A Guide to

FIELD TECHNIQUES

for Documentary Photography

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"There is one thing the photograph must contain, the humanity of the moment. This kind of photography is realism. But realism is not enough – there has to be vision and the two together can make a good photograph. It is difficult to describe this fine line where matter ends and mind begins."

Robert Frank, 1962

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INTRODUCTION.

Compiled here are observations I have made about my own working techniques from my experiences making photographs for international humanitarian aid organizations. The resulting text is a response to my own difficulties trying to get started as a documentary photographer. The intent of this book is to help facilitate the telling of countless stories that need to be told. I hope this text will inspire photographers, anthropologists and humanitarian workers to document what they witness with a personal point of view.

I first started assembling these thoughts while living in Tuscany in the summer of 2007. My writing technique was ad hoc; I would pull out my computer during lengthy airport layovers, train rides and airplane flights and write about the different techniques I teach in photography workshops. The notes finally culminated into an organized entity during the first few weeks of a Fulbright grant in Kyrgyzstan in the autumn of 2007.

Additionally, I have included extensive appendixes. These appendixes have the goal of being as useful as the main text. My primary audience is my workshop students. I have assembled these notes as a supplement to the courses I teach and as a teaching aid to myself. The intention is to have students and other readers contribute their thoughts to future editions to make it as comprehensive a book as possible.

I have written what I know about, so most of the content is aimed at photographers working for Non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, the challenges and techniques I have written about could be useful for a variety of photographic applications. Journalists, anthropologists and academics may all be able to apply some of these techniques to their own profession.

WHAT IS DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY?

Photography instructors generally have their own definition of photography according to what sort of photographic genre they're teaching. The Magnum photographer, Elliot Erwitt, defines photography as "reacting to what you see and organizing it into a frame."[1] I think this is an almost perfect definition of photography because it transcends through almost all genres.

Even in the arranged scenes found in still life, nude and commercial photographs, photography is a matter of being emotionally conscious of how you are reacting to the scene before making the exposure; and then being cognizant of how you are arranging the subject (within the frame) to convey to an audience that same feeling you're experiencing as you are reacting to what's happening in front of the lens. The key to successful image making is being aware of your emotions while composing, exposing and printing (outputting) the image; this process enables you to convey the emotional reaction you had while making the exposure to your audience.

Almost by definition all photography is a documentation (or rendition) of something, whether a portrait, still life or landscape. So, in essence, all photography is a form of documentary photography because the subject is being documented with a camera. Consequently, it becomes difficult to accurately define documentary photography. Usually documentary photography is a sociological or anthropological study of a culture or sub-culture. However, when I tell people I am a documentary photographer, they sometimes think that I shoot photographs to document items to be insured or to be auctioned. And, truthfully, photographing for insurance companies and auction houses is a form of documentary photography. But for our purposes, this text focuses on personal and social documentary photography.

Personal documentary photographers document their own world, the place in which they inhabit and the people who they intimately know and encounter. Some examples of personal documentarians are

Nan Golden (Ballad of Sexual Dependency) and Larry Clark (Tulsa).

Social documentary photographers often enter an environment other than their own and photograph daily life. The fact that they document everyday life is significant; because it is in this that we discover a distinction between documentary photography and photojournalism. I am speaking in very general terms, but documentary photographers record everyday life over a long period of time and photojournalists are driven by a story or a news event. I believe the Magnum photographer, Larry Towell, is a great example of someone who is both a documentarian and photojournalist. His book, Mennonites, is a long term and in depth documentation of a culture; and his work in Palestine (Then, Palestine) is an example of a debated contemporary subject where the photographs, either intentionally, or unintentionally have the ability to instigate social change.

Personal and social documentary photography are not mutually exclusive disciplines. It is usually implied that personal documentary photographers have an inclination towards creating art with the intention of being hung in galleries. (Sally Mann's photographs of her family growing-up in the South are a great example.) And social documentary photographers, such as Larry Towell, have a tendency to chronicle the human condition. However, one can have an insider view of the human condition (such as Larry Clark) and one can approach social documentary projects as an artist, Robert Frank.

Historically, there has been the philosophy that photographers, whether photojournalists or documentarians, should not put their own personality into the images. This is to say that the photographer's sole purpose is to attend an event and press the shutter. If the photographer chooses an obtuse angle, tilts the horizon or compositionally and aesthetically layers the images, the ego of the photographer is present and detracts from what is happening before the lens. This argument is well-intentioned and worth consideration. However, the aesthetic personality of the photographer within the photograph is unavoidable; objectivity is impossible, even the event the photographer is choosing to photograph is an aesthetic or political choice.

Alternately, photographers who gratuitously rely upon trendy compositional or technical trickery should not only rely upon these trends as much as their own clearly realized style and vision that comes exclusively from the way they compose and print their images.

I will discuss the these topics in further detail later, but the participation of the photographer with his or her own images should go no further than what happens behind the camera; in other words, scenes should not be manipulated by the photographer. What is at stake is the authenticity of the moment. The exception to this is portraiture. If it is obvious that the subject is aware of (and confronting) the camera, the photographer can direct the subject to move a certain way.

VENUES FOR DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY.

There are several outlets for documentary photography. Traditional news outlets such as newspapers, Internet and magazines often publish documentary essays in a venue traditionally reserved for photojournalistic work.

Books are the perfect example of an outlet for documentary photography. It is in the book that the photographer has a vehicle to show a broad array of images chronicling a group of people. News outlets are often limited to only a few photographs and the photographic book can combine photographs, text and maps to show the history of the subject. Also, books are altogether less temporary than newspapers and more tangible than websites.

An often-overlooked venue for documentary photographs are exhibitions. Documentary work does not have to be considered art to be placed in a public space. Often photographers forget that the purpose of documentary photography, almost by definition, is to educate and inform and it is the successful documentary exhibit that serves as an educational tool. Exhibits are not limited to galleries and museums; there are many municipal buildings such as libraries that are an important place where people go specifically to view art.

I am a social documentary photographer. My main clients are international non-governmental organizations. NGOs are organizations that do humanitarian work in developing countries and also help vulnerable citizens in developed countries. NGOs hire me to document the work that they do in different parts of the world. I do this in two ways. I photograph success stories using images that show how a person or a community has benefited from an NGO's program. And I photograph the problems that need to be solved by NGOs. Either way, the primary purposes of the photographs are to raise funds and, less-often, to raise awareness.

When working for NGOs it is important not to exploit them. Often photographers offer to photograph projects for NGOs so they can get access to interesting situations solely for the purpose of building their own portfolio. There is nothing wrong with building a portfolio from NGO assignments, but it is important to be committed to making the images they request, after all, they are your client. When I'm on assignment, I often pass by magnificent scenarios for making photographs that are completely irrelevant to the projects my clients implement. In Mongolia, I had to pass by a huge open pit coal mine displaying coal-darkened workers on a biblical scale to photograph a shoe repairman who had received a loan from a micro-credit initiative that was founded by my client. It was difficult to pass, but I returned later when I had time. Upon my return the miners were striking and I came out of the situation with better opportunities than I had originally anticipated. I never push too hard for photographs. I find, and this has been proven time and again, that if I let things happen and I trust the driver and interpreter, I end up in situations better than what I originally anticipated. It's a leap of faith, but it works.

Advocacy. A refugee advocacy group based out of Washington, DC[2] occasionally hires me to document the plight of stranded refugees and stateless people. These sorts of assignments are the kind that photographers often desire most. We go to different regions and document the devastation (usually from war, but also from politics and natural disasters) of a location and it's impact on humanity. The resulting fieldnotes and photographs are used to advocate on behalf of a specific population so that they can get more humanitarian assistance. The photographs are viewed by decision makers in Washington, the United Nations and by the general public.

I believe advocacy photography has a greater humanitarian impact than the documentation of NGO programs. However, I prefer experiencing the everyday life in a lesser-known region when I shoot development programs instead of emergency relief efforts. Often advocacy assignments only allow you a very limited time in a region where other journalists are working on similar or same stories. This way of working inhibits me from producing the sort of work I personally enjoy doing. I haven't forgotten my mandate to broaden the awareness

of the plight of the forgotten citizens of the world through photography. I choose to spend my time in the places in need of humanitarian assistance that are not getting much-needed media coverage.

There are indescribably magnificent things that happen when you spend a significant amount of time with a single family or in a particular region of the world. I was on a United Nations press tour to photograph the effects of a drought in Tajikistan. The group of reporters left the white Land Cruisers and had only three hours to get photographs depicting the effect the drought had on a small village. The work that the photographers were doing was significant. Their photographs would bring awareness to Tajikistan, a place where most Westerners couldn't find on a map. And with this awareness comes potential funding from either private donations to NGOs or in the form of international governmental funding. Journalists were tripping over each other to get the single image personifying suffering. It was competitive and there is nothing wrong with that, except it is not the way I prefer to work. My aim is to have lengthy one-on-one experiences with my subject. My philosophy is that the resulting photographs will be stronger if the people I photograph are not overwhelmed from or tired of intense media attention. There is also a sense of satisfaction derived from finding a place no one else has photographed before and spending time with a family that genuinely enjoys the attention and acknowledgment of being photographed. The result is a reciprocal and positive experience between photographer and subject that produces an accurate portrayal of a place and a people. The personality of both photographer and subject are able to blossom to their fullest potential.

GETTING STARTED.

A career in documentary photography is rewarding. Documentary photographers get to travel to remote parts of the world and experience other cultures first hand while pursuing a creative outlet to express themselves. And, perhaps the most gratifying part of documentary fieldwork is the positive humanitarian impact your photographs can initiate.

Getting started in documentary photography is difficult. There is no exam to pass, no certification and no clearly defined path. But the great thing about being a documentary photographer is that you can design your own career; and if you approach it this way, you'll be able to work for clients on your own terms.

Before becoming a photographer, of any kind, it is important to think about your temperament; in other words, are you wired to be a photographer. I started out working for a still life photographer named Stretch and he once told me he didn't care about the resulting photographs nearly as much as he enjoyed the process of building sets and solving difficult lighting situations. He worked regular business hours with a few late nights and made a great living that allowed him to spend time with his family and sail his wooden boat, his real passion. He didn't fool himself with the notion that his still life photographs of collectable dolls were art. He understood the commercial value of what he did and embraced it.

It was while working for Stretch that I realized I was not cut out to be a commercial photographer. In fact, the commercial process pained me. I had more energy than a single studio could contain. And I was unhappy.

I discovered photography when I was twelve as a potential way to travel and meet interesting people and experience different cultures. As it turned out, I was wired for this sort of work. I have a great deal of energy and enjoy working with people. I am too much of an extravert to spend my days in a studio solving lighting problems. The point here is that before falling in love with a career, make sure you aren't falling in love with only the romantic idea of

what a profession might be. As I write this, I am wearing dirty clothes and sitting in a chilly office in Osh, Kyrgyzstan with an upset stomach and faced with the enormous task of independently figuring out the logistics of shooting a book project over the next six months. Even though I am separated from my family and sick in my stomach in an uncomfortable land, I am happy. I am happy to sleep in my cold apartment and process my negatives amongst the dirty dishes in my kitchen sink. In fact, it is in these foreign and awkward situations that I am most happy. Even though I am often accused of being overly optimistic, it's hard to accept the reality of your own limitations. I will never be able to be a commercial still life photographer and have a regular workweek. And, because of this, there are many concessions I have had to make, but rather than dwell upon what I am incapable of, I have embraced what I love. The most fortunate people in the world are the ones that have accepted who they are and the situation they've been born into and aligned themselves with a complimentary career and lifestyle. When selecting a career it's important to consider your lifestyle needs.

Often people get started as documentary photographers by shooting for newspapers. Additionally many photographers shoot weddings (often advertising as shooting in a documentary style) as a source of income and pursue their documentary work on the side.

As I previously mentioned, there is no decisive way to start a career as a documentary photographer. The first step in becoming a documentary photographer is to get a body of work together that is consistent with what you would like to eventually get paid to shoot.

Many newspaper photographers shoot stories that interest them in their free time and build a portfolio. There are obvious advantages of shooting a project for a newspaper. You get paid to shoot and you have the infrastructure of an editor and a guarantee of publication. The disadvantage is that you are inhibited by the needs of the newspaper and you cannot immerse yourself into a project because you are already working full-time as a photographer and have time limitations. Additionally, it's difficult to maintain a level of enthusiasm after having spent the entire week shooting assignments.

Another option is to self-finance a project. There are many ways to do this: many shoot a project locally in their free time and others finance a trip and shoot a project in an unfamiliar place, while other people attend workshops.

If you decide to pursue a local project locally the advantages are great. It is inexpensive because you don't have to travel and you can stay at home. You can maintain a job and shoot on the side so there is little or no loss of income. Perhaps the biggest advantage is the knowledge of the subject you already have … when photographing a project in an region you know, you have an idea of what the final outcome will look like and you already have a great deal of infrastructure. The disadvantage is that you are photographing a place that may be too familiar and you run the risk of being distracted by your day-to-day obligations. The greatest thing about finding local project is that you are not relying upon the content and newness of a foreign land to carry off your project. You have to dig deep to find the soul of what's interesting.

Funding your own project in a different region or country is an exciting way to build a portfolio. The advantage is that you can go to a place with the sole intention of documenting a new culture with a limited amount of time. Under these circumstances you tend to shoot more efficiently. But the best part of this way of shooting is that you totally immerse yourself into your project. Additionally you can shoot whatever you want –in deciding what to shoot you virtually sit and ask yourself if I could photograph anything, anywhere, what would I photograph? The biggest advantage is that there is complete and absolute freedom in the way you photograph, there are no restrictions placed by editors or geography. The disadvantage is that it is expensive. Not only do you have the expense of lodging and travel, there is also the time away from your moneymaking profession. Additionally, you may need to make more than one trip to a region if you want to document a place over time.

Taking a workshop can be an effective jump-start your career, but it's important to select an instructor who is a good teacher, not just a big name. Workshops are great because you have the instructor and other students as a resource to bounce ideas around and to learn as you are doing in a supportive environment. However, workshops usually only last a week or two and although you may learn a great deal in a short period of time, you probably will not acquire an entire portfolio in two weeks. Additionally the instructors own aesthetic sensibilities may be deliberately or unintentionally thrust upon you. So, if you go this route, it's important to find an instructor open to the kind of work you would like to do and to use the workshop experience as a jumping off point rather than your only source for a portfolio.

Whichever way you decide to pursue an independent project it is important to realize that your decision on what to photograph is extremely important and it may be one of the few, if not only, times in you career where you will be able to shoot what you want, how you want to and without the inhibitions of having to please a client. Treat the time that you shoot as an extremely valuable opportunity. And I cannot emphasize enough how great an opportunity it is!

After you have made a portfolio, you have the difficult job of convincing potential clients the importance of documentary photography to their organization or publication. When I first started marketing myself to NGOs, they had the fear that professional photographs in their literature would look too expensive and donors would think they were spending all their money on promotional materials instead of programs. This philosophy is no longer a big problem because most large NGOs have a marketing or resource development department and fully understand the importance of professionally produced marketing materials. Another response I get from NGOs is that they already have a person in the field that owns a camera and they can have that person shoot the programs. The person might have a good eye and be responsible, but the reality is that if they have another job, they are not going to be able to fully commit to making images for any lengthy period of time. Additionally, this philosophy implies that the only qualification for being a photographer is owning a camera. When a client told me this, my reaction was that if I had a stethoscope, did this make me a surgeon? There is so much more to making images than owning a camera.

Another obstacle standing in the way of getting work for NGOs is that their donors are exclusively the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and they make their decisions based on reports and written grant proposals. In this case, there is little that can be done to convince an NGO that photography will help USAID grant their organization more program money. However, NGOs often use photography and writing in their online and printed literature to get public donations. It is this money that is most desirable for an NGO because there are no strings attached. It is at this point in my marketing call that I mention National Geographic magazine. I ask the person I am talking with how many times have they looked through a National Geographic magazine and read an article compared to the number of times they simply looked at the photographs. Inevitably, the answer is that they looked through the magazine much more than they've actually read the article. It is from this analogy that they realize the importance of photography in marketing for non-profits. Photographs can more quickly gain the attention of the reader than simply written words. (This is not to diminish the importance if the written word.)

CONCEPTION OF A STORY.

Coming up with a self-assigned story idea can bubble up from your subconscious or it can come after a great deal of research and thought. One method is not better than another. However, before spending a great deal of time and money photographing your story, there are many questions you must first ask yourself:

Are you interested?
And will you stay interested?
The conception of a documentary photography project is a huge commitment. Before you sink your life into it, you must ask yourself if you have enough interest and passion for the idea? Is there content enough to keep yourself motivated? If you find a subject that is conceptually rich and visually interesting, then you should have no trouble discovering a project that you can pursue for a long time.

Once, while teaching a workshop, my assistant pointed to an old couple sitting at a cafe on the street and bragged that he could make a photo-project out of them. I agreed. However, to make a great photo-essay, you need to choose a subject that has depth and layers and be aesthetically interesting. Otherwise, the "old couple" on the street might better be documented using sound, video or the written word. A great subject must not have the ability to be better documented in a different medium. It must display the special components of a photograph: a still and silent moment where everything in the frame is relevant to the wholeness of the image. These ingredients can represent something much larger than what one can conceptualize as being able to fit on a two dimensional surface.

Is it visually interesting?
When I teach workshops and discuss ideas with other photographers, many students and colleagues have what they think are great ideas. However, many of these ideas may not translate into a visual format.

