learn to enjoy the process, the ups, the down, and go on the adventure, despite if we ever beat the boss or not. This is where we should be with our photography, enjoying the process, the journey, as the most fruitful and enjoyable part of it all, detached from the outcome, the results, the photographs, the book, the gallery, etc.

Off the grid

I've noticed a trend towards people wanting to live off grid. However, I believe that we can live off grid with our mindset and approach to life instead of being physically in the middle of nowhere, disconnected from society.

I'll never forget killing a scorpion when I arrived in Zambia, Africa for the first time. I open my door to my mud hut, and was greeted by a scorpion, waiting for me upon my door. I picked up a rock, and smashed it into the wall, and killed it. I had a simple window, a table, a chair, and a bed with a mosquito and a very small room. the floors were dirt, the walls were mud, and the roof was thatched. You could say that I was truly off the grid. When I went to sleep at night, I would look up at the ceiling, watching as the spiders crawl around, and listen to the sound of insects, and dogs, various animals, from my window just outside my door. I was tucked away under mosquito net, so that I could prevent acquiring malaria each night. every morning, I fetched water from a well, put it through gravity filter after boiling it, adding iodine. I wash my clothes by hand, cooked over a fire, and even prepared and slaughtered chicken to eat, plucking its feathers, and learning to truly live off grid.

While learning to live off grid was a very fulfilling experience, I'm grateful to be here in the United States of America, where I can turn on the tap, and have clean, running water, or even have simple things like electricity. However, there's something about this modern world that I feel disconnected from, and I think this may be a good thing. Let's learn to live on the grid, thriving in society, while simultaneously being off the grid, with our mind, thoughts, and ideas.

What is the telos of photography?

*The term "telos" originates from Ancient Greek (τέλος), meaning "end," "purpose," or "goal." It is derived from the Proto-Indo-European root *k^wel-, which means "to turn" or "to move around," suggesting the idea of reaching a turning point or an ultimate aim. In philosophical contexts, especially in Aristotelian thought, "telos" refers to the inherent purpose or final cause of an object or a process.*

The goal or the purpose of photography is to simply have fun, detached from the results themselves. Do not worry about the photographs, but enjoy the process. I simply use photography as a way for me to increase my curiosity encourage. My goal is to increase the curiosity I possess one percent each day, and to continuously throw myself out there into the world with a camera in hand. To me, success in photography looks like waking up in the morning, simply eager to go out there, and to catch the sunrise, and explore like a child. Become a big kid with a camera, and look at life openly and honestly like a child.

Humans are by pedal for a reason, as we are meant and designed to be standing upright, and walking. I believe motivation is phony, fake, not real. The motivation is in your legs. Motivation comes through movement. You must set your body in motion, without preconceived notions. The more that you move, the more that you will see, the more that you see, the more that you will do, or photograph

I believe it takes a lot of time to find things that are interesting on the streets, And photography takes a lot of time doing the thing itself. We should strive to shoot more, and think less. We must put our swords to the Grindstone, like we are in Skyrim, grinding for daedric armor and sharpening our swords. I find so much joy in simply going out there and trying over and over again, despite the failure. Failure is inevitable. And I believe we must get used to this, when practicing photography. if I told you that you were going to fail 99% of the time you pick up a camera, will you still do it? If the answer is yes, then go out there and play, have fun! Think less, do more!

Mind, body, and soul

My thought is that the gut is more intelligent than our minds. With strong gut health, I believe we can have even stronger mental health. By fasting, not having any food in my gut, or digesting in my belly, I feel empty, lighter, and stronger both physically, and mentally. The goal is to eliminate all of the bad stuff from my body, and only input good things. When you eat satiating foods like meat it becomes much easier to fast.

Consider your soul as your body. The connection between the mind and the body, reveals your pure soul. Remove the excess fat from your face, and reveal your beautiful soul.

Intuition is composition

Fasting enhances the connection between your mind and your body. It gives you sharp visual acuity like a hunter and helps me recognize the patterns that exist in both nature and human behavior with clairvoyance. I can predict patterns and things before they even unfold when I'm on the street through the spontaneity and serendipity of the moment by listening to my gut.

By using a wrist wrap on my compact digital camera, I forget that the camera is even there. The camera should be an extension of your eye and your body.

One practical suggestion I have is to pick up a Kendama, which means sword, in Japanese. It is a hand, coordination, skill, toy, that I believe in enhances my intuition through daily practice, and subconsciously affects the way that I make compositions on the street.

