

## **Nobody Is a Match for Me**

I was chatting with an older photographer, somebody in their 70s, about the history of photography, specifically street photography. He mentioned that there will never be another Bresson. I then told him,

*“You’re looking at him.”*

He responded, laughing, telling me,

*“Good luck with an ego like that.”*

What I learned from this interaction is that one is not permitted to be confident in one’s abilities in this modern world. It is seen as virtuous to kill your ego, to not be audacious or bold in your pursuit of greatness. I think people expect others to just be humble, modest, and recognize their limitations. The thing with me is, I know that there are no limits, and even if I never reach my goals or achieve greatness, I will at least die trying, knowing that I was confident in my ability, and not just another emo photographer. I’d rather not kill my ego; rather, have a balanced relationship with it.

I never want to become a master of photography. I want to forever remain an amateur, perpetually learning through my recognition of my ignorance, while simultaneously pursuing excellence.

## **Uplift Humanity**

I believe the goal of photography is to uplift humanity, to champion the human experience, and elevate it to a new height. Perhaps it is those who love life the most that will make the best photographs.

*A photograph is a reflection of your lust for life.*

When I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia, Africa, working in food security with rural aquaculture, I was invited within the Bemba tribe with open arms. The most profound realization I had about these communities off the grid, and remote villages, is how the community thrives under one God, as one tribe, sharing the land. During one of my experiences, I spent two weeks sleeping under tents that were erected with sticks and tarps, praying under a thatched roof of the Seventh-Day Adventist church. Towards the end of this two-week church camp, I witnessed hundreds of Zambians be baptized in the lake. As I trudged through the water up to my knees with a camera in hand, I made photos as each Zambian man and woman was dunked into the water one by one. You could sense the fear and tension in the eyes and faces of the people before they were lowered into the water, but when they rose, a smile and open eyes on their faces were clearly visible, like they were born again.

As a volunteer, I was expected to be a helping hand in this community, but at the end of the day, they wound up helping me more than I could ever help them. This community taught me just how beautiful this human experience can be. I've never seen so many people working together, sharing their land, under one God. My time as a volunteer in Zambia helped me realize just how amazing humanity can be, despite all of the complexities we face in life. I came home with a newfound understanding of what truly matters in life, despite what modern society expects of you.

### **Break the Simulation**

In the context of photography, one is expected to make money from their work. Sometimes, when I tell people I'm a photographer, they expect I photograph weddings, events, or make portraits of people for money. This happens 99% of the time you speak with anybody about your passion, as it always correlates with some sort of income stream or monetary gain. When I tell people about my experiences and the things that I photographed throughout my life, they always tell me that I should make so much money from this, that it is so profound and great, and are shocked when I tell them I do not do it for work.

I believe we should go beyond these basic notions of monetary gain within the realm of photography, especially street photography, where it is not the goal whatsoever. Street photographers do not seek fame, praise, or money. We simply seek to become in tune with life itself, existing in the present moment, photographing life as it is. The simple pleasure of walking, exploring the unknown, and coming home with a new work of art is enough to satisfy my soul. I truly do not care if other people see the photograph, or if I am met with monetary gain from the results. This has never been the goal, never will be the goal, and I will simply continue my practice because it makes life whole and meaningful.

At the end of the day, I never do something that I love simply for the sake of making money. Even when it comes to my current job working in horticulture, it is not for the money whatsoever. As much as humans need money to survive, pay for food, rent, etc., it is simply for the passion of the great outdoors and the meaning it provides in my life. I believe doing things simply for the sake of making money is a death sentence for the soul. This, I believe, will kill your joy and burn you out.

### **You Can Create a New World in a Fraction of a Second**

The power of photography lies in its ability to change your perspective with each click of the shutter.

While I photograph life as it is, I'm merely curious about what life will manifest to be in the photographs that I make. This means, however mundane life may seem, when I uplift it in a photograph, it can potentially become like a dream. I find that my new process of photographing abstracts reality, reaching towards this surreal, otherworldly, transcendental height. This is my goal as a street photographer: to take the ordinary and create something extraordinary.

### **We Are Not the Same, I Am a Martian**

My coworker, who has been working for 30 years in the same place, is an absolute joy to be around. The reason is, she shares similar qualities to me in regards to her personality, which I find rare to find in most people my age. She has many quirks, where she walks through the gardens, dancing, almost like a big kid. It reminds me

of myself and how I enjoy walking through the city streets, teetering and tottering along the curbs, jumping on benches, walking through the grass, and dancing through the streets. She reminds me that it's OK to be childlike, to embrace our inner curiosities and unique qualities. I find that it's almost the new norm to just be boring, or the same as everyone else, follow trends, wear the same clothes, act the same way, etc.

I think when you're in that Zen zone of doing something you truly love, you forget that you even exist, or that anything is really happening, except for the present moment of pure bliss.

### **Nothing Can Break My Spirit**

With the camera in hand, and the ability for me to make something from nothing, at any moment in this world, nothing can break my spirits, or my lust for life. I fucking love life. I wake up before the sun rises, just to get my body moving. I can't help myself but throw myself out onto the front lines of life to experience another day. The simple pleasures, such as the sunlight, walking, clean water, and good grass-fed meat, combined with good sleep, are enough to keep me waking up on repeat, with a smile on my face, never in defeat. For any L or loss I take is merely a lesson, and not a mistake. For everything happens for a reason, and nothing can break my spirit this season. Fall is coming, the weather is changing, and I am so eager for the change of these seasons. When the sun goes down at night, I can't help but crawl right into bed, just so that I can wake up as early as possible. When you're full of vitality, nothing can stop you.

### **Not Just an Ant in the Anthill**

In one of my favorite movies from childhood, "A Bug's Life," the main character, Flik, stands out from the rest of the colony. While the rest of the ants are toiling with grains on their backs, one by one, serving the grasshoppers who control their food supply, Flik is an inventor, who seeks to speed up the process of harvesting grains by making machines and different contraptions. When the queen sees he stands out from the bunch, she sentences him to a courtroom and decides what to do with him next, as she believes he is disturbing the status quo. Flik proposes to leave the

colony in search of warrior bugs, to fight against the grasshoppers and gain self-autonomy over their colony. When Flik returns to the colony with his warrior bugs, they successfully drive out the grasshoppers. The ants, no longer under the threat of tyranny, can now live freely and prosperously.

This story reminds me to reject conformity, to embrace individuality, and find a deeper meaning and purpose in life. It also brings to mind the story of Jesus driving out the money changers from the temple. Just as Flik challenged the status quo of his colony to fight for freedom, Jesus defied the expectations of His society by confronting corruption. By overturning the tables of the money changers, He sought to restore purity to the temple. Both Flik and Jesus faced opposition for their actions, but they were driven by a vision of a better, more just world.

## **You Are Divine**

At the center of every village in Zambia, there is a church. In the center of the church, there is an altar, where the community recognizes the sacrifice that Jesus made. By recalling the stories within the New Testament, the members of the community have a blueprint, an archetype, something divine to strive towards. By learning about the stories of Jesus' time on earth, the individual within the tribe is given permission to become like Him. I believe this connection to something greater, to something divine, is what drives a community upwards, towards paradise, creating a New World here on earth. We all have the light of Christ within us, and we are all

divine beings here on this earth. While we are flesh and blood, as Jesus was, we too are divine and connected to something greater, something higher, something transcendental.

You are godlike.