As I write this, I am on a train in Italy having just traveled from Prague where I met an American, a brother of a friend of mine, who is an investment banker. He has been hired to investigate a Czech fugitive who now lives in the Bahamas with three billion dollars of money he essentially stole from Czech pensioners. The story spans several countries and has a great deal of intrigue, but it isn't visual. As I heard the stories of how he outwitted the authorities and traveled around the Azerbaijani countryside in an armored car full of millions of U.S. dollars, buying stock certificates from pensioners for pennies on the dollar, I thought, as I often do, about how I would photograph this story. The plot will most definitely be made into a Hollywood film. However, as far as a photo-essay is concerned, it is flawed. All the visually interesting components have already happened. And it is the mind of the criminal – his thought process - that makes the story interesting; and how do we photograph that? Additionally, can I access him?

Is it more than a few pictures?
Another trap is a story idea based on just a single or only a few pictures. This happens to me all the time. I come up with great ideas for a story and finally realize that I was only thinking of a single photograph. In these instances, I take the single photograph and hang it on the wall. As I will mention later, before attaching yourself to a concept too closely, it's important to make a list of potential photographs you might make.

Can you get access?
It's easy to find a great subject. And later in this essay I will discuss some great starting points. But what is most important is that your project, whatever it is, be accessible to you. This is not to say you need to photograph, as the cliché states, something in your backyard. But it's important that you be able to get to where you're going and that you have enough time (the photographer's greatest asset) to do the project. I believe that giving yourself a self-assigned sabbatical and immersing yourself in a project is a great investment in your education. (My father, a teacher, used to say: "I never let school get in the way of my son's education.") But it's extremely important that you budget time and money accordingly. I work on several projects at the same time. For example, in the late summer and early autumn I photograph at the carnivals in New England. In the summer, I photograph trees

in Tuscany and on Thanksgiving I photograph my family in Michigan. All these projects are not glamorous and have little humanitarian impact, but I love the series that I have coming out of them as much as I do with bigger topical projects. I also get to practice my skills and have an outlet. There is nothing worse than only having a single project that you can work on once a year. I like having several projects going so that I can stay sharp. Professionally, I like to have one project editing, one about to start and one that I am currently shooting.

What sort of light will be available?
Light is the key to all great photography, so it is important to think about the different lighting scenarios that will be available to you throughout the project. If you are considering concentrating on a subject that is indoors, you may have a hard time coming up with reasonably good light to shoot an entire project, especially if the only light available is fluorescent.

Also, consider the time of day. If you plan on photographing a rodeo, see what parts of the rodeo happen at the end of the day when the light is good and try and spend as much time shooting when the sun is low.

One aspect of planning a documentary project that is overlooked is the time of year. Most recently I planned on photographing a project in Central Asia. I decided that the winter, although cold and harsh, was the best time to do work. I would have shorter days and longer shadows and a mix of sunny and cloudy skies. Having an overcast sky was important because I was planning on shooting the project in black and white and also wanted a more somber feel to the images. If I had chosen the summer, when the central Asian weather is consistently sunny, I would have had longer days to contend with and hardly any rain or weather to help demonstrate the passing of time during my project. If all the images were made under a sunny sky, it would seem that the project was short term and didn't have the advantage of a change in mood from weather. Furthermore, a lot of a photographer's style is derived from the type of light used. So weather and season can be as important in illustrating the tone and style of your project as the setting and the subject.

> ***"I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure of the landscape – the loneliness of it, the dead feeling of winter. Something waits beneath it, the whole story doesn't show..."***
>
> ***– Andrew Wyeth***

What is the final format of the project?
I am currently in Kyrgyzstan on a Fulbright grant. I wrote the proposal (see appendix) to photograph five families in the Ferghana valley, an ethnically diverse and divided part of Central Asia. I chose to photograph five families because if I were to depend upon a single family to carry an entire essay, my constant presence would inconvenience them and I would limit the diversity of culture and terrain I could photograph. Additionally, if something were to happen to the family, or if the family decides they don't want to participate in the project anymore, I have four additional families to photograph and I am not putting all my eggs into one basket.

Before coming to Kyrgyzstan, I spent the previous summer writing notes on what I wanted to photograph and studied other photographers whose work I love and aesthetic sensibility I think I could apply to this region. In short, I followed the steps I have previously mentioned; and all these steps will lead up to my final product.

I started writing the Fulbright proposal by thinking about what I wanted the photographs to look and like and what venue I wanted to have an exhibit, or did I want to publish a book. My approach was to think about the resulting project and the steps that lead up to this goal, rather than make a series of images and then decide where I want to exhibit them. This is not to say that concepts would not evolve into a different project.

I decided that I wanted to have a traveling museum exhibition with an accompanying catalog. Having an exhibit in a public space such as a museum has always been a goal of mine ever since I started making photographs. The images are accessible to a

wider range of audience and the exhibit is curated based on merit rather than how it's traditionally done in a private art gallery where the photographs are selected based on marketability. Additionally, museums have a trend towards education and I think the resulting documentary project could have an accompanying lecture series on the region and the catalog could serve as a sociological documentation for scholars and the general public.

In pre-visualizing the exhibit, I decided I wanted to have archival black and white silver prints from negatives. I would shoot the project with my Leica camera and process the negatives as I shot them in my apartment in Kyrgyzstan. The process of making the photographs is simply a means to supporting the final project.

Many people suggest that you think about how feasible it is to sell your story. Although there is nothing wrong with this theory, I think the conception of a story should come from within yourself and then you can worry about your marketing as you further research and shoot your project.

RESEARCH AND PREPARATION.

There is a lot of planning and logistics involved before actually making it to your destination, gaining access and making the first exposures. You have to make sure you know as much about your subject as possible before leaving, especially if you are on a self-assignment and don't have the infrastructure of a sponsoring organization. I worked with a writer on a project in Bulgaria where we went to a remote part of central Bulgaria to photograph and interview a group of nomadic people called the Karakachani (or Sarakatsani) shepherds.[3] We took a train and a taxi and booked a room in a hotel only to eventually find out that the Karakachani are no longer Balkan shepherds, but sedentary middle-class business people. My notion of photographing a nomadic mountain people ended up being nothing more than a few photographs of the people the writer interviewed. With a bit of pre-planning, I would've been able to avoid spending time and money on a dead end project.

Initially it's important to get information by seeing photographs of the location and from first hand accounts. I look at photographs of my intended destination on the web – I usually search the country name on photo agency websites and on "Flicker" and "Google Pictures" websites. Remember that photography is a visual medium and it's important to see what sort of environments you'll be able to shoot in once you're in the country.

Also, talking to someone who has been to where you are going is a very useful way of finding out practical logistical information. I try to find Peace Corps Volunteers or university professors who have done research in the region to find out information, such as weather, the cheapest way of getting around and interesting contacts in the field.

Additionally there is an old series of children's books found in the juvenile section of the library called "Land of Enchantment". It is here that you can find all you need to know about the food, government, people and geographic terrain of a country. The books are brief and concise and can usually be read

in only a few minutes. Most importantly, there are pictures showing what everything looks like. Guidebooks are good and I usually buy a Lonely Planet book when I go away – Rough Guides and Moon Guides are also good. Buying a guidebook is a great investment. A good guidebook can offer a sense of real security; if I unexpectedly find myself in a new town, I'll know where to look for a meal and room. Additionally they have concise histories and country facts in the beginning of the book that can teach you about a place very quickly.

The most entertaining way to research it to read fiction, poetry and travelogues related to wherever you're going. I use these sources for particular photo ideas and, most importantly, this is where I get the mood of a place and a poetic idea of how my photographs should make myself and the intended audience feel. Mood is extremely important and I'll touch on this towards the end of the book.

If your destination is foreign, you have the usual process of passports, visas, inoculations and malaria medicine[4], if necessary. I check the State Department and read their recommendations. I also get a free subscription to www.reliefweb.int - they send me an update on what is happening in several countries each day. It helps me keep track of developing humanitarian issues.

I usually know if I have done enough research if I have achieved the goal of finding a family to stay with at some point throughout my journey. This usually indicates that I have a photo-project I can immerse myself into when I am at my destination. I truly believe that the greatest photo-essays come from time spent with families; and that the best way to tell a story of a country is through the eyes of a single home.

POPKA.

Popka is the Russian word for folder. I use the word Popka because the Russian-style folders have a clever way of holding different documents together, without having to punch holes into them. Additionally, I love the word Popka and use it with great frequency. I encourage all my students to create their own travel Popka with each project they embark upon. As much as anything, a travel Popka is filled with important information that gives you a sense of security if things To start with, I usually include the following:

1. Color copy of your passport and visa page
2. Emergency contact information including parents and family numbers and the address and location of the nearest embassy representing your home country (if traveling overseas). And also all the information from the organization or publication that has hired you. This includes the address of the field office you'll be working with in addition to the address of the organizations' headquarters.
3. Country profiles from the State Department and a list of local hospitals with Western standards, if traveling overseas.
4. Inoculation record.
5. International driving license. (No one anywhere has ever asked for it, ever)
6. Customs forms for equipment when traveling overseas; you can bring your equipment to your local customs office and make a list of it on their document and they stamp it with an official stamp that signifies you brought it out of the United States and did not buy or sell it when you were overseas. I usually laminate these documents.
7. Sunpath™. This is software primarily used by filmmakers that graphs where the sun will be at over 10,000 locations throughout the world. It is extremely accurate and even charts how long shadows will be at a particular time of day. It is best used in conjunction with a clinometer in addition to a compass.

8. Health Insurance Information. Always good to have your insurance information with along with contact information.
9. Medical Evacuation Insurance. I usually buy travelers insurance in case I need to be evacuated from a country for something severe. It can be extremely costly to get a medical evacuation without the appropriate insurance.
10. Credit Card Information. All the information on how to contact your credit card company if your cards are stolen. For overseas assignments, there is often a toll free or call-collect number you can dial to cancel or replace your cards.
11. A copy of your contract if you are working for an organization or a publication. It is very handy to settle any questions regarding your compensation, the scope of your work or what the field office will supply versus what the headquarters will provide.
12. Small map of your destination. Not a very complex one for the Popka. Just something that you can print off the web that shows major cities and roads.

The hardest and most creative component of the Popka is creating a list of photograph and story ideas. I try to include creative ideas I have about making photos in a particular region. These might include drawings from my mind on what a place might look like; a list of potential environments that are conducive to making the your kind of photograph; art clipped out of a magazine or even a poem that inspires a mood that seems reminiscent of your destination or subject – it's entirely up to you to be as creative as possible.

In addition to the Popka, I also carry a receipts envelope; I use a bankers bag with a zipper. I also bring as detailed a map as I can find of the region I'll be documenting.

IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENT.

One of the most frustrating and inaccurate criticisms of documentary photography is that it is easy to make photographs in an exotic or foreign land. There is the notion that when the photographer arrives at a destination, everyone is dressed in their ethnic costume and the unusual landscape leads to the inevitability of interesting photographs; all you have to do is randomly aim and snap the shutter. This simply is not true. However, it is often the case that photographers rely upon the content and topic of their work to carry the story. With some practice and thought it is easy to decipher a good image from one that is simply a mediocre rendition of a place, but lacking aesthetic depth, mood and originality.

Just as in commercial and wedding photography, you want to maximize the use of the environment in which you are working. Commercial photographers often build sets in studios or use scouted locations and a team of stylists and assistants to ensure the photographs are exactly what the client is looking for.

Wedding photographers have beautiful venues decorated with flowers and photograph people in their finest outfits. Therefore it is ironic that both a wedding photographer and a commercial photographer accused me, as a documentary photographer, as having an easy time coming up with my photographs because the environments were so rich. Although wedding and commercial photographers have there own set of problems to deal with, it should not be assumed that just because I am in an exotic location, all I have to do is aim my camera and each photograph I make is a glorious piece of art. Not only am I limited by not being able to manipulate my subjects, I am forced to work in adverse weather conditions in garbage-strewn landscapes with children coming in and out my frame and photographing several days at a stretch to get a single unmanipulated image that represents the work an NGO is doing. This is not to mention having to continuously eat local food (like mutton fat) and sleep on a cot underneath

the stars with no plumbing or electricity because there are no hotel rooms. Therefore, I take these remarks from other photographers as compliments, because the environments in which I photograph are generally awful, and the photographs don't necessarily represent the hardships I've had to endure to make them; in fact, they've illustrated that all I've gone through on an assignment looks easy. I think in documentary photography it is implied that there is an extraordinary story behind getting the images. And we should look at the work on its own aesthetic merit, rather than thinking about what it took to get the image. This is not to say that I don't look at other photographers work and ask myself, "How the hell did they get that?"

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Where and when you select to shoot are very important decisions in the final outcome of your work. Good light and interesting subjects enhance the photographs significantly, but there is a lot more to it than time and place; and there is a great deal of effort, planning and expense (not necessarily financial) to getting into these environments.

Many documentarians believe that they must photograph what they are handed, and to a certain extent this is true. But you also have to consider where you want to photograph. Your opinion matters because the photographer is the one who best knows what's involved in making photographs. It is important to acknowledge to yourself, and others, that you have been hired not only to make photographs, but also to consult on the best way to facilitate your assignment.

Even with the infrastructure of a hosting NGO, the local staff and country director (in NGO photography) are often accustomed to folks from the head office or headquarters arriving and spending a week in the office interviewing and auditing – but a photographer is a unique guest with a specific need to be out in the field because they are only capable of photographing what is in front of them whereas writers can rely upon interviews from people who have been in the field.

There is a great deal of common sense involved in maximizing the sorts of images you can come up with in the field. Many NGOs have projects that rely upon training local NGOs. These capacity-building trainings may be the bulk of what an international NGO does, but not a very interesting subject to photograph. There are few things worse than traveling across a country to photograph someone in front of a chalkboard discussing safe-sex practices with a banana and a condom. So, before leaving on an assignment, make sure that what you are photographing is going to be compelling and visual. Instead of photographing the safe sex demonstration, it would be good to photograph sex-workers who are employing safe-sex techniques with their clients or spending time in an AIDS ward and making advocacy photographs that document the problem of AIDS and why it is necessary to practice safe sex. It is very easy for an NGO staff to arrange for a photographer to photograph their meetings, so often that is what is on the agenda. But the photographs have to be compelling and interesting and it is often up to the photographer to suggest ideas for interesting situations. The key is not to be shy about asking for what you need. The worst is that they can say "no".

APPROACHES (PEOPLE AND WORK).

Once you get yourself into interesting situations, it's important to make sure you handle the folks you are photographing delicately. There is a large amount of trust involved in photographing people in situations that might be uncomfortable.

Don't lie. When approaching people under almost any circumstance, I make it a point never to lie about who I am and why I am photographing. I usually say, my name is so and so and I am here to photograph for XYZ NGO. Or, if you're a student, tell your subject this – one of the greatest parts of being a student is that you can approach potential subjects with a completely non-threatening reason. When introducing yourself, it's important to be confident and not give power to the subject to say no. This is not to say you should be rude. Use a firm handshake and act as though making a photograph of them is no big deal. If a photographer shyly approaches a subject and sheepishly asks to make photographs, the subject will think something suspicious is happening. Approach your subject, shake hands and kindly say what you are intending to do. If they say no, simply walk away. Often, while you're walking away, the subject will ask you why you're taking photographs and eventually allow you access. But, it's important never to have the attitude of being offended when someone denies permission; you're only doing your job as a photographer by asking permission and you'll get plenty of rejections. But it's very difficult to come up with a successful photograph of someone who does not want to have his or her photograph taken.

If you are in a situation where there is a group of people and you sense one person is uncomfortable with being photographed, shoot photographs in a different direction. But make sure they see you photographing. Then they have the opportunity to see that being photographed is harmless. After this, you can casually suggest including everyone in the photographs; your chances of being able to photograph everyone are greatly increased.

FIXERS, INTERPRETERS AND DRIVERS.

After I worked for several years as an assistant at a still life studio in Maine, I saved enough money to go and shoot my own project. After much planning and research I decided to go to Bulgaria and photograph the Roma (or Gypsies[5]) and another group called Pomaks.

Although I did a great deal of research before going to Bulgaria, I didn't realize what Bulgaria would actually be like … for example, I had no idea that there would be a Cyrillic alphabet or that nodding your head meant "no' and shaking your head left and right meant "yes".

I had someone through a local NGO arrange for a family stay to photograph a Pomak family in a small village called Ribnova. Pomaks are a Muslim group of subsistent farmers that went through a great deal of persecution in both communist and post-Soviet times. I left Sophia on a bus with a family's name and address on a torn shred of paper. I got off at the last stop thinking I was in Ribnova. I showed my piece of paper around and realized that I had to take another bus from across the village. Buses only went to Ribnova twice a week. I luckily managed to catch a bus the same day. When I finally arrived in Ribnova, I showed my paper with the address on it around and a young girl named Ruminiana, or Rumi, met me.

Rumi was only ten. We explored Ribnova until her parents arrived from the tobacco fields. She showed me where brick makers were making blocks from mud and drying it in the sun. I spent the afternoon with the brick makers and got some wonderful photographs. The lesson I learned from the experience is that photographers must think like a child, because what interests a child is also visually interesting. So whenever I try and make plans to shoot photos, I always think about what is visually interesting rather than the historical context or thought behind a subject. We must never forget that photography is a visual medium. Rumi not only was one of my best interpreters (even

though she didn't speak English) she was one of my great teachers as well.

Fixer. A fixer is usually a local person who "fixes" things for a photographer. They act as an interpreter, but more importantly they know their way around a place and can arrange for a photographer to get into the situations that are most conducive to making photographs. A good fixer can get you into a heroin shooting gallery and into a normally closed religious ceremony in the same day. Here, in Kyrgyzstan, my fixer is named Samat. I met him at the bazaar trying to sell his "brother's" used mobile phone. He helped us negotiate the purchase of a DVD player for a friend of mine and I thought his skills were good and I took his number and I hire him when I'm out in the field.