We must remember that photography is a visual game of putting the puzzle pieces together, but it is also a physical medium. This means that there is agility required to practice street photography. We must be physically present in the world, bear witness, at the front lines of life, close to life, both physically and emotionally.

Affirm life through art

I'm not just making a photograph. I'm making photographs as a way for me to connect with life itself, to find meaning in the mundane and affirm my life. The goal of art and photography is to champion mankind and to uplift human spirit to a height that has been seen before.

Sculpture architecture are the Apex of beauty and art. When you look at a sculpture or work of architecture, it requires the viewer to gaze up at it, as it is elevated to a physically higher, vantage point, architecture and sculpture of gravity, with the artists decided to sculpt and craft structures that are larger than mankind.

When I stand in the center of the Wanamaker building here in Philadelphia, besides a large bronze sculpture of an eagle, that is thousands of tons in weight, with thousands of feathers, rot by hand, I am fueled with vitality. I look up towards the worlds, largest playing pipe organ, hear music that fills my soul, while underneath a very high ceiling. The detail and ornaments surrounding the building on both the interior and exterior never ceases to put a smile on my face, and have me contemplate the meaning of life, simultaneously affirming my life and how great it is to be alive.

My recent trip to Rome, I had to prove the viewing some paintings by Caravaggio inside the Catholic churches. These biblical narratives that are depicted within his work, resonate on an emotional level. Through the stories that are depicted within the paintings, in combination with the aesthetics and his use of high contrast, and the rendering, it leaves the viewer in contemplation with their faith.

I believe that photography can become the Apex of art, or at least one of the greatest art forms. A photograph defies the laws of physics, transcending space and time. after a decade of exploration within the medium of photography, I'm still very curious about what I can achieve as an artist with a camera.

Flow State

When I am practicing street photography, I enter a flow state, or would I like to call, the Zen zone. I simply go slow, moving my physical body at an extremely slow pace, typically 75% slower than everybody else on the streets. walking becomes meditation, and I believe you can achieve this state without the need of sitting in a dark room, in the lotus pose, with your eyes closed. As I am walking, amongst the chaos of the streets, I am not thinking, and simply responding with my intuition to my surroundings. i'd become one with the street, walking, endlessly, in the state of production, in my flow state.

The Age of Abundance

We have so many cars and technology, computers, bridges, architecture, yummy foods, TV shows, movies, entertainment, and artificial intelligence that can enhance our lives. However, in the age of abundance, I believe we are still still searching for meaning in life. Perhaps photography can be the ultimate outlet to find meaning in life, as your body moves physically through the world, exploring, while finding god in the details and simple pleasures in life such as walking and sunlight.

I feel the sensation of abundance through gratitude. I have endless gratitude for everything that nature provides, like water and sunlight, or fresh grass fed meat. I believe that movement is medicine, and being outside, feels me with this gratitude. I smile when I hear the bird sing in the morning, watch a bug crawl upon my skin, when I'm sitting in the grass. I'm grateful for the ants, the worms, the birds, the fish, the trees, the breeze, and everything in between.

Childlike optimism is needed right now in the world, where a child is open and honest, and more importantly, curious. children are dangerous, and courageous, because they do not know the outcomes of their decisions. This makes the spirit of a child, very pure and innocent.

When you change yourself and become more selfish, you can go out and be selfless and change the world. The ultimate goal of every day life is to impact the life of other people, and spread kindness, but not just for kindness sake, but the sake of society and humanity, to evolve to something greater. Your impact on a stranger, whether you're holding the door open for them, smiling at them, listening to them, engaging with life and engaging with others with kindness, we can brighten the world and become a beacon of light that shines in the dark.

Painting with light

Let us not forget the meaning of photography, painting with light. Or, more specifically.

The word "photography" is derived from Greek roots. It combines "phos" (φῶς), meaning "light," and "graphé" (γραφή), meaning "drawing" or "writing." Thus, "photography" essentially means "drawing with light."

With a camera in hand, we possess the ability to create an instant sketch of life. We wield the omnipotent power of the sun, and paint with it. As photographers, we seek truth through the light in a time where most receive their information, in the dark, or within a cave. Perhaps are drawings, art, pictures, our photographs, become the new cave paintings.

Light fuels me with a blissful and abundant sensation. When in doubt, just follow the light.

