

Courage in Street Photography

What's popping, people? It's Dante, going for my morning walk here in Philadelphia along the Schuylkill River Trail, wearing this 40-pound weight vest. This thing is freaking awesome!

While street photography is accessible to anyone, it requires an adventurous and courageous spirit to find success in this practice.

What is a Photograph?

A photograph is a reflection of your courage.

Courage comes from the Latin word for heart. When you photograph, you're displaying your lust for life; your heart is on display. The photographs you create become a reflection of your heart, your soul, and your courage.

The Lust for Battle

Consider the street as an arena. By entering this space, you open yourself up to infinite possibilities. You must charge forward, setting fear aside.

"Set your body in motion without preconceived notions of what you will find."

Child-like Curiosity

Put courage and curiosity at the forefront and embrace the spirit of play. Approach the world like a big kid with a camera—wander with an open mind. Use your camera to discover new things, explore different ways of living, and remain perpetually curious.

Don't Hesitate

If you see something worth capturing, take the picture. Don't dwell on potential repercussions until after the shot is taken. Allow confrontation to teach you how to navigate the street.

"Body language is crucial—carry yourself with confidence by keeping your head up, shoulders back, and chest open at all times."

A Story from the Streets

I'm reminded of my time photographing in the Shu'fat refugee camp in East Jerusalem. When I first stumbled across this location, I Googled it, hoping to get a better idea of what to expect. I read all this negative feedback and articles that instilled fear in me. But I learned quickly that the goal is to set your body in motion without preconceived notions.

Overcoming that fear and anxiety was essential. I embraced a naive curiosity, playing in the streets, meeting people, and enjoying local food. I even had fun boxing with a Palestinian man who was play-fighting with friends.

While walking along no man's land beside the wall, I stood still to make a photograph. Suddenly, a rock flew from a hillside and hit me in the back of the leg.

"It reminded me of when I was a kid, collecting acorns for play fights. It hurt, but it was playful, like the child who threw the rock at me."

Despite the initial shock, I didn't let that experience deter me. I kept returning to the area, capturing moments, and eventually photographed a boy throwing a baby stroller against the wall. That surreal moment was born from courage and fearlessness—something that can only emerge from a playful spirit.

A Triumphant Victory

My time photographing in the camp was a triumphant victory for me. I felt like I conquered the wall that separates Israel and Palestine. These memories fuel my understanding of courage as I walk.

"Yes, standing upon the wall may seem foolish, and I'm aware of the risks, like a bee sting or the wind knocking me off balance. But to excel in photography—especially street and documentary work—you must be bold and brazen."

The genres and all that nonsense don't matter. What matters is that, as a photographer working in public spaces, the streets become our canvas and our arena.

"Courage must be at the forefront, first and foremost."