Interpreter. An interpreter is usually hired solely based on their language skills. They often have formal language training and are great in translating technical data and are generally under-employed and on their way to working in a administrative capacity or internationally. NGOs usually have field workers that act as interpreters for visiting photographers. They are savvy to the projects being implemented, but usually don't act in the same capacity as a fixer.

Interpreters are generally highly educated and over-qualified. A good interpreter realizes this and understands that all that is done in the field does not require their assistance. A good interpreter is a major asset and a poor interpreter is a liability. Interpreters are tools that photographers call upon when needed. It can be important to have them present, even if they aren't speaking. They can serve as a conduit to a culture and are informed of the environment around the photographer. However, interpreters often get bored from watching the photographer and start to make conversations with the subject or do something equally distracting that would utilize their language skills. A good interpreter will keep stay focused on being of assistance only when needed.

Drivers. A driver can be more important than either an interpreter or fixer. By nature, they are more informed than interpreters, and know which routes to safely take and where the action is. They can often be more resourceful than fixers, although both are street smart. On long hauls, I try and get two drivers, one for the first portion of the assignment and then one as a replacement. Long days at the wheel can make a driver extremely tired. Usually it is logistically difficult to have a replacement driver, so I usually budget a day of rest for the driver and fixer in the middle of our trip.

It is not uncommon for the driver to get wrapped up in the project the photographer is working on, and occasionally the driver will enter the building the photographer is working in and start art directing the subjects. When this happens, I often send the driver to search for something in the car that does not exist. I ask them to get my small black pouch full of film that is my suitcase. With the intention of being useful, they go and look for a black pouch that does not exist; they are being useful and I have tactfully and successfully had them leave the scene they were manipulating.

Having a good crew is important. As previously mentioned, fixers, drivers and interpreters can be more of a liability than an asset. When starting out, it's important to explain to your colleagues that they are an important link to their culture and although they have been hired because of their excellent language skills or driving ability, you often only need them for support in case something goes wrong or for an interview after the photographs have been made. A good interpreter will not interact with your subjects while you are photographing. Fixers, interpreters and drivers, being good hosts, want to help and often ask the subjects to smile and look at the camera and to stop doing what they are doing to acknowledge the camera. This is a problem, so initially I explain that I am striving to get as natural photographs as possible. It is a hard concept to grasp because although they have been hired for their language skills, they are most valuable when they only speak necessarily. So, when we meet a subject, I try and have the subject go about what they were doing as if I wasn't there. It takes some time, but after a while, the novelty of a

person with a camera wears off and they fall into their routine again. This is when the unposed and natural photographs occur.

When I arrive in a country I make sure to include the driver and the interpreter in the decision making process. This ensures everyone knows each other's needs. When going on longer expeditions, I take the crew to the grocery store and we buy provisions and water. I also allow everyone to buy one CD or cassette for the ride in the car; this is a democratic way of cycling through everyone's music. I also, if there are seat belts, instruct the driver not to start the car until everyone in the car is buckled up.[6]

When in the field, I instruct the interpreter to stand over my right shoulder. I shoot with a wide-angle lens and this guarantees that they won't be sneaking into the edge of the frame. Also, having the interpreter behind me makes the conversations I have seem more realistic; I communicate with the subject, the interpreter translates what I was saying and the subject's response is relayed into my ear by the interpreter – the cycle of communication is efficient and seems the most like a real-time, person-to-person conversation.

Most importantly, I treat my colleagues with a great deal of respect and I always try to have fun. They are gold to me and I rely upon them for guidance that, in many cases, is the only source of security I have in an insecure place. Many of my interpreters have become very good friends and we've stayed in touch via the Internet over the years. I've seen Ramil from Azerbaijan grow and mature as a photographer; Bako, from Tajikistan, has moved to the Netherlands to get his masters degree and is now the proud father of a beautiful baby girl; and I've seen Tamunia, from the Caucasus, get married and raise her daughter.

RAPPORT.

Everything you do and how you act is going to be interpreted as how all foreigners (or, at the very least, all the people from your country) act. So it is important to be a good ambassador, both for you and your country and for the organization you represent.

From the very start, it's important to take a genuine interest in your subjects. If you aren't sincerely engrossed, then you run the risk of tiring of your project idea and never finishing. Additionally your subjects will probably recognize your disinterest and lose patience in helping you with your project.

In observing the subject, it is my practice to do exactly that: Observe. I try not to participate in what is happening at all while I am shooting. Initially it seems a bit awkward to simply squat on the floor and keep a camera up to your face and verbally ignore the people who have invited you into their home. After a while, about twenty minutes, no matter who you are photographing, they go about their daily routine. A fast track to getting into their daily routine is to ask what they would be doing if you were not there and then ask them to go about their day. It may seem disrespectful, but it isn't. And it is a profoundly powerful experience when you have built a silent rapport with a family only through your own observing. There will be other times to socialize – when the light isn't good or when it's time for a meal, or when you decide to kick a soccer ball around with the children in the family.

When photographing, it is important to stay focused and shoot photos without verbally interacting with your subject. At first it will seem awkward, as if you are rudely shooting photographs without acknowledging the people who have graciously allowed you to document their day-to-day life. But, after a while, about half-an-hour, people will start to settle into what they had previously been doing and you'll be off to getting photographs beyond simple portraits. This is the point where my heart starts to race with excitement. And eventually, after even more time, there is a magical, unspoken, trust that develops and soon, although you have said very little, you are often welcome to witness almost anything

that occurs in your subject's life. You will find the rapport you have through observation and quietness will far outweigh anything you can get from a formal interview or portrait session. If you think about your own life, the people you are closest to are not the people you only have conversations with, but the people you spend a great deal of time with ... and this is why time is the photographer's biggest asset!

The only way I know how to initiate a good rapport, is to keep the camera held up to my face and keep looking through the viewfinder. I study the frame and compose from the edge and DO NOT remove the camera from my face. Even when it gets weird, I keep looking through the viewfinder. The subjects will laugh and act nervous at first. I DO NOT laugh with them, I let them just get used to my presence. And then they'll talk with me. If you NEED to answer, answer using only one or two words, but I don't take the camera away from my face. I stay quiet and think about the frame and focus on what is happening and then, after a period of what seems like an eternity, the magic happens and my subjects enter their own life again and I have broken through and have candid access to whatever will happen in front of my lens. This paragraph may be the most important paragraph of the entire essay. This is the technique I use to gain access into other people's lives. And although there are few to no words exchanged, there is an understanding and profound spiritual bond between photographer and subject.

The significance of listening. It is important to allow the subjects to discuss their lives with you; often much more can come across in the final photographs when you know more about your subject. The time to do this is early on in the relationship with your subject. Although this may seem contradictory to the previous paragraph, there are times when you should take the camera away from your face and not photograph. These interactions are more fruitful than aimlessly clicking of the shutter. It is this non-judgmental (and genuine) listening that can build a reciprocal trust that will allow you to have intimate access into other people's lives. They are allowing you access into their family and life, so it is important to dignify what they are saying by patiently listening and letting them explain. Don't get greedy with making pictures; they'll automatically come with time. I like to make the experience of photographing someone as enriching for the subject as it is for me. Most people like to tell their story and I like to hear what they have to say. I let the camera hang from around my neck, I sit back and listen.

I spent two weeks staying with a Roma family in Velingrad Bulgaria. I had limited time, and no interpreter. One day Roman, the father, took me outside behind the house and for two hours explained to me the process of making adhesive glue from tree sap (at least that's what I think he was explaining). And it was during this time that we bonded and started to build the friendship that would eventually lead to him inviting me to be a part of his family.

A couple years later, on a return visit to Velingrad, I had been embraced by the whole community as Roman's son. It was as if I had never left. And during this visit, Roman and his wife, Dora, found out that his oldest daughter, Mira, had run off to Argentina to marry an older man without Roman and Dora's approval. Mira sent a letter to the family explaining she had married without their approval and without inviting them to the ceremony. I was there when the letter arrived. Dora was upset and frantic. We comforted her as much as we could and then we respected her wishes to be alone. Roman and I left the house and got a coffee in town. As Dora stayed at home, Roman and I sat quietly in the coffee shop. We sat quietly as I comforted the old man. His life had changed forever and he and I contemplated the future of his family together. Even though few words were spoken, I think he was grateful for our friendship.

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Exchange of money. Often potential subjects expect money in exchange for being photographed. I never give money solely to photograph someone. Ethically, I think it is important that whoever is having their photograph taken is doing so because they want to, not because they are profiting from it. In paying for photographs you can be taking advantage of

someone who doesn't necessarily want to have their photograph made, but agrees to because they are in need of money. There are circumstances where it is important to compensate people for providing services. I tend to leave money for families if I have stayed with them for several days. They have had to carry the burden of providing me with lodging and it is only fair that I reimburse them generously for a place to stay. To date, it has never happened that we've agreed upon a price (or that I would pay) in advance. I usually stay and hand them a sealed envelope and say thanks as I am heading out the door. If I anticipate that they will not accept the money, then I'll hide the money and tell them to check under my pillow (or wherever I've left it) after I've gone. This method is particularly effective in preventing an embarrassing negotiation between the photographer and the local family.

It is important to keep any promises you make to your subjects. Absolutely do NOT offer prints to someone you cannot logistically provide prints for. If I honestly do not think I'll be able to deliver photographs to a beneficiary or subject, I simply tell them in all likelihood that they probably won't see the images. They are often surprised, and content with my honest answer to their request. On occasion I've even been thanked for being truthful. However, I usually try and make the effort to give prints whenever I can, or, if I'm working for an NGO, I'll encourage the local office to provide photos to their beneficiaries after they've been printed in an annual report or they've received a DVD of my work from the head office.

GUILT.

I have taught a workshop in humanitarian photography in Uganda. In one part of the workshop, I take the students to a remote village that has been devastated by AIDS. On the first evening, the students meet the families they will spend the next several days with. After this, we return to our compound and discuss the experience; the discussion inevitably produces tears from what appears to be feelings of anger and sympathy - how hard their lives must be? When they look further into their own reaction, they realize that the feelings are not actually sympathetic, but more of guilt. "How could I have so much and they have so little?"

During the course of the next few days, the pictures they make are not of devastation and disease, but simply photographs of families living in Africa. And the student's feelings of sympathy and guilt often transform into admiration and, on occasion, jealousy. The admiration comes from the courage their families demonstrate in the face of poverty and disease. The jealousy comes from experiencing first-hand an unfamiliar closeness and interdependence that non-western families possess. This is not to imply that Western families are not close and interdependent; it has, however, been my observation that there is a different sort of relationship found in an African family than in the global north.

The big payoff after working with a single family over a long period of time is that documentary photography is not simply proof of devastation, but an accurate record of a culture in a specific time and in a specific place.

PATIENCE.

"The photographer must lie in wait, watching out for his prey, and have a presentiment of what is about to happen." Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The New Yorker Magazine*

Time is our most precious asset; and time can afford you the luxury of patience. There are two approaches to making photographs. Much like hunters, photographers stalk things. The most common approach to photography is to wander and shoot what you see as you see it. This can be done meticulously, with a large format camera, or more casually with a handheld camera.

With a large format camera, the photographer sees something that attracts their attention and sets up the camera and composes with deliberate actions. The nature of large format photography does not allow photographer to play around in a situation as much as with smaller cameras. However, large format photographers often pre-visualize what a scene may look like at a particular time of day and either wait until the light is where they want it or take notes and come back at another time. Anticipating what light will look like at another time of day is not exclusive to large format photographers. I encourage all photographers to consider whether or not a scene would be rendered better at another time of day. (In the Equipment section of this book, I will mention Sunpath® software that tracks the path of the sun and the length of the day.)

We can use the same approach with a handheld camera. However, the adjustments made are not with tilts and shifts of the lens, but movements of the entire camera and by studying what is happening within the frame. The usual approach to small format photography is often very casual; put the camera up to your face and snap a photograph making sure that you've included everything you intended to without fully considering where things are placed in the frame. It is important to contemplate the entire frame.

Another approach, which is more easily done with a smaller camera than a view camera, is to find an environment to play around in and shoot a series of photographs based on what you anticipate happening. To use the hunting analogy, this is more like setting up a blind and waiting for ducks to come into your field of view, rather than aggressively wandering around looking for your subject. I find this method to be less used than the grab-shot method and generally will yield more successful results. For example, on the street you might see a shaft of light between two buildings and study and compose using that light in anticipation of someone moving through the light. When a person walks through the light, the photographer clicks the shutter and makes a photograph that seems spontaneous, but was actually anticipated. You can continue to stay in the same location and wait for different people to travel through the light, snapping a photograph each time. It is a fun exercise and makes for more visually complex photographs. The success in this method relies in recognizing a good environment, or dynamic scene, and patiently waiting for things to happen within the frame.

In terms of documentary photography, it's important to employ both methods. If you come across a scene that could eventually be a terrific place to shoot, but you don't see the photographs immediately, it would be wise to stop and ponder and patiently see what sorts of opportunities present themselves to you. For example, at a carnival there are all sorts of wonderful anticipatory photographs with rides moving in an out of the frame, mixed light sources and various characters wandering around. Try hanging out on the midway and framing up a scene and see what happens. A crowded public space like this also makes for a person with a camera to become very inconspicuous. It's an ideal setup.

You can use these methods in a variety of environments. In an intimate situation, where you might be photographing a family, position yourself where there is the best light. When you are indoors, position yourself by a window and wait for activities to happen there, rather than chasing the events. It is amazing what will travel into the frame when you least expect it. I was in a situation where I was documenting the lives a poor family in Indonesia. I had stayed with the family for several days, sleeping on the floor between the grandmother and grandfather. I was sure not to

stage any photographs and I stuck by the window light and waited. And waited. My patience was running dry. When I thought I had shot all I could, the mother came by the window and poured water from a basin into a makeshift sink. I had imagined how I would frame the picture and I snapped away – slowly and deliberately. The light on her was perfect and the water seemed to be flowing beyond the frame. It was very atmospheric and the most successful image of the three days I had stayed there; I believe it is in these quiet moments that documentary photography really expresses the life of a people. There are always big events we want to document, but the essence of a people remains in the non-events – in the day to day. And as far as I could tell, a simple photograph of her pouring water into a basin, expressed the quiet mood and rugged beauty of this Indonesian family.

On another occasion I was traveling with a writer in Gaza. With poor security and limited time, I had been having a rough time getting any photographs truly depicting the lives of the Palestinians. A farmer invited the writer and me into his home. His wife was washing tomatoes in a sink. There was no electricity and no light except for light from some holes in the tin ceiling. I looked up at the light-source and the woman I photographed said the holes were from bomb shrapnel. These little shafts of light were all I had to work with and it made for a beautiful photograph. Furthermore, the writer used the story of the shrapnel as a metaphor for an entire story about the plight of the Palestinian refugee. There was a sad poetry in a woman washing tomatoes by the light of shrapnel holes. It is important to look at the elegant poignant beauty of a situation, rather than rely exclusively upon depicting devastation.

What was important to me is that in each scene I didn't manipulate what was happening and I didn't rely upon making a simple portrait. I waited until I had something real and profound that could be rendered in my own quiet style. It took a lot of patience, but I never got worried; I knew it would simply come if I waited long enough.

ACT OF SHOOTING PHOTOS.

There are some simple things I keep in mind when I am out making photographs. They all revolve around the notion of making photographs deliberately, rather than casually.

Skiing and photography. When we put aside the day to go skiing, we plan ahead, watch the weather report, pack a lunch, drive to the mountain, buy a lift ticket and put on our skis. And then we ski our hearts out. We harvest all we can from the day and get in as many runs as possible. We never consider doing something else while we are skiing.

Often when people plan to spend the day making photographs, they don't put in the planning, time and energy that they do when they've planned a ski trip. The reason is there is a notion that photography can be done passively. This is to say that amateur photographers can spend the day walking the streets with a camera around their neck and passing it off as if they were seriously making photographs. When planning to spend the afternoon or a whole day making photographs, it is important to make sure you are deliberately focused on making images. Often photographers will go out with the intention of making portfolio pieces and then find themselves working around a lunch appointment or social engagement. Generally, documentary photography and street photography are solitary endeavors. When shooting a documentary project, you are interacting with the folks you are photographing; however, the interaction is minimal, ensuring that what you are documenting is authentic. The authenticity of the moment is a beautiful and essential part of successful documentary fieldwork.

To further use the skiing analogy, there are folks who make a living from skiing every day (ski patrol and competitive racers) and those that only ski on holiday. Just as there are professional photographers and there are people who spend their vacation at a photography workshop or a foreign destination with the intent to photograph. As photographers, our goal is to maximize the amount of time we spend

making photographs. If we are truly dedicated to being a photographer, it is necessary to set aside many traditional lifestyle priorities and dive into the world of photography.

To do this, we must study the environments and the light we like to photograph in and set aside time to deliberately make photographs in situations that lend themselves to making these sorts of pictures. The environment and light we choose is similar to the quality of snow and the weather conditions of a skier. And, just as photographers, professional skiers have the ability to select the best conditions to ski in … we photograph, or ski, everyday, so that when the conditions are best we can latch on to them and make the best images possible (or the best turns in the snow). And because everyday is spent making images, you don't feel the inhibiting pressure of having to make a spectacular portfolio image in a predetermined and limited time. As the poet Rilke is quoted as saying, you cannot force sap from a tree. And, a wonderful thing about being dedicated to photography is that you can spend a certain portion of your day pursuing it without having to drive to a ski resort.