Move onward into the unknown

Move onward into the unknown, articulating it, and put order to the chaos. This is similar to how this world was born, this universe was once formless, but then there was light. Light etches and give shape and form to surfaces, places, faces, and things.

The world is a canvas.

We are not confined to a box or to the four corners of a canvas. We can walk endlessly or live until we are 120 years old and still not see everything in this world. I find peace in the chaos of the streets.

What is a photograph?

A photograph is not just light on surface, a paper choice, the result of a lens choice, a camera, a film stock, etc.

A photograph is a reflection of your courage (courage, cor = heart)

You can create a new in a fraction of a second. Somebody on the street once asked me,

Are you shooting with your hip? I responded,

No, I'm shooting from the heart.

Stories shape reality

When I was photographing conflict on the front lines between Israel and Palestine in the Westbank, I fueled myself with courage and curiosity at the forefront. Perhaps war and conflict will forever be present in society, and is inevitable.

I am reminded of my time in Jerusalem, when I visited the valley of Ila, and viewed the location where David and Goliath fought. I remember rolling through caves, and discovering pieces of ancient pots that have been here since the Bronze Age. when I reflect on the story of David and Goliath, it reminds me to move onward in life with courage. This small farmer boy, David, arm himself with courage, his heart, the armor of God, stepped onto the battlefield, and defeated the giant, Goliath, with the precision of a headshot, and faith.

As photographers, we too, should go out there into the world with courage, as this will be our guiding star, into the darkness, or the unknown. If I was not curious and courageous, about life itself, I would've never experienced all of its complexities, such as my exploration throughout Israel and Palestine. While armor and courage is critical to consider,

I wield my cameras as a sword, striking through the heart of chaos, revealing the soul of the street, creating visual order and harmony from the spontaneity of every day life. Photography is endless, and the camera gives me a superpower. I can walk the same mundane lane every single day and still find a new way to create something from nothing. There is always an opportunity lurking around the corner, you just have to set your body in motion, without preconceived notions, of what you will find.

The news promotes fear and hate

I believe we must all smash our TVs, cell phones, and go off the grid from the news and media. The news merely promotes fear and hate. Because of all the doom and gloom, that consumes these platforms, it will make it so that you will never want to leave your room. You might as well just get under the covers in your bed, with Netflix on, and live along the sidelines of life. We must stop consuming, hate, and living in fear. Go forward with fearlessness, and disconnect from it all.

The art of exploration

I grew up, spending lots of time in the woods. I made teepees and forts with sticks, made bridges with stones, sharpened spears, and attempted to hunt deer, climb trees, swung from vines, discovered caves, and totem poles from the Lenape tribe Native Americans who lived in my backyard, in the Wissahickon forest. When I was in middle school, we learned about the Native Americans, and their way of life, as the Lenape tribe inhabited the area and Philadelphia. The Lenape tribe lived along the Schuylkill River, where I start every morning with a walk, which means hidden Creek, alongside the neighborhood where I grew up, Manayunk, which means, where we go to drink. In the Lenape tribe, there is a Wolf Clan, who were the protectors of the tribe. They viewed the wolf as a teacher and guide as there is a legend of a Lenape tribe member being lost in the forest, but followed a wolf that led him back home. This act of bravery and courage of following the wolf taught the Lenape people the importance of trust and courage by listening to nature.

When I think of the woods, I remind myself of the story of the founding of Rome. Remus and Romulus, the founders of Rome were raised by La Lupa, a wolf, in the forest. These stories and myths intrigue me. Can you imagine what courage and intrepidity you would be feeling by being raised by a wolf by a baby. At that point, nothing will stop you, and then you can go and be a founder of an empire like Rome.

When I think of Warriors, I remembered one of the first movies that I've ever watched as a boy, a bug's life. Maybe we are all just ants in a big colony, but each ant has a role to play.

Flik, the main character and hero in the movie, is an inventor and innovator. He would make machines that could speed up the process of harvesting grain. All of the ants were toiling, picking up the grains one by one on their back. The plot goes, the ants gather the food, and work, and the grasshoppers use their military prowess, and control, over the ant colony, to provide them with the food.

Flick was the first ant in the colony to leave the colony and went out searching for warrior bugs to fight against the grasshoppers. Flick found his own path, and he fought against the grasshoppers and won in the end. The colony, then thrived, with self autonomy and control of their own population, without the overbearing rule of the grasshoppers. There's something about the story that fascinates me, almost like flick was Jesus, a messiah, in search for his Jewish disciples, who were controlled by Rome.

