

## Street Photography with a Documentary Approach

Over the years, I found that approaching the streets in new places requires a *documentary photographer's mindset*. While I'm interested in the aesthetics of street photography and the candid, spontaneous nature of making photographs, it becomes difficult when working in new communities.

### What's the Difference?

When I consider documentary and street photography, the main difference is **time** and **connection**:

- **Street Photography:** You remain a fly on the wall, rarely interacting with people, making pictures, and moving on. Anyone can pick up a camera and walk the streets, capturing fleeting moments.
- **Documentary Photography:** It's about spending extended time in a specific location, integrating into the community, and becoming closer to the subjects on a personal level. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the place.

*"Access allows for storytelling without the need for posing, giving the work a natural authenticity."*

### Access is Key

One simple way I found to achieve this deeper connection is by carrying an Instax camera. When you approach a scene or group of people, *offer to make prints and gift portraits* to people in the moment. This small gesture sets people at ease and builds trust. With this trust, you can then:

- Make more work in the same place.
- Return regularly to continue photographing.
- Capture candid moments without needing to ask for permission.

**Carry an instant camera, and you'll gain instant access.**

### **Getting Closer**

When I spent time photographing in Jericho, I made it a point to return after six months of photographing there and spent another three months living with a family. Each morning, I'd knock on Mohammed's door, share breakfast with him, and he'd guide me around town. This kind of access comes only when you *truly integrate* into a community and spend time there.

### **Building Relationships**

With Mohammed, I was introduced to Hassan, an old man with a small garden. Every day, we'd water his crops, sit on his porch, and talk about life. Hassan even took us to the desert where Mohammed and I hiked around the river in Jericho. These moments led to photographs that captured the *soul* of the place.

### **Make a Friend**

**Having a friend is crucial**, especially when you're photographing in unfamiliar or potentially dangerous areas. Once, a young man broke my camera strap during a confrontation. When Mohammed found out, he explained to the people that I was no threat and even fixed my camera strap using tape.

*"Building a relationship in a new community can be simpler than it seems."*

### **The Value of Depth**

When you get closer to a community through a documentary approach, the photographs you create become much more compelling and interesting than simple candid street snaps. With access, you can tell a visual story without posing people, revealing the *true character* of a place.

### **Combining the Best of Both Worlds**

- You can have a documentary photographer's approach, yet still remain in the vein of street photography.
- It's less about whether the work is *street* or *documentary* and more about the stories you're able to tell.
- The deeper the connection, the more authentic the work.

In the end, I've found this approach to be the reason I've had success in making candid photographs over the years.

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**Carry an instant camera, make a friend, and let your work speak for itself.**