How to hold a camera. It may seem sort of odd to spend a section of this essay discussing something as seemingly obvious as how to hold your camera, but how you handle your camera is a necessary part the deliberate process of making a photograph. Generally, when working with an SLR or a rangefinder with interchangeable lenses, it is good to support the lens and bottom of the camera with your left hand. Having your left hand flat under the camera and allowing your thumb and index finger to focus or adjust the aperture ring ensures that the camera will be as steady as possible when the shutter is pressed. Additionally, holding the camera like this and using both hands allows you to scour a situation, almost stalk, and be deliberate with what you are seeing and eventually photographing. Additionally, I wrap the camera strap around my right wrist. Doing this prevents me from having the camera casually hanging around my neck. It forces me to be active, rather than passive, when I am in an interesting situation. Also, the strap around your wrist prevents the camera from falling and the strap from getting in the way of your lens.

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Below is a list of things to be aware of when you are actively shooting in a situation:

Hold the camera and only the camera. Often non-professional photographers, NGO workers, or writers who need to make photos in addition to writing will put there notebook under their arm and a pen in their mouth and make a photograph as an afterthought. As if to say, "Oh, yeah, I need a picture of this too." Acknowledge the importance of photography to your project and take time and compose photographs rather than passively photograph.

Get out of the car. If you see something from the car that catches your eye, by all means snap away. But be sure to also get out of the car and see if there is a better angle. Don't be lazy. Spend the time to think about the frame.

Minimize the interaction you have with subjects while shooting. It's amazing the rapport you can get from silently observing. We've discussed this earlier, but it's important to bring it up again.

Keep the camera up to your eye at all times, even after it gets weird. The moments you are waiting for will happen the instant you take the camera away from your eye. Often I find myself waiting for someone in the frame to move their attention away from me and get involved with the situation they are in. If I take my eye away from the viewfinder, then they inevitably try to make eye contact with me or acknowledge me in some other way. In this regard, it is almost as if your job is to win a staring contest.

Most importantly, BE DELIBERATE. Do not passively make photographs. But keep in mind that your goal is to intuitively and emotionally portray a situation. Don't let your deliberate use of the camera inhibit the poetry of the moment you are documenting.

THE FRAME.

In discussing light and the frame, it is important to know that there is already the assumption that the photographer has an understanding of how their camera works. This is not a technical manual, but a guide to practices and approaches when conducting documentary fieldwork.

The frame is extremely important because everything within the confines of the frame is significant to the success of the photograph as a whole. The proportions of the traditional thirty-five millimeter frame are in a ratio of 2:3. This ratio is, in my eyes, perfect. The rectangular shape allows for us to compose in a way that allows the eye to freely move in an oval direction around the edges of the frame and admire and study the three dimensional layers portrayed in a two dimensional medium. Alternately, the square format often encourages the photographer to compose in a classical manner, putting the main subject exactly in the middle of the composition. This sort of composing is relevant and useful; however with some practice, a seasoned photographer can compose using almost exclusively the edge of the frame to make more sophisticated and layered photographs. I am a firm believer in cropping the image within the viewfinder. There are a couple exceptions when I feel cropping is necessary. During critiques, I crop student's images to demonstrate how they could have more effectively composed; on occasion, I crop my own images, when I am unable to crop within the camera the way I had intended to due to obstacles between me and the subject or because I did not have the equipment (e.g. longer lens) at hand to make the image I anticipated. In this later case, I compose the image as best as I can in the lens and crop accordingly in the print. This happens very rarely because I have become so accustomed to the lenses I shoot with that I usually only find myself in situations appropriate to my favorite focal lengths – 35mm and 28 mm. With no cropping, we are already making decisions and editing what we want people to see when we are making the choice to trip the shutter.

When documentary photographers are getting started, they often initially limit their subject to people's faces. This is an obvious starting point because facial expressions can send a clearly universal message about the condition of a population. There is no doubt that a face is an interesting subject and can be a powerful tool in the overall outcome of a complete photo-essay, but a series of portraits do not complete a story. We don't see where people live, work or play.

As a photographer, I, sometimes to a fault, avoid making photographs simply depicting people confronting the lens. I do, however, have to make these images a great deal when working for NGOs. It is the faces of specific beneficiaries, combined with the written word (and their story) that often stimulates donorship and social awareness.

Similar to the portraits we just discussed, photographs composed with the main subject, whether a building, a tree or a person in the center of the frame abruptly rouses the viewer's attention. With this deadpan aesthetic, the viewer often sees and registers all the photograph has to offer in a very short time. This is great for applications such as commercial or wedding photography. But, with a more sophisticated frame, the viewer can be forced into spending time studying all the details. For example, a former student of mine photographed a birthing clinic in Uganda during a workshop. The photographs that were made during this session resulted in an extraordinary documentation of a culture. Not only did the photographs depict the actual childbirth, they also showed the entire environment of the clinic. As viewers, we were able to look at and compare conditions to a clinic we have in our native country. But, what I really enjoyed in these photographs were the details. The images were made in a way that showed the medical instruments and products used by the African midwives. In short, the images managed to hold my attention a lot longer than a simple portrait. The composition of the frame and the way the edge was used, encouraged me to float around the rectangle of the frame rather than simply gaze at the explicit subject displayed in the middle of the composition. Sophisticated imagery such as this is necessary to the completion of a successful documentary project.

Because photographs are made up of an entire frame, as photographers, we are responsible for everything in the frame. When studying what is happening within the frame at the time the exposure is made, it is important to be cognizant of how the shapes of the people within the frame interact with each other and with their environment. Creating layers within a photograph, both visually and symbolically, is the core of photographic composition. Even with the deadpan aesthetic, the object placed in the center of the frame, the rest of the composition has to compliment the main subject. It is how you arrange the frame that lets the viewer know who you are as an artist or documentarian.

When composing and thinking about the spatial relationships within the frame, one of the first decisions we can consciously make is where to put the horizon. If we want our subject to look vulnerable and diminutive, then we can raise above the subject and aim the camera down at the people we are photographing, thus putting the horizon in the upper portion of the frame. Alternately we can get down low and aim up at our subject if we want the subject to look imposing or intimidating. Additionally, you can create a sense of tension by having the horizon run through the neck of the main subject, separating the head from the body. A comfortable place to put the horizon is through the main subjects shoulders, if you want the horizon to play a relatively silent role in your photograph. Any way you compose, the horizon is part of the composition, even if it is decided to leave the horizon out of the frame. Most importantly, being aware of the horizon is a great starting point in determining how everything interacts within the frame.

Tilting the horizon is a great way to add the sense of motion to an otherwise static photograph. A tilt of the frame gives the viewer the feeling of motion, as if in a boat. I was photographing the Tuareg nomads in the desert of Niger. I was staying with a family and as the evening approached, I photographed the mother crushing grain. To give the sense of her hard work, I simply tilted the frame and shot at a slower shutter speed, making a slight motion blur, and the image became more alive and full of an energy that transcended beyond the frame.

As a photographer, it is great to give the illusion that significant events simply happen in front of the camera. It's a matter of getting into the right environments and interacting with the subject while still being unobtrusive. But, when we are in a rich environment, sometimes we tend to get overwhelmed. There is so much going on and we've worked so hard to physically get to where we are that the actual composing and shooting is an afterthought.

Observing remarkable events can be overwhelming, so when something wonderful happens before your eyes, and lens, I first take a deep breath and then I quietly talk myself through the process. I start working the situation within the frame from the corners and move my way inward; it's the edge that will hold the viewer's eye in the frame. I decide what I want to include within the frame and then I have all the important components interact with each other. I make it fun, like putting together the pieces of a puzzle. It has taken years for me to do these things intuitively, and the way I got here was to be cognizant of what I was saying to myself and acting accordingly. The adjustments I make when composing are simply a few degrees of the camera. I tend not to make dramatic shifts; I make subtle, elegant, adjustments. The world within the frame can be overwhelming and we all need starting points. As a documentary photographer, it's important to pay attention to how you work and to relax as much as you can when composing, to not be overwhelmed by technique and the subject and not be inhibited by external forces. In knowing how you work and being open to what is happening before your lens helps define your style, and refine what you shoot. You'll find that you shoot less and the photographs you make will be more sophisticated and relevant to either your personal aesthetic sensibilities or to the documentary project as a whole.

LIGHT.

Be subtle. Paying attention to the nuances of how the scene is being illuminated can make light a beautiful and silent supporter of the composition as a whole. By being aware of light, the photographer can illuminate and immensely improve the photograph; However, a poorly lit photographs has less of a chance of being successful. Light is like a screenplay. You can make a bad movie (photograph) with a good screenplay (light), but it is far less likely that a good film (photograph) can be made from a poor screenplay (light).

The nature of light is both a scientific and aesthetic phenomenon. Selecting the appropriate light is as important as finding the right camera when making photographs. Different forms of light can be as relevant in creating a mood as the actual content of a photograph, so it is very important to consider light when you are embarking on a project. Additionally, the type of light you most often use, and become known for, can play a significant role in acquiring a unique style to your photography. It is with this unique style that you can further establish yourself commercially and artistically; ideally you want to institute a style of your own that can virtually be trademarked and later used to market yourself.

Light is a tool, so before I start on a documentary project, I often think about and research the sort of light I want to use. Photographers usually consider the "best light" to be at the very beginning or end of the day. This is when the shadows are longest and there is a flattering golden cast from the sunlight. When the sun is low in the sky and the shadows get long, the sun passes through more of the Earth's atmosphere, because it is at an angle. During sunrise and sunset, two things happen: the light gets more orange and the shadows soften. It may first seem like the shadows become harsher, but this isn't the case, they actually soften and become very flattering. This sort of light gives shape to objects and when the light is low, there is more opportunity for the light to bounce off reflective surfaces such as buildings and glass. It is these reflections that can fill in the shadows. This is a magical time of day.

In researching a project, it is important to acknowledge the different sorts of light that will be available to you. It is important to remember that not all photographs in your project need to have the same lighting scheme in order for them to have consistency. Having a series of photographs too closely linked in their lighting scenario can, but not always, make for a very boring documentary project. What is important is that you are cognizant of the types of light that are available to you, which will further ensure that you get yourself into situations that are conducive to your desired lighting scenario. Furthermore, the color and quality of light can establish your photograph's mood. In choosing a documentary project, it is important to consider what light sources you'll be dealing with while you photograph your subject.

THERE ARE SEVERAL DIFFERENT TYPES OF LIGHT:

Direct Sunlight (Overhead). This is the most difficult and unflattering light. Objects have little shape and human subjects are often forced to squint. Additionally, in this harsh light, highlights get blown out and it is less clear what is going on in the photograph – particularly with the current digital technology that has less dynamic range than negative film. Unfortunately, in the developing world, this is the light you are most often confronted with using. I am not suggesting that most humanitarian crises happen along the equator, but in locations where security is an issue, the photographer cannot often travel during dawn, dusk or at night, so you are limited by only traveling during daylight hours. Consequently, it is often three hours into the morning when you arrive at your location and the sun is already at a high point.

Sunrise and Sunset. For the reasons previously mentioned, this is a favorite for many photographers. The Golden Hour is when even a pile of rubbish can have a beautiful glow. If I have to photograph a building or a landscape, I usually try to scout out the best angle and return when the sun is directly hitting the appropriate side of the building. There are a couple obstacles to overcome when photographing at this time. Subjects often squint when they are looking into the direction of the

sun and at the very end of the day you have to position yourself to avoid getting your shadow into the composition.

Dawn and Dusk. This is my favorite type of light. It is a magic time when everything in color becomes a distinct blue – and when shooting in black and white, the shadows take on a hazy flatness from which figures and shapes can emerge from.

A great way to use this half an hour to sixty minutes of blue light is to photograph in an environment with mixed light sources. The photographer can make sweeping panoramic cityscapes and have the entire base of the image be a blue from which emerges sparkling tungsten and florescent lights. Almost without exception, this blue time of day, coupled with artificial light sources can lead to a palette of identifiable abstraction. Additionally, photographing artificially illuminated architecture at dusk can make the necessary scene-setting shot of a mundane building interesting. I refer to this time of day as the "blue-sixty" or L'Heur Bleu.

Overcast. In color, overcast days can be problematic. Especially on an overcast day where there are no additional atmospheric elements such as rain or fog. I try to shoot very little on overcast days with thick cloud cover when I am required to shoot in color. I usually try to wait until dusk when things begin to turn blue to take out my camera. There are a couple advantages: Generally speaking, if I had to choose between overcast and direct overhead sun, I would choose the cloud cover. Especially when shooting digitally, where the adjustment of contrast and saturation can more easily be manipulated. Additionally, overcast days allow for making photographs of people in the middle of the day without the subjects squinting.

In black and white, however, overcast days can be great; There is no loss of vibrancy of color and you can aim your camera in most any direction and not worry about adjusting your f-stop and shutter speed settings too much, thus making images more intuitively. I am currently working on a project in Kyrgyzstan and chose to spend the winter here so that I could shoot black and white film on winter days, gray from heavy cloud cover to convey the desolate mood I was looking to use.

Overcast with Shadows. This is a rare phenomenon. There are times when there is a thin layer of clouds; thin enough to let sunlight pass through and create soft diffuse light while still maintaining shadows. It is almost as if the world is lit with a giant soft box such as one a photographer might find in a commercial studio. The result is direct light with distinct shadows and color that has a unique vibrancy.

Backlit. Whenever I test out a new lens, digital camera or film stock, I always shoot a bracket of photographs in four different types of light: direct sun, open shade, mix of sun and shade and a backlit subject.

From these tests, the photographer can see how different light sources react to different lighting situations. For example, I ran a film test with a Fuji transparency film and I discovered that I liked the color blue the film rendered in the shadows, especially on red brick. From the same test, I found out that one of my digital camera bodies can handle direct sun a lot better than another --- the sensor can handle extreme highlights and shadows without losing detail in either one.

Importantly, the photographer can learn how to adjust their meter and exposure to accommodate a particular lighting situation that is perhaps too complex for the camera's meter or internal computer to figure out.

Perhaps the most important test scenario is backlight, or something lit from behind. This test shows how your equipment (lens and sensor or film) can handle detail in the shadows. When conducting this test, the exposure bracket should be in smaller increments – instead of half or two thirds of a stop, do the bracket in one-third increments. The shift in what you can see in the shadows changes significantly with small adjustments in the aperture.

To do a backlight test, put something or someone in front of a window or in a doorway with bright sun outside and shoot a bracket in third stop increments from minus (under-expose) two stops to plus (over-expose) two stops. As mentioned earlier, shoot the bracket in one-third stop increments.

In addition to figuring out the best way to expose your photographs with such a significant variance in highlights and shadows, the test can also demonstrate how your camera can handle sharpness, contrast, highlight detail and shadow detail.

To evaluate the contrast, look into the dark part of the silhouetted object or person. From this the photographer can discern what sort of detail the lens and film (or sensor) combination can handle in the shadows. Alternately, the photographer can study the highlights and see the detail, if any, that is rendered. Digital and film-based photography will differ significantly in this test, especially in the highlights. For film photographers switching to digital, this test will be a great help in indicating how similar lighting situations will vary between the digital and film formats. Digital has a tendency to flare more than film, especially when comparing DSLR to rangefinder film photography. Both have an aesthetic sensibility that can be useful in creating mood and atmosphere in your photographs.

Perhaps my favorite type of indoor light is diffuse backlight. This is light that comes in through a window or other broad source and glows across an object. A great example is a wooden floor. Watch how the dull, diffuse, light will illuminate a floor. Walk around the wooden planks and study how the light looks from different angles. When the light source is facing you, see how the details of the wood glow and the variation from left to right across the surface. This simple exercise can help the photographer appreciate the subtle nuances of light, rather than simply the flamboyant changes in light such as deep and literal shadows on a wall or dramatic color in a sunset.

Artificial Light.

Tungsten. Tungsten light is the light that is emitted from a traditional household light bulb. Without filtration or white balance adjustments, light bulbs make everything a deep orange. Like any light source, when embraced and used efficiently, it can be used to enhance your project. I especially like using tungsten bulbs with other artificial light sources. I photographed a young nomadic girl using only a single light bulb and a candle lantern. The door to the outside was open and illuminating the outdoors was a full moon. The mix of cool blue light outside and the warm light inside made the interior of the yurt seem warm and inviting. Additionally, as I photograph and look at photographs, I like to look for single bare bulbs dangling from the top edge of the frame. And if the bulbs are hanging above a person's head, it makes them look as though they have a great idea.

Florescent. Without filtration or the white balance adjusted on your DSLR, florescent tubes tend to make everything green. This green can be very beautiful when it is mixed with other light sources. A great example of this is at a carnival midway at dusk. There are many light sources – carnival rides, food vendors and games – and when you mix all these colorful lights together, florescent can take on its own unique character.

Or, for example, a client gave me the difficult task of photographing a bakery in the Mongolian desert. It was an uninspired freestanding cement structure with a single window. How could I make it interesting? I went to the building early, before dawn, and set up my camera. A single florescent bulb illuminated the entryway. I waited until the beautiful pre-dawn blue light came and then I snapped several exposures of the blue natural light combined with the intense green light illuminated by the florescent tube. The way I conceived and saw the photograph had nothing to do with the building, but, rather, the resulting images were an interesting play between the blue and green light.

When selecting a long-term photography project, make sure you don't select a subject or main environment that is only indoor florescent lights. Even with a black and white project, florescent light

is a flat dull source that is difficult to work with on a long-term project. An ideal project is one with a variety of the sources we have discussed.

These are some typical light sources that generally have similar characteristics. But the geographic location and the time of year affect the sorts of light we see outdoors. Whatever lighting situation you find yourself in, ask yourself a few questions: is the light harsh or soft? Backlit or from the side? You want to ask yourself these questions to be cognizant of the aesthetic choices you are making which, in turn, can establish the mood of your project.

MOOD.

Mood is the emotion of a place or event. Passing these emotions to an audience is what makes a photograph powerful. Mood can, and usually does, more effectively tell a story as much as literal depictions of people, places or events. It is for this reason that I try to rely upon mood as much as content (or subject) to tell the story. Therefore, when photographing, I am more apt to react to a subject based on my emotional response than literally or intellectually; this emotional reaction can be based on light and atmospheric conditions as much as the event the lens is depicting. It is important to pay attention to how you feel about a place or event and make images when you have a heightened emotional reaction, even (especially) if you aren't sure why.