Take the call to adventure.

A lot of my earliest memories of watching movies, were adventure, movies, such as the goonies. In the movie, the boys are under pressure, they're all friends, in a neighborhood, but their house may be taken away from them because they can no longer afford their mortgage.

The boys had a call to adventure to find hidden treasure on a pirate ship after discovering a map to it in the attic of their father's home. In the end, they find the treasure, and the goonies can stay together. The goonies had a call to adventure, took action, and overcame the obstacles that were in their way.

I believe the individual within a colony must strive to be the hero.

Think of George Washington, crossing the Delaware River in a snowstorm. Washington and his intrepid troops fought against the British, then gaining sovereignty and self autonomy to create America. In modern day times, America is the Roman Empire 2.0. I'm reminded of this when I walk by the Navy Yard in Philadelphia and recognize the power of our naval force and military across the world. America is the Apex of where human civilization can be and strive to become.

I believe freedom is the result of a call to action, through courage, and intrepidness.

The pursuit of pleasure

We have so much abundance here in this modern world, but we squander our potential with the pursuit of pleasure. I believe we become selfish in a destructive way through gluttony and hedonistic pleasure. Sex is merely just a little gooey stuff that comes out of an orifice. It's a slight sensation for a second. It's not worth pursuing for pleasure.

A lot of pleasure seeking is distracting from the bigger picture, such as reproduction, evolution, and advancing civilization. The pursuit of pleasure lead us astray from becoming the greatest version of ourselves.

Sacrifice and tribe

The Peace Corps volunteer experience I had working as a rural aquaculture promotion specialist in remote villages of Zambia, Africa was the most paradigm shifting event that I had in my life.

When I arrived in my village, a sacrifice was made immediately. I was presented with a goat, hanging from a tree and was given a knife to slaughter it. We feasted on it for the next week.

I was now invited and welcomed to this new village, community, family or tribe.

When I was a young boy, we would recite the Pledge of Allegiance and pray together all throughout school before class in Catholic school from grades pre-K at eight. I believe nationalism is good, as it reminds my of the hierarchy necessary for a flourishing society that is,

1. God
2. Tribe
3. Land

We are all one big family that stems from one family tree.

I learned to thrive under a thatched roof while in Zambia and a surrogate member of the Bemba tribe.

At the center of the village, there's a gathering place, the church. At the center of the church, there is an altar, where a sacrifice that is made, breaking bread, as we remind ourselves of the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross.

The entire tribe is reminded of this ideal man to strive towards, through sacrifice, to strive to become like Jesus. I believe that religion and church promotes families to not only come together and create more families, but also promotes the individual within the community to become the greatest version of themselves. I believe we can all thrive together, with that ideal man at the forefront, at the center of the community.

Consider the teachings and philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth as an archetypal hero. One of his famous teachings is to turn the other cheek, to be meek, and humble. While at first glance, this may sound like weakness, or cowardice, I believe that there is some wisdom to have here.

During one of my adventures in Jericho, I was making photographs of a group of young men. One of the young men, stood out from the bunch, and was trying to flex on me, and stunt on me, by ripping the camera strap off of my neck, and breaking it. I simply did not respond, looked at him in the face, as he huffed and puffed, and turned the other cheek. If I were to respond with aggression, I may have been met with hostility in this foreign community. However, through simply not responding, a peaceful outcome occurred, as the elders nearby handled the situation. I returned to my friend Mohammed's house, he mended my camera strap, and I went back out there, once again.

Mohamed and I would spend each morning, watering Hassan's garden, this elder of Jericho that we accompanied for some tea and coffee and conversation. It is wise with locals when traveling to new places.

While Jesus was peaceful, his ultimate goal was not peace, but division, separating the wheat from the chaff. He was not afraid to use justified aggression, such as the time he flipped over the tables, and used his whip against the money lenders

outside the temple. let's draw wisdom from the teachings of Jesus, and strive to become a hero, by learning from these archetypes.

Become the greatest version of yourself

In order to become the greatest versions of ourselves, we must start with the basics, with sleep. We must sleep like the gods, at least eight hours per day. I believe that setting your circadian rhythm is a no-brainer, and a must do, in order to align your biological clock, with nature. Rise and sleep with the sun. Just simply get out there first thing in the morning, watch the sunrise, and allow it to pier through your eyes. Before you go to sleep, look outside, and go out there for a nice evening stroll, allowing the sun to pure your soul, and you will get deep sleep, after having your feast.