It is impractical and impossible to teach photographers how to react emotionally to their subjects. What emotionally charges a photographer is something entirely unique to the photographer and to the audience. However, it is the viewer's emotional response that can give a photographer and photographs praise.

As photographers, it is important that we discuss methods to render and convey the mood of a place to our audience. There are certain things that can help elicit these emotions and we should be aware of them when we are out in our environment photographing.

Mood of Content. This is the most common and obvious way to put emotional energy into a photograph. How can the viewer deny being emotionally moved when viewing an image of a suffering child's face? Alternately, joyful moments can elicit the same level of emotion. Joyful or humorous moments in photographs often have to depict more than simply a face. Human interaction or a particular moment at a sporting event, such as a runner crossing the finishing line, are subject-driven moments that are universally understood.

Photographs such as these rely heavily upon the subject and are often unimaginative. The

craftsmanship of the photograph comes from being at a good vantage point and having the right lens and exposure. Light and atmosphere become secondary.

Sidelines. These are the moments around an event. This could be a crowd's reaction at an auto race or a father and a son at a Spanish bullring. (Insert Eisenstaedt photograph of children watching a puppet show). But, what also falls under this category are the quiet moments within a family's life, such as the reaction of a husband sitting at a table while his wife prepares lunch. These quiet moments, where there is no event other than simple human interaction, can be very telling and beautiful. The craftsmanship comes from the photographer's access to his or her subject and the knowledge they have of who they have been observing and human nature in general. I like these photographs because we can see the personality of the subject and have a voyeuristic view of intimate human interaction.

The Emotion of a Coming Storm. A few years ago I watched a documentary on the genocide in Rwanda. The film had the expected images of machetes and tanks, but the most emotional part of the entire film was tightly cropped footage of leaves on a tree before a severe electrical storm. Although I have spent a great deal of time in places where there is war, I could somehow, mysteriously, relate to the encroaching energy of a coming thundershower more readily than images of carnage. There was something universal, accessible and familiar about the feeling one gets in their bones before a downpour – the filmmakers had illustrated the coming of a genocide with a simple image of a tree; what made the image spectacular was the mood, the humidity, of the composition, simple footage of how light interacted with tree leaves.

It is the mood as much as the subject of our images that can elicit an emotional reaction from the viewer. When we look at an image, we bring our own feelings and life experiences and form a unique reaction to what we see in the photograph. This reaction isn't necessarily from the actual subject; emotional reaction can be derived from a variety of elements within the composition; light, shadow, color, scale and geometry are a few examples of compositional elements that create mood, and play a significant role in the impact a photograph will have on the viewer. Any combination of these, and an infinite amount of other, components can trigger as poignant a viewer reaction as the actual subject of the photograph.

The photographer has little or no control over the viewer's past experiences that lead them, either individually or collectively, to their reaction to a photograph. So, it is part of the photographer's job to present images that can appeal to a broad audience on an emotional and nostalgic level. In doing this, the photographer must be careful not to change his or her own personal vision to accommodate commercial appeal; rather, photographers must work in a style unique to themselves enabling the viewer to latch on to their own aesthetic sensibility. The resulting unique style, if thoroughly developed, will create its own commercial outlet.

A lot of mood can be derived from images that have seemingly little or no relevant content relating to the larger body of work such as a photo-essay. This sort of imagery is highly artistic and relies upon a universal response from the audience. When done well, the photograph soon becomes extraordinarily powerful with no obvious cause, almost abstract. These photographs can be very important to documentary photographers; they are similar to song lyrics that the listener cannot understand on a literal level, but can relate to intuitively emotionally. Aesthetic power is derived from familiar words (or photographs of familiar things) interacting with each other in an unusual setting. Have you ever listened to a song and not known what the song is about, but felt a strong emotional reaction?

Furthermore, the photographer can accurately and creatively depict the tragedy of a time and a place by documenting events in a quiet, less flamboyant way. Instead of documenting the funeral of a young boy during the American dust bowl famine, Walker Evans simply photographed a Coke bottle put on a boy's grave by one of his friends – the photograph is a graceful way of demonstrating the tragedy of the times and also the relationship the boy had to his community and friends.

This non-event aesthetic is at the heart of making traditional documentary photography personal and poignant rather than simple renditions of people, events and places. These universally understood moments combined with moody depictions of emotionally charged scenes can form a cohesive and powerful documentation of a culture, time and place.

CONTENT.

Once the photographer is in a rich environment, there is little to worry about in terms of getting good content for the photograph. As an example, if the photographer is at a carnival with his or her camera, whatever the photographer photographs will essentially be about the carnival. The trick is getting into loaded environments.

In documenting a culture, there is much more than simply an event, such as a carnival, for a photographer to photograph. We have to refine what we are looking for, while, at the same time, not become too dogmatic about what we decide to shoot. A photographer's style can be, and often is, manifest of what the photographer decides to photograph.

When on assignment, there are quite a few standard image ideas for the photographer to look for. The following shot list is from a list of the many common ideas for a photographer to shoot while working on a project with a family.

Universal Activities. When photographing a different culture, it is often important to document a universal activity such as sending children off to school or eating a meal. These photographs are universal because they depict activities people must do, regardless of their culture. Furthermore, these photographs let the viewer identify with the subjects in the photograph allowing the foreign audience access into a different culture.

What people eat, and how they prepare it. Often, when on assignment, you can reach a location and the folks you are assigned to photograph have nothing happening. Even with a great deal of time, there is often a lot of down time and the overly eager photographer will end up with photographs of people simply sitting and staring at the camera. Everyone must eat. And in order to eat, they have to prepare the meal. Food is a defining element in any culture and the preparation and consumption of a meal is a great segue into how another culture interacts within a family.

Home. Much like food, every culture has to have a home. I always ask myself and take an interest in where someone lives. This often leads to the subject inviting you into their home and more intimate access to their family. "Home" can have a variety of meanings; once, on assignment in the Republic of Georgia, I asked a refugee where they lived and they brought me into a classroom that was used to house refugees and pointed to a stack of suitcases. This pile of suitcases, conceptually, made a powerful image.

Where and how a culture worships. Celebrations and Rituals. Religion is present in every culture and if you can gain access into a place of worship, there are a lot of great emotional moments to record. The way a culture celebrates holidays and milestones, such as funerals, creates great opportunities for emotional photographs. Gaining access to these events can be difficult, but once you have a right of entry, the photographer can get many spectacular and important photographs. When photographing in places of worship and events such as weddings and funerals, be sure not to be too aggressive and conspicuous, hold back and ensure that your invitation isn't worn out too quickly. It can be very easy to destroy a long-term relationship with a family from using poor judgment in a solemn situation.

In all of these situations, we want to convey the story of a place through the eyes of one family or a small community from a larger culture. The more intimate the photographs are, the more compelling they can be to the viewer; the viewer can readily relate to the activities within the photograph. What makes a photography project distinctive is the photographer's ability to capture less-obvious and very intimate images. A unique style can bubble up from a particular mood. But personal vision should not rely completely upon mood; a large part of developing a personal style is to refine what you are looking for when you go out in the field. What the photographer includes and excludes both within the frame and in the completed series significantly impacts the project as a whole and can often define the photographer's personal vision.

When on assignment, or even on the street, the young photographer can get overwhelmed by the subject matter and try and record everything. In order to develop a unique look to your photographs it is important to refine what it is you are looking for on the street or in your project. The search for what the photographer is looking for goes further than simply trying to figure out what needs to be recorded, it's capturing the humanity of the moment. It is important to be cognizant of the light, framing and the content in each photograph. All three of these elements must support each other in order to make a great composition.

We have previously discussed light and the frame. Now, it is the photographer's job to define, more specifically, what it is we are looking for in the field. When documenting a place or a people, it is not the goal to document everything; this would be impossible and even an attempt to do this, runs the risk of resulting in mundane images. The job of the documentary photographer is to capture the spirit or essence of a place. In order to do this, we must carefully choose what we wish to acknowledge in our photo-essay. Deciding what to include and not include in composing and editing is very personal and subjective. This process relies upon both intuition and careful planning; it's a matter of not knowing what to look for, but knowing exactly what it is when you see it.

Deciding what to photograph cannot be taught. How we see and choose what to photograph is a personal decision from which a personal style is derived. Commercial photographers have the guidance of having to photograph a particular product or place; documentarians are often left on their own to conceptualize, photograph and edit a story. This is a mixed blessing. With so much influence over a project, the photographer has an ability to have creative control over the images and how they are disseminated; the flip side is that the documentary photographer's solo involvement prohibits the potential fruits of a collaborative effort.

A technique I use as a starting point on an assignment or personal project is to write down ideas, concepts and environments I might want to photograph. This list of ideas may include an interesting environment

that is pertinent to the story or even just the region. I think only about visually interesting ideas, not solely conceptual. Even if I don't refer to the list often, the act of writing down these ideas is a great way for me to retain information and ideas and it further acts as a tangible reminder of what I could seek out to photograph when I am away on a project.

I am currently in Italy after a long winter in Central Asia. I'll be here for the duration of the summer. I try to photograph everyday while I am here. Even with casual walks around Florence, I spend a great deal of time refining what it is I am looking for and want to photograph. A few nights ago I was returning from the theater and there was a scruffy accordion player crossing the street. For me, Florence is most beautiful in the evening. When the sun is hidden by the architecture, diffuse light filters down upon the dark street and there is a quiet light. I photographed the lone street musician as he was walking home. And now, after making the image, I am more cognizant of the accordion musicians and now I have something specific to look for; and in looking for accordion players going home, I have started to photograph the African street vendors walking home with their large white sacks of counterfeit handbags. Their dark skin, along with the white bags and the dim light filtering down between the buildings make the subject almost irrelevant, leaving it to the mood of the scene to carry the composition. Because of the time I spent wandering with my camera, I now have two different subjects to look for as a starting point and more will come. The important part of this exercise is that I was aware of what struck me emotionally and visually and I have hung on to that and now I have a time of day and a mood to work with on my Florentine portfolio.

In addition to making a list specific to a project, I have a general, more generic, list I carry in my wallet of different locations to remember to check out when I am in new place . Some examples are going to the local bus depot or a local market. I use this list rarely, but update it often. It is more of a security blanket; something I hold on to. For example, I was on assignment in Eritrea and arrived at the town I was to photograph in a few hours ahead of schedule. I consulted my list and asked the driver to take me to the local bus station. I photographed the passengers unloading the top rack on the bus. It was a rich environment and I probably would have overlooked it without my list. A resulting photograph ended up in my portfolio. Without the list, or without a refined notion of what to look for, I would have been blindly shooting whatever came my way and missing these wonderful sideline events. Without a plan on what to look for, the photographer is essentially acting as an architect without a blueprint.

EXERCISES.

In order to conceptualize and refine what to look for, I often give students exercises that help keep their subconscious on the lookout for certain photograph ideas. I also apply these principles to my own work as well. It is a way of helping ourselves look for specific subjects in a much larger, and overwhelming, world.

During all workshops I teach, I ask students to photograph a specific list of things each day for the duration of the workshop. This exercise includes subjects we encounter everyday and would possibly be overlooked by the student or photographer. It is an exercise in acknowledging the interesting things that can happen in our routine lives.

Meal. At least once during the day, a student should photograph a meal they have had. This means more than a simple rendition of the plate of food set before the photographer. Some students have gone into the kitchen of the restaurant they are eating at and made some pretty extraordinary images of the cooks and the kitchen staff. On other occasions, students photograph people they are eating with or the whole restaurant, or hang out by the restaurant jukebox and photograph people putting money into the machine.

Sleep. Each day, everyone falls asleep and wakes up. As a photographer, I try to be aware of our daily environment. I recommend that students photograph the bed they slept in or the person they slept with, or their roommate. On location, I practice a version of this assignment and photograph the

view from my hotel window. An image from the Best Western in Dhaka, Bangladesh made it into my Winterground portfolio.

Candid. Making a photograph of someone who doesn't know they are having their photograph taken is a great technique for breaking away from the standard portrait of someone confronting the camera. Additionally, it is way of showing the relationship between people and their environment by using a person or people as an indicator of scale in a larger scene, rather than having the subject of the photograph be the person.

When I am at home, I take daily walks along the river behind my house. Wherever I go I take my camera, and these daily walks are no exception. I make photographs of light on the foliage. Wet leaves from a recent rain are some of my favorite images. I fill the frame with nothing but leaves. Over the last several years, these walks have produced a significant body of work. Although the images may never see the light of day, the portfolio that comes from them is very personal and a favorite of mine. I am able to subconsciously access a part of myself with the only limitations being my camera and the path I choose to walk. What intrigues me most about these photographs are that they are entrenched in mood with the subject becoming secondary, almost irrelevant.

CREDO.

A credo is a formal and organized declaration of who you currently are as a photographer and a list of professional thoughts and goals about your future. The photographer must realize that this is written exclusively for his or her own benefit and should write it as if they are the only one to read it. A credo is a journal, but not one of random, brainstormed thoughts; it is a business and life plan. Although the credo is an important document, the photographer should have fun putting it together and approach it as unconstrained as possible; it is a way to free your mind and organize your thoughts. Keep in mind that the credo is not necessarily the time to get specific with a project idea. It is a written affirmation of how you currently work and how you intend to work in the future. (The reader can refer to the earlier part of this text to examine how to best facilitate the implementation of a specific documentary project).

Once you have completed a credo, you'll have tangible documentation of who you are as a photographer and a list of goals. The completed credo will enable the photographer to track his or her progress and confirm where they have been and where they are headed as a photographer. The only rules for writing a credo are to not be shy. Make it personal. Write it as if you are the only one who will ever read it. In short, bare your soul.

~

Here are some guidelines I use when starting and completing a new credo. These are only suggestions, and should be used, if at all, as a vague starting point. I encourage photographers to figure out their own structure for creating a credo; again, I want to reemphasize how important it is to initiate this as a free-writing exercise and then organize it into a more formal document.

Where you are writing. Whenever I take notes for a new credo, I document when (including the date, time and year) and where I physically am when I sit down to write. Later on, when I go over what I have written, I have a better idea of what state of mind I was in when I was writing. Being

alone in a hotel room or at a busy Italian piazza will influence my perspective; the time and place I am writing has an impact on what inspires the ideas that come into my head and what I want to say at that particular moment.

Who you currently are as a photographer. This section of the credo will have a significant impact on the photographer. It is a way of sitting down and acknowledging all the strengths and faults with the photographer's current body of work. It is also an appropriate time to determine what changes the photographer would like to make in terms of the sort of assignments, personal or paid, that the photographer would like to pursue.

To start, I usually analyze my most recent work and give myself an honest critique. I am difficult on myself and try to be as objective as possible. I forget about the experience of making the images and focus on the composition and content, and see how my images work together.

I also look at who is buying my work and sending me on assignments. Am I happy with the work I am currently doing or would I like to branch out into new directions? There is always something to change, so we must acknowledge what needs to be changed and proactively make those changes. It is difficult to admit what is wrong, but it is an important part of the creative process.

Sources of inspiration It is important for the photographer to gather inspiration from a variety of places. I often use literature, paintings, poetry and song lyrics to inspire the sort of mood I intend to convey. I look at sources outside of photography; the mood from different mediums can transcend into photographs, or not. But, either way, it is good to be emotionally inspired and have a folder on hand that is constantly updated. Organizing what inspires you, thinking about it and then writing can be a great and necessary tool for achieving a desired look and feel to your photographs.

In putting this section of the credo together, I have no preconceived notion of what to collect; I simply react to something and put it into my folder. Inspiration can come from sources as diverse as a walk on the street or a visit to a major museum. The process of accumulating sources of inspiration is never-ending. I am always on the lookout for things that I have an emotional response to – this includes writing down dreams and even random bits of conversation that I hear on the street.

I am currently in Florence, Italy. I went to the Uffizi gallery yesterday. I wandered the exhibition rooms and took in the paintings, sculpture and line drawings. The inspiration I felt was immense. After going through the galleries, I had a list of works and artists I wanted to further investigate. I researched the paintings on the web, and made a collection of the work. While looking at the paintings I had collected, I found that the scenes I most enjoyed were not portraits, but pastoral landscapes. The subjects were interacting among themselves under a dramatic sky, epic scenes that were often allegorical lamentations. My trip to the museum and the subsequent research provided me with a notion of the scale and mood I would like to achieve in my own photography. These were the types of scenes I wanted to photograph and I would not have known this, if I had not been looking for sources of inspiration, collecting inspiring relics and being cognizant of what inspired me.

A particular color. When contemplating all that has been collected and all that inspires you, it is difficult to know how to manifest all this into a photograph. I usually start by thinking of something simple, like a color. From there, I move on and think of all the places that I can find that specific shade of a color. What is the mood of the color? What does the color represent?

Goals. Writing a credo is a general synopsis of what your ideal career in photography would involve. The whole idea of creating a credo revolves around the notion that this document will help the photographer reach professional and artistic goals. In order to do this, the photographer must have a prophetic idea of what he or she would like to achieve. It is building a life plan – just as an architect would have a goal and vision of a building, the architect must first create a guide or blueprint for what the completed structure will look like. In short, we must know what we are working towards.

The best way to complete this section of the credo is for the photographer to write down where he or she would like to work and where they would like to have their images displayed. In writing these things down, the photographer should think about where they want to photograph in broad terms, not for a specific project. The credo is not an outline for a specific project, but a general guideline for their career as a whole.

The first list should be of all the places the photographer would like to photograph. Include situations as specific as an event, such as a carnival or festival, to vague regions such as countries, continents or mountain ranges. This list could also include a group of people, either ethnically or in terms of the situation politically (e.g. refugees and people suffering from AIDS) that the photographer desires to document.

Finding different locations to make interesting photographs will help the photographer have a sense of the content and palette of their completed body of work. With this enlightened sense of place, the look of the desired images will surface and the photographer will have a better sense of who they are aesthetically. For example, the photographer who wants to photograph in Latin America may discover that they would do best to photograph in color rather than black and white. Latin America culture has much more color and sun in it than the former Soviet Union, which may best be rendered in black and white. (Of course there are extreme exceptions to these rules, I was using Latin America and the Former Soviet Union only as examples.)

Next, the photographer should list all the venues he or she would like to have their images displayed – galleries, museums, books and magazines are a few examples. As previously mentioned, it is important not to be inhibited by markets and where to sell your work. The best photographs come when the photographer is answering to their own personal voice. This list of where to display the work simply enables the photographs to have some parameters, thus allowing the photographer to have a more refined sense of what to look for when realizing their own personal vision. We don't want to be writing a screenplay when the final outcome is a book of poems.

Listing where we would like to photograph and where we would like to have our images viewed helps form the roadmap to where we need to go! The photographer can now consider how to achieve these goals. For the documentary photographer, he or she can find organizations that work within a region or a subject and outlets, such as magazines and gallery space, which have a use for documentary photographs. Knowing where you want to exhibit or publish your photographs can help establish guidelines for a personal photographic style.

Technical. After gaining insight into where to shoot and what outlets the photographer would like to display or print his or her work, it is important to consider the technical part of realizing these goals. Some questions I ask myself are:

1.) Do I photograph in digital or film?
2.) Do I use black and white or color?
3.) What format should I shoot in?
4.) If I shoot film, do I use digital or silver prints?

Writing a new credo is a blank canvas. It is a time to consider ALL options and a way to help transition to a new way of photographing. I update my credo all the time. I firmly believe it to be an important step in my development as a photographer. A lot of the above questions I have asked are already decided upon based on the way I have been shooting for the past several years. However, each time I embark on a new project, or write a new credo, I think it is important to deliberate about whether or not it would serve myself better to switch formats or shooting style. For the last ten years, I photographed with thirty-five millimeter color transparency film; this technique represented me as a photographer and was how people knew me. In writing an updated credo for my grant to Kyrgyzstan, I made the decision to switch to black and white print film. I came to this conclusion by collecting and looking at all my favorite photographs by other photographers; the majority of the work I liked was black and white silver prints. Also, I have been shooting digitally for clients for years and my Kyrgyzstan project was for myself. I wanted the dynamic range of negative film and I wanted the analog experience of film while I would be shooting. (I didn't want to rely upon

batteries and laptops.) Writing the credo helped me think in an organized way about how to change my approach to photography.

Lifestyle. The decision to be a documentary photographer is not simply a career choice; it is a choice in lifestyle. There are obvious lifestyle changes such as being away from home and unsteady income. It is not my intention to suggest that documentary photography is a bad career choice, there are countless benefits to being a documentarian – experiencing new cultures, expressing yourself creatively and setting your own schedule. The one thing that is hard to describe is the loneliness of being a photographer. Not only are there long trips away from family and friends, there is the time when the photographer returns home only to realize that everyday life has gone on without them, and with this realization comes the formidable task of reintegrating into daily life.

The credo is a good way to ponder what sort of lifestyle you want to lead and allows you to examine the life you have been leading. This is a difficult, humbling and eye-opening experience. It incorporates the investigation of personal and professional life experiences – an integration that is not always compatible.

There are no guidelines for this introspective part of the credo. It is good to write when you are feeling optimistic. I write this section to confirm that I am content with my professional choices and to use as proof that I am considering the impact my career has had on me personally.

Ways to make money. This is a more practical part of the credo. I always consider from what sources I get paid. I list all of these sources and I also make a list of potential new sources.

For me, income comes from assignments, teaching workshops, speaking engagements and usage and stock sales. On the "potential" list, I inevitably include grants and stock photography sales. After having included "grants" in my credo for years, I finally sat down and wrote a grant proposal. As good luck would have it, I received the grant. It was a dream come true. Each year, I will continue to pursue grant money. I used to have the notion that it was a lot of work for a slim chance at some money with a lot of stipulations. I no longer believe this and now look at grants as a legitimate and inspired source of income.

I started my first credo in Thailand. I had an assignment and when the assignment was completed, I gave myself several days to wander around the streets of Bangkok with my camera. I thought about what I wanted to do, and where I wanted to go as a photographer. I could think of nothing to say. I was stumped. And then, after three days, I spontaneously sat down and wrote the notes to a very comprehensive credo. The ideas came quickly, I could not write fast enough.

I took this very rough draft back home to Tajikistan, where I was living at the time. I worked on it and revised it with footnotes, quotes and a variety of things I had collected for inspiration. Without even knowing it, I had written my first credo.

While I was in Thailand, the Magnum photographer, Chris Steele-Perkins, was teaching a workshop in Tajikistan. He had hired my assistant, Bako, to help him. Upon my return to Dushanbe, Mr. Steele-Perkins and I had dinner together at an Indian restaurant. We talked about photography and eventually he took a look at my portfolio. His review of my work was accurate and insightful. I agreed with all that he said. I made mental and written notes. When I returned home that evening, I compared what he said with notes I had made in my new credo. They matched identically. The magical part of this whole experience was that the portfolio review was further validated by my own feelings towards my work and where I was going professionally.

In many ways, this book is a bit of a credo. It is an organized document that explains how I work and how I get ideas and inspiration. It does not, however, track goals and organize sources of inspiration. The process of writing a credo is ongoing. I constantly write and rewrite my current credo. I usually start a

new one every six months to a year. Some of them are very comprehensive and others are nothing more than lists of photograph ideas or things that I have heard that inspires me.

✲

ETHICS.

The interaction between the subject and the photographer and the expectation on either side of the camera has been a debated topic ever since the invention of photography. Many of my students feel as though working as a photographer through non-governmental organizations perpetuates the idea that developing countries rely upon the West for all their support. I cannot answer this question; it is a geopolitical phenomenon that inevitably leads to a long (and often necessary) philosophical discourse.

My approach is simple. I never photograph anyone in a situation I wouldn't want to be photographed in myself. (Keep I mind that I do NOT like to have my photograph made.) This philosophy allows me to sleep at night without worrying. I make the experience for my subject as enriching as possible. The only exception to this rule is if the subject, being in a situation I am uncomfortable with, asks me to make a photograph of them. I respect their wishes and make exposures.

Additionally, and morally, the photographer has to decide whether to intervene in a dire situation or simply to record it. I was on assignment in Alaska in a small native fishing village with only five hundred residents. I was faced with the moral dilemma of how to intervene and help and also fulfill my assignment of documenting the Alaskan native approach to responding to emergencies.

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Here is a letter I wrote home about the experience:

Hello –

I apologize for not writing sooner. Been busy...

I spent Saturday night in Anchorage – I got in late and my luggage got in much later (all of it including cameras!)

I flew to Bethel, Alaska on Sunday morning and was impressed by how far away from everywhere I felt...

the signs at the airport are in Yu'pik the Native Alaskan tribe.

My hotel was a hoot – expensive and similar to Russia (the terrain and feeling is also very Russian).

I walked around Bethel – a dry town with several Chinese restaurants. Meals are very expensive – it's like being on an island, only more expensive. A large pizza was about the $30.00 and a bag of Dorritos at the grocery store was $6.00.

I flew around with a Medi-vac crew on Monday... we went into one small village and brought a Native girl back to the medical center because of a respiratory condition – a chronic problem in this part of the world, especially among Natives. Needless to say, it's one of the coolest things I've ever done. The paramedics were really great – fun guys named Ritchie and Matt.

Then on Tuesday I flew to Toksook Bay. The airstrip was the smallest I've ever flown into – this includes Afghanistan. A man on a four-wheeler picked me up and drove me to the clinic I would be photographing. Great people here – I walked around town and photographed whatever I felt like... I introduced myself to everyone. All the houses are built on stilts about four feet off the ground – otherwise they would start to melt the permafrost and sink into the mud. The grocery store takes credit cards – but there is no pavement on the roads and the post office is smaller than my bedroom. Toksook's population is 500 people and a bunch of sled dogs that have very poor people skills.

The entire village is made up of Yu'piks and they are a great people. Although I found out the hard way that they take things very literally and my sense of humor was misunderstood – but I got everyone laughing today and that made me happy.

I was on the phone with my father Tuesday night – sorry I woke you up – and then there was a knock on the clinic door. I hung up the phone and answered the door. (I'm staying at the clinic – my bed is an examining table – not the worst I've slept on, but pretty close.)

At the door was a concerned man who told me there was a drowning in the river. Stanley, the advanced nurse practitioner from Florida also staying at the clinic with me, and I ran down to the river. Apparently three boys went onto the ice and fell through – two were accounted for and the third was still under. We poked in the blue ice with boat oars by the light of a four wheeler – there are only four wheelers here and one truck owned by the school. Then more people gathered and we soon found out that actually all three boys were accounted for – but two boys were resuscitated by CPR and in severe hypothermia in a neighboring house. Eventually we found out that a three year old had pushed a toy truck out on the ice and chased it and fell through – a five year old chased him and also fell through. One of the boy's younger sister ran to the steam room her father was in and got him – he ran to the river and pulled then out of the water. He was one the one who gave CPR – he learned it in the military and actually saved a young child's life five years earlier when a youngster fell through when the ice was thawing in the Spring. The two boys had been in the water about 12 minutes.

We raced up to the house and I was struck by the intensity of the moment. Crying family members and a Bruce Lee movie on TV. The grandmother was mopping the mud off the floor immediately after everyone entered. Stanley was in the bedroom where only one boy was conscious. The nurse aids who run the clinic mobilized and got hot pads from neighbors – I ran back to the clinic and got sleeping bags. (I learned ad hoc how to drive a four wheeler – if you think I'm a nervous driver behind the wheel of my car, you should see me on a Honda Rancher.) The rectal temperature of the younger child was less than 85 degrees – the thermometer would only go that low. The other was about 87... they were coming in and out of consciousness. We emptied IV bags and filled them with water and microwaved them to get their temperature up as quick as possible. The children

were blue and it was tremendously frightening. They gained consciousness and we kept getting them warmer and warmer – the temperature was about 92 when we moved them to the clinic. The schools truck arrived and we carried the bundled little bodies into two of the examining rooms. I must say I have never and probably will never see a community mobilize so fast – there is only one radio station that is run by a computer, but announcements about water and snow and emergencies is broadcast via a CB radio. Something which everyone has in their home. Today's announcement is that school is delivering cheeseburgers to homes for $6/each.

Their temperatures kept rising and we called the medi-vac unit. Before long we got their temperatures up to 96 and 97 degrees. Ritchie and Matt flew in an hour later – we all agreed that we had experienced a miracle. We said our hellos and good-byes and the two boys left for the clinic in Bethel. The younger one was eventually moved to Anchorage for more observations since he had a respiratory condition. (We would later discover that there was water in his lungs.) He's coming home tomorrow. Both boys survived and there are so many heros in this saga – Stanley and the health aids, the boy's father and especially little Cecilia, the girl who ran and got her father.

On my shoot list was written the words "get a photograph of a home visit if you can" – I experienced the ultimate home visit. In my life, with all the places I've been and all the suffering I've seen, this was the first time I was confronted with the do I help or photograph dilemma? I opted to help. At the children's house, when they were warming up and there was nothing more I could do, I asked one of the parents if I could make a photograph... he nodded yes. I asked to only make one picture (not a dozen) – I had to make it a good one, only one chance. I raised my viewfinder to may face and shot an exposure. I saw the flash illuminate one bundled little boy shivering off his hypothermia. When I left – the family all said the sincerest thank-yous I've ever heard. I feel I handled the situation well. I would later make more photos back at the clinic... when their conditions stabilized more. I'll let you know how the picture comes out.

Since then, I've had incredibly, hmmmm, rich meals. Last night was walrus skin, boiled goose and dried fish. The favorite condiment is seal oil. Grim – but not as bad as it sounds. I'm hoping to go seal hunting this weekend if the seas calm down a bit.

I'll write later from the Aleutian.

Love,
Thatch

FIELD NOTES.

Good field notes are an art onto themselves. In the digital age, cameras have metadata to record exposure data including the date time of the exposure. However, the information within the frame must also be recorded.

In writing field notes, a good logbook is necessary. This is a very personal decision. I prefer a thin journal with blank pages. I use the thin log books because I can fill them up before they wear out.

With each entry, I start by recording the date, including the year and the location, being as specific as possible. Then I draw a line – a third of the way in from the left – down the length of the page. On the left side of the line, I write down the roll number or flash card number. To the right of the line, I include the personal information of the subjects, including their ages and relationship to each other. I also include a brief description of everyone in the frame, usually based on what they are wearing. This enables me to determine who's who in the photograph.

Then, I add personal observations that the camera cannot record. This can range from the smell of a place to individual quotes. I also try and include interesting histories of the relationships between people. I include anything that is interesting. This makes going over the notes more personalized, giving the reader a sense of atmosphere that the camera cannot record.

When shooting film, no matter if I am taking a casual roll of my family or a roll for an assignment, I make sure to log every frame of every roll. I have log sheets where I sequentially number each roll of film. I also record:

1.) Date
2.) Film type
3.) Film speed (the speed at which I actually shot the film)
4.) Format
5.) Brief description
6.) Number of times the film has gone through the x-ray machine
7.) Test processing time
8.) Final processing time.

I shoot film sequentially starting with number one. With every scenario, I separate the batch of rolls with a dark mark on the log sheet between the two scenarios. When it is time to process the film, I make sure never to have more than one roll of film from each scenario being processed at the same time, this helps ensure that I will not lose more than one roll of film of any given scenario if there is a malfunction in processing. When I ship transparency film to the lab, I do two different shipments on separate days, the odd rolls first and the even rolls second. This helps guarantee that if the shipping company loses my package of exposed film, only half of the film will be lost.

I have included a copy of a blank film log as an appendix section of this book.

EDITING AND SEQUENCING.

Good editing is as important a step in the photographic process as making the correct exposure or crafting a fine print. What the photographer chooses not to reveal to the audience heavily influences the impact of the final presentation.

The photographer's first task is to make sure he or she is in a good editing environment. It is important to have a great deal of time set aside specifically for reviewing your work. Additionally, there is the temptation to edit while listening to music. I try to avoid music while editing because the emotional impact of the music influences my decision-making; I sometimes have a hard time deciphering between the impact of my photographs with the influence of the music I am listening to; this is not to say all photographers should avoid listening to music, this is only an observation I've had from my own experience.

A block of several days should be set aside to edit. I try to do my editing and sequencing when I know I'll be home for a few consecutive weeks. I might edit on a Monday morning and reach a resting point early in the afternoon. Then, I can return to the editing room on Wednesday with a fresh set of eyes and see all that I missed on Monday. There is a momentum that comes from checking in with the sequencing over the course of several days or weeks.

Having enough space in which to edit is important. I like to use a long table and spread out prints. When I am at a good stopping point, I gently put a cloth over the table and return to the table from time to time to check and see if how I've sequenced holds up.

In the digital age there is the temptation of editing exclusively on the computer. Editing out the bad exposures or obviously awkward compositions on a computer can be very efficient. Sequencing, however, is more effectively done with prints or slides; they are easier to move around. When sequencing a book, you can make a mock-up and see how the flow works from page to page. Additionally, tangible prints can help establish the appropriate scale of the images.

After creating a good workspace, the photographer must ask himself or herself what they are editing for?

Editing for a Book. In editing a photography book it is good to contemplate how images work sequentially as well as side-by-side. It is a matter of seeing how images interact with each other when they are flipped from one page to the next. Additionally, the photographer or designer must consider how the design of two or more images interacts on a single spread.

Generally, photography books are too long. If you are editing a book, it should be no more than one hundred and twenty images, but even better is around eighty. Of course there are always exceptions, but books that are too long usually lose the interest of the reader.

With all editing it is good to start out with a very loose selection, perhaps ten times the amount you want to narrow it down to. Then narrow down the amount of images based on how they work together, instead of trying to have all the best photographs, one right after another. The viewer will need a rest. A good resource for doing mock-up books are to print your book through an online company that can do single run printings, such as *Blurb* or *My Publisher.*

Editing for an exhibit. The parameters for editing for an exhibit are dictated by the size of the exhibition space and the size of the prints. When determining how large to print your photographs, there are some factors that influence your decision. In recent years, the trend has been to present large exhibition prints. When I go to an exhibit, I enjoy viewing large-sized images. I feel the current trend towards large prints is consistent with our flamboyant and conspicuous culture. I also remind myself that large prints are indeed a trend and I ask myself, does the large photograph have a genuine need to be big.

When looking at large photographs, I find that I am able to view them as if I were part of an audience, almost as if I were at a performance or concert. The experience of viewing photographs from the perspective of being in a crowd can make me feel as though I am one of many and my experience with the photograph is not unique, but as part of a mass audience. This experience is very conceptual to me and is a statement about the culture in which we live.

A smaller, more intimate, scale makes the photographs quieter and asking to be more carefully studied. Smaller images make it difficult for more than one person to view the photograph at a time. This one-on-one experience makes the experience with the photograph thorough and perhaps more unique.

Unlike editing for a book, the exhibit often is a showcase for the photographer's greatest hits. An exhibit is more about how the images stand on their own; this is not to suggest that a well-edited and sequenced exhibit does not have a need for supporting images as in a book.

Sequencing a show is about the viewers experience within the exhibition space. What is the first photograph the viewer sees when they enter the space? Of course the photograph opposite the entrance – and does this photograph fit into the sequence of the rest of the exhibit, or is it simply there to draw attention upon itself, without taking into account the neighboring photographs?