Before we go to sleep, we should eat like gods, and feast. After fasting all day, break your fast by gorging on as much red meat as you possibly can eat. I can personally eat around 3 to 5 pounds of beef per day, satiating, my body, giving me the power and energy. I need to conquer every single day. I believe that snacking is bad and we've been living our lives away that is similar to that of a squirrel, eating a acorns and little things here and there. Breakfast and lunch are not necessary whatsoever, but stick to the basics such as ground beef, steak, lamb, eggs, and beef liver. Just pretend like it's ancient Rome and you're defending the castle wall outside of the Vatican. With those soldiers waste their time snacking throughout the day? Or would they be defending the walls, the citizens, and the citadel? Eating is a waste of time, but feasting has a function.

How to feel like Genghis Khan in the morning? Eat 1 pound of beef liver before going to sleep. The first thing a wolf eats when it kills its prey is the liver. Consider the myth of Prometheus, and how he was chained to a rock, having his liver eaten by an eagle over and over again, and endless torturous pain, as he is immortal. there is an obvious symbol of the liver and eagle, and the power that they both represent.

When it comes to restaurants, stick to all you can eat beef locations, such as Fogo de Chão, or any Brazilian steakhouse, and the Korean hot pot places. The Korean hot pot restaurants are really great because they're all you can eat, fun, engaging,

and they also have kimchi at the salad bar. Kimchi is a great food that is rich and probiotics and will heal your gut. Perhaps our gut health determines our physical and mental health. Heal your gut, and eat some kimchi.

The word restaurant means “to restore.” in 18th century France, restaurants were originally used to sell healing, broths to restore and refresh their customers. With this in mind, the only real restaurants in a city are perhaps found in Chinatown at the Vietnamese Beef Pho restaurants. Beef broth is a healing broth, and will restore you. I believe that beef is medicine. We can all thrive together and become the greatest versions of ourselves through consuming things that increase our power and vitality.

Transcend

There’s something in me that wants to return to the garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve resided and chose to eat from the tree of knowledge and pick up the flaming swords that guard the entrance, and prevent us from accessing the tree of life, or, immortality. Perhaps destruction can become creation with these flaming swords in hand.

Is man permitted to strive to become a demigod?

I believe that in modern cities, we lack this creative spirit, imagination, and are disconnected from the old prophecies, mythology, and stories, that can be found in ancient texts. Perhaps we do not dream vividly anymore either. My theory is that because of the air pollution in the sky, in cities, we lack a connection to the cosmos, the stars, the universe above. I’ll never forget when I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia, speaking with my host father, every evening, after we ate our meal, looking up at the stars. I’ve never seen anything so beautiful in my life. I could see shooting stars, every night, every constellation, even satellites, moving freely. The colors and stars, so bright, filled the village with light despite it being so dark. I remembered the conversations I would have with my host father were typically cultural exchanges. I would describe to him how life is in the city of Philadelphia, and he would talk to me about biblical stories and prophets.

In the modern world, memes become the smallest unit of knowledge and information. Memes are like genes and the language, stories, and information, describe who we are.

During my recent trip to Italy, I spent some time in Florence, visited the house of Dante, and explored various churches and admired the beauty of sculptures, such as that of David, Hercules, and Achilles. When I witnessed Achilles in the hands of Ajax in a beautiful sculpture, it reminds me of death, and how it can be beautiful. Achilles, this fearless warrior with a lust for battle, gracefully died. I believe to transcend, we must strive to be like these heroes and archetypes, and learn from these stories from those such as Achilles, Hercules, David, and Jesus. I suggest we return to the beautiful, and surround ourselves and beauty, whether in beautiful churches, looking at sculptures, or spending time in nature.

On Easter Sunday of 2023, something called me to come back to church. I remember waking up, looking out at the city, and feeling like the world was a big prison. I don't know what it is, but I followed my intuition after a long hiatus, since I was around 13 years old. At the end of mass, we began to pray the prayer to Saint Michael, the archangel. While I attended Catholic school from pre-K to 8th grade, we never mentioned Saint Michael, the archangel, or learned this prayer. It felt like a call of battle, and invigorated my soul. I learned that Saint Michael, the archangel is the leader of God's army, and responsible for defeating Satan in the end of the New Testament, in the book of revelations.