What makes the sequencing of an exhibit unique is that the photographs are to be viewed sequentially and as a whole. So, color and geometry must have a fluidity that also compliments the content of the photographs. In addition to this, the curator must take into account what photographs should be emphasized with scale, larger prints.

With documentary photography, exhibits are often created to inform the public about a place or a people. So, within all the above-mentioned parameters, there has to be a narrative element to the flow of the exhibit.

Editing for a projection. Slideshow are perhaps the most common outlet for documentary photographers to show their work. Projections are inexpensive to set up and operate. There are no ongoing operational costs; they usually run in a single evening. Additionally there is no pressure to sell images to offset the expense of printing and framing costs for an exhibit; and there are no printing and distribution costs of a book.

What makes a projection unique is that the photographer has the luxury of discussing the context of the images being displayed in real time. In my eyes, a projection is not a showcase of greatest hits, but a monologue, a narrative, with the sole intent to educate the audience. A projection gives documentarians the ability to show illustrative photographs of what a culture eats and where they sleep, without the expectation that each photograph be a masterpiece.

Sequencing a projection is similar to organizing a book in that the images will be shown individually and sequentially. The difference is that the layout of the images in a projection has less significance; they are shown in the context of the entire presentation, without the parameters of the space and the flow of the traffic one would find in a gallery exhibition. It is as if the photographer is writing, photographing, editing and directing his or her own film.

Editing for a magazine. The process for providing images for magazines is different than creating a book or an exhibit. The photographer is required to shoot a whole story and provide the editorial staff with a wide selection of photographs from which to choose from. The decision of what is printed is generally out of the hands of the photographer.

I shoot very little assignments for magazines, but when I work on annual reports for non-governmental organizations, I hand over a very wide selection of photographs for them to use as they see fit.

Editorial control over images for magazines has historically been a difficult topic for photographers who want to ensure that what they want in the

publication is printed. My philosophy is simple. The magazine or NGO has paid me to make photographs, not to edit. I do not want my legacy as a photographer to boil down to a few magazine articles edited by a staff with a different agenda than my own, so I allow them to do as they please with the images, making sure that they do not misrepresent the content within the photographs. I use the photographs I have made on assignment to sequence as I would like in books, exhibits or lecture projections. For me, magazines are commercial outlets created to sell products. Of course there are exceptions to this rule, but generally magazines, like most businesses, have an agenda to earn money. This agenda is different than mine, but I accept their need to accommodate their bottom line. It is a sad fact of the times in which we live.

Editing in general. I suggest that the photographer start with a very broad edit, several times more than what is anticipated for the final outcome. In books and projections, I generally try to narrow everything down to eighty images. I came up with this figure from shooting slides and keeping everything to what could fit in a single slide carousel of eighty images. Additionally, the great photography books, such as Robert Frank's The Americans, usually have between eighty and a hundred images.

For NGO and magazine assignments, I edit out all the duplicate images and the ones with technical flaws. I keep a few favorites for my own and give the client everything. NGOs have a number of different uses for photographs from a single assignment, I want them to have as much flexibility for using the photographs as possible, and so I try and give them as much as I can.

Exhibitions are in a category all by themselves. I have done exhibits with as few as twenty photographs and as many as sixty-five. The way I edit is dependent upon whether it is a survey of my career or if it is an exhibit revolving around a single issue or topic.

When I initially start an edit, I create a hierarchy of first and second favorite choices. These are images that I simply find aesthetically or graphically interesting. I also make categories based on the subjects of the photographs; the subject can be as literal as "trees" or "telephone poles" or as conceptual as the mood of an image such as "sad" or "dark". When I categorize like this, I find that I have new portfolios emerging. When I shoot a single documentary project, I find that I have created smaller portfolios that are equally strong in emotional content as the main intended topic.

Sequencing is very intuitive. I like to start with an image that asks the viewer: how did we get here? And then I like to flash back and have a series of images that lead up to the strong starting photograph. In editing this way, it is important not to wear out the audience with a series of intense images, one after the other, there needs to be a resting point. Images that give the viewer a rest, the photographs that are not greatest hits but support the project as a whole, are very important. When editing for a projection, I like to have heavy and intense stories and images followed by anecdotal tales about getting sick on the local cuisine or awkward cultural interactions I have when I'm on assignment.

Jeff Rosenheim, curator of photography at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, gave me a list of questions to ask when editing and sequencing:

1.) What is it?
2.) Why is it important?
3.) Why does it hold up?
4.) What does it say?

All of these questions are important. And all of them should be asked in relation to the world and culture we all inhabit. All great photography is a commentary on the world we live in.

EQUIPMENT.

Photographers have a tendency to get wrapped up in equipment. My enthusiasm for photography is embedded in the images that I make and the experiences I have in different cultures. People reading this text will most likely already have made the decision which brand of camera gear to use and what lenses are their favorites. The best advice I can give is that I prefer fixed-focus lenses with fast apertures. I think the physical act of moving your body to get closer and further is a very efficient way of deliberating how to effectively compose. And fast apertures allow photographers to work in low-light situations that are often the most interesting.

A basic philosophy I have for equipment is that you want to put yourself in a situation where you feel confident with all that you have brought, but not burdened by so much. I don't like equipment, I feel like it can inhibit what the photographer is trying to accomplish. But, you don't want to find yourself on assignment in a remote and cold part of the world and discover that you left your warm boots at home or having to worry about whether you brought enough batteries to hold you through until you access electricity again. Simple planning is necessary.

~

I've included a list of things I find important to bring on assignment that is not exclusively photography related.

- Bags. I am constantly buying new bags trying to find the perfect one. There is no perfect camera bag. The best solution I have found is a good canvas bag that can hold inserts from a camera bag. A bag such as this looks like a regular shoulder bag, but can contain all the necessary equipment needed to take great photographs: a camera, a couple lens and an image storage device, whether film or flash cards.

- Compass and Clinometer. Several years ago I bought Sunpath® software. The software lets the photographer know where the sun is at any fifteen-minute interval anywhere in the world on any day in history. Whenever I go on assignment, I always print out a chart of my anticipated locations. Sunpath® even charts how long the shadows will be! Along with the software a good compass and clinometer are handy tools. I can scout locations and know when the sun will be shining down a street or between a set of trees. Its accuracy is amazing.

- Footwear. Often when I teach a destination workshop, there will be questions beforehand from students asking what sport of shoes to pack. Students are usually embarrassed to ask, because they think that they should ask more technical questions. I think it is an important question. Research the place you go and make sure you have the right footwear for the climate, and equally important, make sure that the footwear you do have is worn enough so it is comfortable. New shoes need some getting adjusted to.

- A reference library. In the appendix section of this book, you will find a list of reference books. I use my reference library a great deal and recommend that the documentary photographer have a collection of books to refer to as well as a library of monographs by photographers that they admire; this can be used as a never-ending source of inspiration.

- If an NGO calls with an assignment idea, I put them on hold until I can get online and take a look on their site and see what sorts of programs they have and I get out my atlas and open to the proposed country. These two tools allow me to be able to speak intelligently about what they are trying to propose. They are usually really impressed and have no idea that I have accessed all this information while on the line with them.

- A good journal. Like a camera bag, a good journal is important for recording field notes and everyday experiences on the road. Selection of a notebook is very personal. You want to make sure that it isn't so thick that you'll never get through it. Thicker journals tend to wear out before I finish them. I try to go with small pocket-sized notebooks that are good for a couple weeks of jotting down contact information and general impressions of the environment we encounter.

CONCLUSION.

One of the great gifts handed to a photographer is the ability to become hyper sensitive to our environment and we often find ourselves overwhelmed by the world we live in. This text is intended as a way of helping the photographer navigate through their career.

This book will never be finished. The content will not change, but will evolve from the contribution of its' readers, my students.

Please email your thoughts and comments:

thatcher@thatchercook.com

1. Elliot Erwitt - Magnum Stories; Pg. 138
2. Refugees International – www.refugeesinternational.org. See appendix of an advocacy report.
3. I read about them in an encyclopedia of minorities put out by Minority Rights Group, a great reference for finding photography interesting cultures to photograph
4. I recommend Malarone™ - it has minimal side effects.
5. I use the word Gypsy because I was adopted into a Gypsy family on this excursion and my Gypsy father said the word Gypsy should never be a word to be ashamed of!
6. The leading cause of death for humanitarian workers is automobile accidents.

APPENDIX.

ROGER BURKS LECTURE ON WRITING

Writing for NGOs has three goals:

1. To show
2. To report
3. To Familiarize

- Good writing will persuade the public and donors to volunteer, spread the word about programs and to donate money.

- When we have the audience THINK, FEEL, and CARE we create ACTION.

- Ways to do this …
  People relate to other people. Stay away from talking about villages. Villages are made up of families and families are made up of people. The story of a family can explain the story of a program and a village. The idea is that people are the same everywhere. We all breathe, eat and have happy and sad times. We've all had similar struggles and that we can universally relate to … there are distinct challenges we all know about.

- Give examples of poverty - specific examples.

- The writer must explain the culture, the program and what's going on in a village. It is the writer's goal to open a window and show the plight of another culture.

- A way to personalize this is to find unique features to a person. (Examples: "the person had a very serious face" or "the person would hide behind their hand".)

- The HOOK. Something colorful and interesting to make people want to read more; don't be afraid to give your own thoughts and opinions.

- Keep the story short - 500 to 1,000 words.

PACKING LIST: UGANDA

These are only suggestions. I don't expect all of you will bring everything.

- ❑ Credit Cards – American Express and Diner's Club in not as available as Visa. There is even a limit on where Mastercard is accepted.
- ❑ Receipt envelope – This is for receipts that you can deduct for taxes, etc … and also as a way to keep up on how much money you are spending. I usually get a bankers bag from my bank.
- ❑ Cameras – Probably a good idea to take more than one camera in case one malfunctions. I will be traveling light with only my film camera, so I won't have a spare for students to use.
- ❑ Tripod – this is up to you. Can be helpful. I usually bring one and never use it.
- ❑ Tripod plates – this are the quick release adapters for your tripod. (Something that students sometimes forget. I usually buy enough to put on each of my camera and then one for the tripod as well.)
- ❑ Mobile phone w/charger. We can also get mobile phones in Kampala --- if you have a phone that you travel with, bring it and we can put a local SIM card in it.
- ❑ Knife (Leatherman) – optional, but always good to have a can and bottle opener and a small screwdriver, etc …
- ❑ Digital Audio Recorder – it is great to record sounds of Africa as well.
- ❑ Filters – if you use them, don't forget them.
- ❑ Flash with attachments
- ❑ Lens and camera body caps – it will be dusty, so it is good to have these to protect your camera and lenses.
- ❑ Sensor cleaner.
- ❑ Sharpies – or permanent markers
- ❑ Pens
- ❑ Mini tripod – really optional. But if you get/bring one, bring a high quality one.
- ❑ Document Folder (or something with a zipper to hold your documents.)
- ❑ Mini First Aid kit with…
  1. Cipro
  2. Malarone
- ❑ Light meter – if you use a handheld meter, don't forget it.
- ❑ Compass & Clinometer – in use with Sunpath® software.
- ❑ Bug repellent
- ❑ Mini Mag-lite w/ extra bulbs – the mini-mag-lite that takes AA batteries is the best. Because the lens can become a stand for the flashlight and work like a candle. Also, the battery spring has a spare bulb in it, so no need to buy a spare bulb if you already have one in the battery spring of the flashlight.
- ❑ Lens cleaner & tissue
- ❑ Sensor cleaner
- ❑ Hand Sanitizer
- ❑ Cable release
- ❑ Guidebook – Lonely Planet and Rough Guides tend to be the best. Map would help as well.
- ❑ Clothes
- ❑ Check & bring batteries
- ❑ Good reading book/novel – as if we'll have time to read! Glasses & Sunglasses
- ❑ Toiletries – bring the brands that you are most used to because you will have a difficult time trying to find the brands you are looking for…I bring baby powder, because it gets hot and we don't always have access to a shower.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

1. Sun Path Charts – wide-screen.com sells SunPath ® software that charts where the sun is anywhere in the world at 15 minute intervals. (No need to buy it, I'll bring my copy and print out a chart for the time we are there.)
2. Insurance Card – Bring your own health insurance card and I would STRONGLY suggest that you buy supplemental travel insurance in case you need to be medi-vaced out – I usually buy IMG – you can find it on-line and it is not expensive.
3. State.gov - Travel Advisory. I always print out what the State department has to say about where I am going. When you read it, don't get scared, conditions traditionally sound much worse than they really are, but there is good info on embassy and hospital information.
4. Map – not necessary, I'll have one.
5. Notepads
6. Business cards
7. Postcards
8. Film logs – if you shot film.
9. U.S. Customs Forms – I get my equipment registered with U.S. customs and had the stamped, signed official documents laminated. No one has ever asked and unless you are bring a great deal of equipment (large strobes, etc …) I would not make too much of an effort to get the forms.
10. Inoculation record
11. International driver's license – not necessary.
12. Contact / credit card info
13. Passport scan
14. Calendar pages
15. Datebook & Journals
16. Travel insurance info
17. Passport & Passport copies. (I usually put one in my checked baggage and one folded in my wallet.

SET UP AN EMAIL ACCOUNT WITH:

- Color Passport Scan.
- Credit card information (including international toll free numbers of who to contact in case of necessary cancellation.)
- Emergency Contact information. If you feel compelled, you are more than welcome to give me your emergency contact information so I have it as well.

REFERENCE BOOKS

- *On Being a Photographer* by David Hurn and Bill Jay
- *Rough Guide* and *Lonely Planet* Guide Books
- *The Basics* - A series of books giving a brief but detailed description of a particular religion. Published by SCM Press/Trinity Press International
- *InterAction Member Profiles* – A description of all Non-Governmental Organizations working out of the United States
- *World Refugee Survey* – Published by the U.S. Committee of Refugees
- *A Quick and Dirty Guide to War* – James F. Dunnigan & Austin Bay
- *World Directory of Minorities* – published by Minority Rights Group
- *Great Religions of the World* – Published by the National Geographic Society
- *Atlas of the Wolrd* - Published by the National Geographic Society

POPKA CHECKLIST

- ❑ Color copy of your passport and visa page
- ❑ Emergency contact information including parents and family numbers and the address and location of the nearest embassy representing your home country (if traveling overseas). And also all the information from the organization or publication that has hired you. This includes the address of the field office you'll be working with in addition to the address of the organizations' headquarters.
- ❑ Country profiles from the State Department and a list of local hospitals with Western standards, if traveling overseas.
- ❑ Inoculation record.
- ❑ International driving license. (No one anywhere has ever asked for it)
- ❑ Customs forms for equipment when traveling overseas; you can bring your equipment to your local customs office and make a list of it on their document and they stamp it with an official stamp that signifies you brought it out of the United States and did not buy or sell it when you were overseas. I usually laminate these documents.
- ❑ Sunpath™. This is software primarily used by filmmakers that graphs where the sun will be at over 10,000 locations throughout the world. It is extremely accurate and even charts how long shadows will be at a particular time of day. It is best used in conjunction with a clinometer in addition to a compass.
- ❑ Health Insurance Information. Always good to have your insurance information with along with contact information.
- ❑ Medical Evacuation Insurance. I usually buy travelers insurance in case I need to be evacuated from a country for something severe. It can be extremely costly to get a medical evacuation without the appropriate insurance.
- ❑ Credit Card Information. All the information on how to contact your credit card company if your cards are stolen. For overseas assignments, there is often a toll free or call-collect number you can dial to cancel or replace your cards.
- ❑ A copy of your contract if you are working for an organization or a publication. It is very handy to settle any questions regarding your compensation, the scope of your work or what the field office will supply versus what the headquarters will provide.
- ❑ Small map of your destination. Not a very complex one for the Popka. Just something that you can print off the web that shows major cities and roads.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Humanitarian News

www.reliefweb.int – United Nations/OCHA
www.alertnet.org – Reuters NGO news
www.fews.net – Famine Early Warning System
www.irinnews.org – United Nations Regional Integration News
www.unhcr.org – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
www.reliefweb.int/idp – United Nations Internal Displacement Unit
www.fewer.org – forum on early warning and early response
www.crisisweb.org – field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict

Travel Related Information

travel.state.gov – State Department warnings and brief country description
www.visaobtainers.com – links to all Embassies and visa requirements
www.joshuaproject.net/index.php – religious link showing a variety of ethnic minorities all over the world
www.weather.gov – NOAA weather
www.timeanddate.com – show the coordinates of a variety of places all over the world.

Equipment

www.wide-screen.com – software for scouting the location of the sun

News

www.iwpr.net – Institute for War and Peace Reporting
news.bbc.co.uk – BBC
www.onlinenewspapers.com
www.abyznewslinks.com

Photography Organizations

www.editorialphoto.com
www.magnumphotos.com
www.viiphoto.com

Documentary Photography

www.documentography.com
www.revue.com

General Photography

art-support.com/index.htm
5b4.blogspot.com
www.lightstalkers.org
www.mediastorm.com

Page Number:
Job Number:
Dates:
Job Description:

Roll #	Date	Film Type	Format	Description	X-ray	Filter	Test	Run

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NOTES:

Statement of Proposed Study or Research
Thatcher Cook
Kyrgyz Republic – Photography

A Photographic Survey of Islamic Youth Culture in the Ferghana Valley

It is my intention to photograph the coming-of-age of young people in the Kyrgyz region of the Ferghana Valley. The photographs will be a look at the blend of Islamic and former Soviet culture using young adults aged fifteen to twenty-five to represent a microcosm of a region struggling to define itself. The resulting photo-essay will depict young people that are roughly the same age as their newly founded nation - both of which are uncomfortably wedged between Western influence and Islamic tradition.