Later that year, I felt very unfulfilled in my current job, working for the city as a photographer, and decided to quit. I packed my backpack, and headed to Rome, where I spent two months in the eternal city. Since I was a young boy, around four or five years old, I've always been visiting Italy and I'm a dual citizen between Italy and the United States.

The first time I visited Italy was for Pasqua, or Easter. I remember attending mass in the small town where my family lives, in Caserta, in the south, just outside of Napoli. The church was so tiny, and it was such a hot day. I remember a girl even fainted next to me during the mass because the church was so small, packed, and hot.

After mass, we gathered at the family's house where we participated in the traditions of Pasqua. I remember being given a big chocolate egg and a hammer, and my brother, and I, and all the children, stood on top of the table, smashing the chocolate, and revealing toys, which were mostly puppets, tucked away inside.

When I was a young boy, I loved the toy store in Piazza Navona, and my mom bought me lots of the crusader, gladiator, and warrior figurines that they sell. I thought these were so cool, and would set them up on horseback, in intricate scenes, creating stories and narratives of battle in my bedroom. I've always had an imaginative and creative spirit since I was young. I even remember when we would be in chapel, in Catholic school, during the Stations of the Cross, I would imagine scenes of battle, of soldiers fighting, in front of the cross, on top of the stations, and the pews, all throughout the church. I've always been intrigued by battle, and warriors, and I've always used my imagination to create stories. I've always been a vivid dreamer.

In 2023, I remember the first vivid dream that I had, was of an eclipse. I was lying on my back, from a first-person perspective, in Antarctica, and looked up towards the sky, and revealed the sun and the moon eclipse. The scene felt dark because of this, I remember panning down, to the left of me, and seeing another man lying on his back, perhaps an ancestor. I then turned to the right of me and witnessed mammoths grazing. The mammoths charged towards me, and I woke up. Now when I recall this dream, it's quite profound because later the next year, we had an eclipse.

There was something in my intuition, that led me back to Rome. I was working as a photographer for the city, and felt very unfulfilled, as the work I was creating is essentially meaningless. I quit the job, and went straight to Rome. I began visiting the castle outside of the Vatican, attempting to learn this prayer, to Saint Michael, the Archangel, as a sculpture of him, is positioned at the top of the castle, which is so beautiful, as he looks, graceful, with a sword in hand, thrusting the devil Downwards. I went for a day trip to Paris to practice some street photography. After the first night, photographing the Eiffel Tower, and getting myself some food, I went to bed in my hotel that night, I had a very vivid dream of a double rainbow that appeared in the sky, transformed into a clouded dragon, chased me, disappeared, and I woke up. The next day, I wandered through the streets in Paris, and discovered a sculpture of Saint Michael, the archangel, surrounded by two dragons. as I looked up at the sculpture of Saint Michael, the archangel, this hero, so

graceful, and beautiful a rainbow was casted in the sky directly above him. I had no clue what these dragons represented, and hardly any idea of the who Saint Michael is, so I decided to call my godmother, who was a nun for 40 years, and ask her about this, reciting my dream, curious about this dragon, who saint Michael is, and the rainbow. She told me that in the book of revelations, Saint Michael fights against the dragon, who represents Satan, in the final battle.

Here are two verses from revelations that describe a rainbow and the battle against the dragon:

Revelation 10:1: "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire."

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Revelation 12:7-9, KJV)

My godmother told me that this was a wink from God, as the correlation between my dream and what was embodied in reality the next day, is quite miraculous.

I followed my intuition, trusted it, and the road led me to Rome. I have found God, reached the height of my spiritual journey, and understand the role that each individual plays within this cosmic drama of life. We are all significant players, upon this stage, that is the world. While this modern world distracts us, removes us from any real sense of community and tribe, under God, I believe that we can connect with the divine through our Godlike intuition.

I no longer fear of death. I am simply grateful every morning to have another breath. I treat each night like a mini death and each morning like a mini birth. I remember learning to skateboard as a child at FDR skatepark and witnessing a man smashing his skull into the ground, a bloody mess. Perhaps this is why I am so intrepid, as I have been climbing trees, and throwing myself down obstacles fearlessly, on concrete, since a very young age. perhaps we should be like that

skater, attempting the impossible, and finding glory in the pain and suffering. If life is a video game, perhaps whether or not you beat the boss or die at the end does not matter. The outcome is irrelevant because you fear not of it.

Blessed are the free in spirit, for we shall transcend this earth.

DANTE