In the 1920s and 30s, the Soviet Union divided the Ferghana, or Fergana, Valley between the Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Tajik Republics; all three cultures were intentionally divided ensuring no ethnic majority remained in any one republic. Under the centralized Soviet system, the whole region was part of a larger homogenized economy relying upon the production of cotton; the distinction between borders was essentially irrelevant, thus repressing cultural and religious differences.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Ferghana Valley, the most fertile and densely-populated region of Central Asia, would be shared by three sovereign republics: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic or Kyrgyzstan. The old and often undefined Soviet borders that divided the three ethnic groups now define three countries all with split ethnicities, making the Ferghana Valley a veritable tinderbox of ethnic tension. This was demonstrated in 2005 with the government killing of hundreds of protestors in neighboring Andijan, Uzbekistan. Over a decade has passed since the Kyrgyz Republic has gained independence. Young adults, unable to remember a time before Kyrgyz independence, represent many of the struggles of a new nation acquiring its own political, religious, and societal identity.

It is my goal to photograph this transition, using young people to represent a nation's shift to independence. As far as I know there are no photo-books documenting the Ferghana Valley. A monograph that comes close to the proposed book is Magnum photographer Luc Delahaye's Wintereise, which examines post-Soviet culture through images of alcoholism and criminality along with photographs depicting the concept of family in Russia. Each photograph will be like an image in a poem, examining young people as they struggle with the threat of religious fundamentalism and drugs against a backdrop of ethnic tension, conservative Islamic culture and environmental degradation.

A final edit of the photographs will be exhibited in public spaces and incorporated into a lecture series I already give to university and secondary school students (who incidentally are the same age as my proposed subjects) about the different developing countries I've worked in as a photographer for international non-governmental organizations. Additionally, I intend to publish, either independently or through a publisher, a monograph. The resulting book will not only serve as a finished work of art, but also as a cultural document, making the photo-essay both an artistic and academic endeavor. My approach is a poetic one; the photographs, although literal, will rely upon mood as much as content to

portray the atmosphere of a people and a region evolving through a poignant period of transition.

My experience in Kyrgyzstan was limited to a mere two-week trip in the year 2000. At that time, I traveled there independently and photographed in the Lake Song Köl region while I was living and working as a photographer in Tajikistan. Although I have been to more than fifty countries since then, the Kyrgyz Republic has remained my favorite destination. What intrigued me most about Kyrgyzstan was how the traditional culture had been preserved even through the Soviet era; rural isolation and the nomadic heritage enabled Kyrgyzstan to resist the demands of the Soviet Union's trend towards uniformity. However this preservation of culture may not last – globalization is proving to be a stronger force. While I was there, I stayed in an apartment and one morning, while on the balcony, I heard a young girl below hum the theme to the motion picture, *Titanic*, a sign of encroaching Western influence.

To implement this project, *Mercy Corps*, the U.S.- based non-governmental organization, which provides humanitarian relief and development programs to over 80 countries over the last 27 years, has agreed to be my partner. I already have a long-standing relationship with Mercy Corps; over the past six years I have traveled to eight countries as their contract photographer. Mercy Corps has a well-established portfolio of programs in the Ferghana Valley. In addition to construction projects they are the leader in the region for community mobilization programs. Mercy Corps has grass-roots access to many communities in Ferghana. As my affiliate, Mercy Corps will facilitate my work with their beneficiaries and provide general regional infrastructure for my efforts. In exchange, I'll provide unlimited usage of my photographs to Mercy Corps.

The proposed project will be completed between September 2007 and June 2008. During my stay, I will be based in Osh and photograph both in Osh and in neighboring villages. Before I start photographing, I will begin by building a rapport with the communities and the street corner youth. The second portion of my project would be the actual photography. During the last third of my stay I will begin the process of editing and refining the tone and scale of the project. Ten months in the Kyrgyz Republic would allow me the time needed to accomplish a photographic essay personally unprecedented both in depth and scale.

Photographing Islamic youth culture in Kyrgyzstan would afford me the opportunity to further my Russian language education and completely immerse myself in a photographic essay without the distraction of other commitments such as freelance work and the inhibition of clients needs. My hope is that this project, in its final form, will lead to a better understanding of the political and religious climate in the Ferghana Valley. The values the Kyrgyz feel towards their heritage not only speak to me as an artist interested in cultural traditions, but as a citizen of our ever-changing world.

Narrative Curriculum Vitae
Thatcher Cook
Kyrgyz Republic – Photography

As with every young person, my childhood experience was strongly linked to my parents and their way of life. My folks separated when I was five. Their divorce, career changes and remarriages made for a very transient adolescence. I had become a nomad, attending sixteen school systems before my High School graduation. When I was twelve, I received my first camera and photography became a constant presence in my life.

My first photo essay was of a circus. This essay, which I still incorporate into school lectures, opened my eyes to the potential to photography; it was my first experience with a refugee-like population – marginalized people on the move.

I studied photography at the University of Maine. After College, I roamed around the United States working at restaurants as a dishwasher. By chance, I eventually found steady work at a commercial photography studio in Maine. I stayed at Stretch Studio for almost three years, saving every penny I could to do an independent photo-essay that resulted in a trip to Bulgaria. On my first trip, I lived and photographed among the Roma (or Gypsies) and Pomaks, a vulnerable Muslim minority, for several weeks.

I fell in love with a Bulgarian woman and we got married. While living in Bulgaria, I got a contract to photograph for the *Helsinki Committee on Human Rights.* Although I was only paid a $70.00 per month, the access that was given to me was invaluable. I was able to visit detention centers unannounced and document human rights violations. During this period I traveled throughout the Balkans. The war in Bosnia is where I learned first-hand the grim reality of the human capacity for violence.

After our time in Bulgaria we immigrated to New York, where I worked for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), most notably the *Coalition for the Homeless.* A year later, my wife was offered a job in Tajikistan and we moved to Central Asia. I immersed myself in the Russian language and culture; spending several hours a day at a language institute learning the Russian language. During this time I photographed on assignment in Mongolia, Afghanistan, Russia, Chechnya, Republic of Georgia, Thailand and Indonesia for a wide range of NGOs including the *International Rescue Committee*, *World Food Programme*, *Mission East* and *Mercy Corps.*

On a trip to Azerbaijan, I found a group of internally displaced people (IDPs) who had been living in holes in the ground for ten years. Concerned, I met with *Refugees International*, a Washington-based refugee advocacy group, to see if they could help. The meeting resulted in me being sent to Azerbaijan as part of a team to assess the plight of all IDPs in the Southern Caucasus. This was the start of my refugee advocacy work.

Photography assignments and refugee advocacy projects have brought me to over fifty countries in locations as diverse as the Gaza Strip and the hurricane-ravaged Mississippi coastline. My work also brings me to a variety of college and secondary schools to educate students about the human condition and my work as a freelance photographer. To date, my greatest humanitarian accomplishment is advocating on behalf of the Bihari, a stateless group in Bangladesh, who are now getting United Nations humanitarian assistance that was previously unavailable.

In my years photographing developing and transitional cultures I have found a way to create images that not only speak to my own sensibility of documentation, but are also a discourse on the anthropology of a region. My success as a photographer and as a thinker means giving others, through the photographic medium, a better understanding of the communities we all inhabit.

Portland, Maine

Latitude 43° 40' N
Longitude 70° 15' W
Magnetic Declination 16° W

N

Bristol County
Time Zone: UTC -5
Eastern Standard Time EST
(DST is from 4/ 6/08 to 10/25/08)

Azimuth Bearings are given for Magnetic North. Do Not correct your compass for Magnetic Declination. The Magnetic Declination has been used in the calculations.

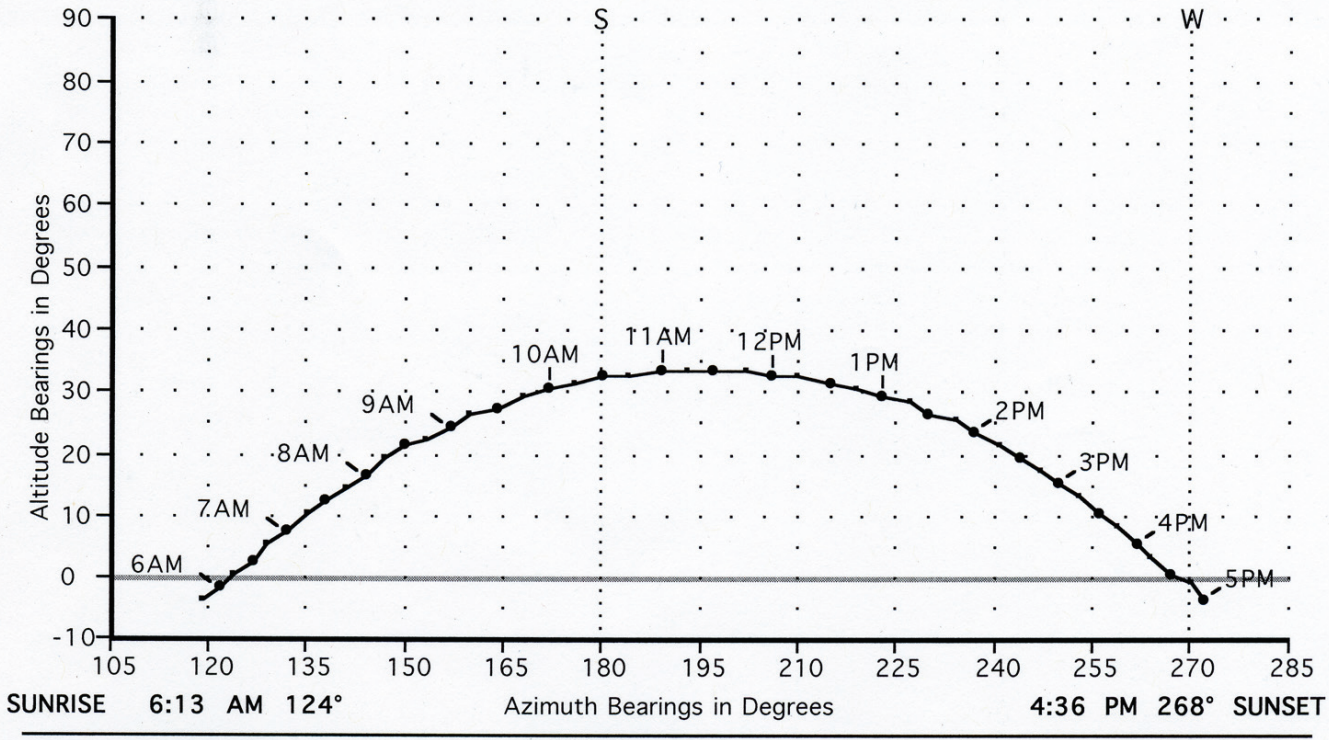
		Dawn	AZ	SUNRISE	Day Length	SUNSET	AZ	Dusk
Tue	10/28/08	*5:52 AM*	124°	**6:13 AM**	10:24	**4:36 PM**	268°	*4:58 PM*

Tuesday, October 28, 2008

15 minute intervals — AZ°- Azimuth ALT°- Altitude

	AZ°	ALT°	Sf**		AZ°	ALT°	Sf**		AZ°	ALT°	Sf**		AZ°	ALT°	Sf**		AZ°	ALT°	Sf**
	119	-4	---		147	19	2.90		184	32	1.60		227	28	1.88		259	8	7.12
6AM	122	-2	---		150	21	2.61	11AM	189	33	1.54		230	26	2.05	4PM	262	5	11.4
	124	0	---		153	22	2.48		193	33	1.54		234	25	2.14		264	3	19.1
	127	2	28.6	9AM	157	24	2.25		197	33	1.54	2PM	237	23	2.36		267	0	---
	129	5	11.4		160	26	2.05		202	33	1.54		241	21	2.61		270	-1	---
7AM	132	7	8.14		164	27	1.96	12PM	206	32	1.60		244	19	2.90	5PM	272	-4	---
	135	10	5.67		168	29	1.80		210	32	1.60		247	17	3.27				
	138	12	4.70	10AM	172	30	1.73		215	31	1.66	3PM	250	15	3.73				
	141	14	4.01		176	31	1.66		219	30	1.73		253	13	4.33				
8AM	144	16	3.49		180	32	1.60	1PM	223	29	1.80		256	10	5.67				

Shadow Length = Object Height x Shadow Factor (Sf**)



REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL

RI BULLETIN

A POWERFUL VOICE FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

December 13, 2004

Contacts: Maureen Lynch and Thatcher Cook
ri@refugeesinternational.org or 202.828.0110

Stateless Biharis in Bangladesh: A Humanitarian Nightmare

In 2004 the already desperate living conditions of the stateless Biharis in Bangladesh have continued to worsen. This year alone, they have lost their government-subsidized food aid, and many families have lost their homes to tornado, fire, and eviction. They continue to eke out an inhuman existence in their camps of decaying squalor. The situation is critical and requires immediate attention.

In pre-independence India, the Biharis were an Urdu-speaking Muslim minority in the Hindu region of Bihar. In 1947, at the time of partition, the Biharis moved to what was then East Pakistan. When civil war broke out between East and West Pakistan, the Biharis, who consider themselves Pakistani, sided with West Pakistan. In 1971, however, East Pakistan became the independent state of Bangladesh. The Biharis were left behind as the Pakistani army and civilians evacuated and found themselves unwelcome in both countries. Pakistan feared a mass influx of Biharis could destabilize a fragile and culturally mixed population, and Bangladesh scorned the Biharis for having supported the enemy. With neither country offering citizenship, the Biharis (also called stranded Pakistanis) have remained stateless for 33 years.

A permanent solution is possible if the governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh offer citizenship to the Biharis. Some camp residents think of themselves as Pakistani and would like to be reunited with family members in Pakistan. This repatriation could be funded by money already put aside by the Pakistani government. Others, who have never been to and have no family in Pakistan, can only imagine a life in Bangladesh. Those Biharis that are keen to establish lives as Bangladeshi citizens sometimes see "no other way" and marry local Bangladeshis. Others, such as 20-year-old Abdul, who survives hand to mouth as a garment factory worker, says he would like to go to Pakistan. In any case, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is not addressing the plight of the Biharis.

An estimated 250,000 to 300,000 Biharis live in 66 camps in 13 regions across the country. All camps have one thing in common – they are severely overcrowded. In Rangpur, northern Bangladesh, there are several instances where 12 or more family members sleep huddled together in a single room no larger than eight by ten feet. As families grow without access to more land, they are forced to live in increasingly small quarters. "We have no privacy," one 9-year-old student says. In some camps dirt floors become deep mud in the monsoon season. Rainwater creates another problem for those with less than adequate roofing. A widow and mother of four told Refugees International, "We cannot stay here when it rains. We have to live in the railway station." In September, a tornado ripped through one camp and destroyed 54 homes. Temporary structures, some with no roofs, were built, leaving no protection from the elements. On December 4, fire ripped though a camp in Saidpur, leaving two hundred people homeless. During the last year, over 150 families have been threatened with eviction, and in one Chittagong camp some residents were forcibly removed from their homes.

Lack of water and co-habitation with animals, combined with poor drainage and sanitation systems, contribute to a variety of medical problems, including skin disease, water-borne illness, upper respiratory infections and gastro-intestinal disorders. In one camp, ten wells were damaged leaving only two working wells to supply water to 650 families. In Mirpur's Millat Camp, there was only one latrine for 6,000 people. Few medical clinics exist, and several camps have no healthcare at all, leaving entire families susceptible to both medical and financial hardship. In one case, RI entered a candlelit room where two terrified young girls hovered behind their dying father. Without a breadwinner, they face a lifetime of borrowing and panhandling.

For Bihari children, the right to a basic education has become a luxury. The school in Saardar Bahardur camp closed this year from lack of funding. In Adamgee, only six boys from an entire camp made it to secondary school. Teachers go unpaid, students study in shifts, and requests to the Minister of Education for new books have been turned down. One teacher, who has not been paid since September said, "In this environment, learning is a lot of work for the students. There is no time to get wiser. Children work after school for money by doing handicrafts and jewelry. At home they live like animals. Their families cook, eat, work, and sleep in the same room."

This lack of education, combined with an already impoverished economy, provides little opportunity for employment inside or outside the camps. One young man said he makes 100 taka a day as a rickshaw driver. After he pays a 40 taka bicycle rental, he is left with only 60 taka (about $1.00) to feed his family. Those fortunate enough to find work often face discrimination and harassment. In Geneva camp, vendors complained of locals taking merchandise without paying. Others have been asked for "ransom."

Recently, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh granted citizenship to ten Biharis. Small significant moves such as this are important, but do not address the larger problem. The 33 years of suffering must be addressed by the governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan, the United Nations, and non-governmental agencies.

Refugees International therefore recommends that:

The Government of Pakistan

- Work with the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR to offer the possibility of resettlement and citizenship for Biharis who wish to live in Pakistan.

The Government of Bangladesh

- Grant citizenship to Biharis who wish to remain in Bangladesh.
- Provide immediate accommodation and other support for people who have lost their homes to the recent fire and tornado.
- Restore relief for immediate needs, including food.
- In collaboration with local and international NGOs, ensure that each camp has enough basic amenities, including water, latrines, schools, and medical clinics, to accommodate its population.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees:

- Take a proactive role to provide relief consistent with its mandate to address stateless people in the same manner as refugees.
- Take a proactive role in securing a resolution of the Biharis' situation by facilitating an agreement between Pakistan and Bangladesh resulting in citizenship for all in one of the two countries.
- Explore options for third country resettlement.
- Increase the number of protection and legal staff dealing with global statelessness.

Director of Research Maureen Lynch and Field Representative Thatcher Cook visited Bangladesh to examine the situation for stateless Biharis in November.