

RANGEFINDER

The Missouri Photo Workshop | September 26, 2020 | Volume 73, Issue 5



Shaghayegh Hatefi, a yoga teacher, leaves home to go to a cafe in Yazd, Iran.

Photo by Marjan Yazdi

Alyssa Schukar on “making it” in independent photojournalism

TOP TIPS FOR FREELANCING

cianna morales



Alyssa Schukar presenting at MPW.70 in Mountain Grove, Mo., in 2018

Photo by Jenna Kieser

Alyssa Schukar, a faculty member for the fourth time at this year’s Missouri Photo Workshop, is a freelance photojournalist based in Washington, D.C. Her work is rooted in a love for people, and is propelled by a desire to name the larger forces that affect people’s lives. Schukar is often on assignment for national publications and is a contract storyteller at the nonprofit Feeding America.

Freelancing isn’t easy, she says, but these tenets guide Schukar’s career and help her find success.

Run your business

“If you’re a freelancer, you’ve got to

have business skills,” Schukar said. Seventy percent of the job is running the business, and, every now and then, taking pictures. This entails creating a budget with weekly or monthly targets and yearly goals; managing insurance; being savvy about contracts and photo rights; and more. On slow weeks, Schukar is contacting editors, thinking about assignments, researching projects and doing what she can to drum up work.

“It’s a full time job, sometimes more than a full time job,” she said.

Diversify your income

Freelance photojournalists also

need to work with a varied client list to meet their financial goals. Schukar doesn’t just work for news organizations — she photographs for nonprofits that she aligns with. A lot of photojournalists also do commercial work, event photography or weddings.

“The essential thing about diversifying your client list and your source of income is that you can then do project work that is more on the fulfilling end and less on the financial income side, and have a better sense of power there,” Schukar said.

Shoot what inspires you

Photographing what you’re

interested in doesn’t just feed your soul; it’s also necessary for shaping your business.

“The biggest favor that young photographers can do for themselves is work on stories that they’re passionate about,” Schukar said.

Schukar spent three years working on “The Most Industrialized City in America,” documenting a community in Indiana that is surrounded by polluting industry. That project led to more work from national publications because editors saw the effort that Schukar put into the photos.

“If you want to get hired for a specific kind of story, you have to first create that body of work so editors will see the work and understand what you’re passionate about,” Schukar said.

Build your community

A classic stereotype of the freelancer might be a lone wolf figure — but Schukar debunks this myth.

“If you are trying to do it on your own, it’s going to be harder, and you’ll make mistakes that you don’t have to make because you’re not learning from other photographers,” Schukar said.

You have to create the kind of community you want to be part of, she said. That’s why Schukar and her colleagues came up with the Prism Photo Workshop, which helps young freelancers from Chicago with business and pitching skills. That way, stories being told in Chicago come from a place of knowledge.

“Find a community of photographers who will support you emotionally, through edits, by sharing assignments,” Schukar said.

That core of people will be how you’ll find sustainability.

“Without supporting each other, it’s a really difficult endeavor to take on freelance photography.”

A GLIMPSE OF RADU’S STORY

amy schaffer

Alexandra Radu watches through her viewfinder as her subject, Ezra Gideon, puts on a chest binder and struggles to fit into his old dress shirts that his muscles have now filled out.

Gideon is 56 years old and a little over a year into his transition into manhood. This is the most intimate access Radu has been granted in the five years spent photographing LGBTQIA+ stories in Malaysia.

Religious dictations like Sharia law send fear through the country’s LGBTQIA+ community and make finding willing subjects challenging.

“I don’t publish much about it for safety reasons for the people involved,” Radu said. “But I feel it’s

important for someone to document what’s happening here because it’s quite amazing. It’s a strong movement even though it’s not in the open.”

Gideon is an exception.

“I feel very privileged for that,” Radu said. “He wants to share his story because there’s no fear there. In the vast majority, I think Ezra is the only person amongst the LGBT community here — which I know so far — that has this level of confidence in sharing his story.”

Radu has known Gideon for years, frequently spotting him at LGBTQIA+ events around her area but never becoming close friends. When she asked to shadow him for the week

of MPW.73, “it just clicked, the stars aligned.”

Her photos will follow Gideon as he navigates directing an international PR company, learns to be vulnerable in his romantic relationship and strengthens his relationship with himself — all while in a global pandemic.

“It’s just a story of a man who’s happy with himself,” Radu says. “And who’s making the best of his days.”

Radu hopes to continue seeking guidance from her faculty after the workshop comes to a close. They have shown her how to discover Gideon’s depth, something she describes as beyond “precious.”



Ezra Gideon combs his hair as he prepares to leave home for a press conference that he coordinates in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The texture of his hair has changed while transitioning, becoming thicker and harder to tame.

Photo by Alexandra Radu



Alexandra Radu is a Romanian independent documentary photographer and journalist based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Radu has 15 years of experience in the field documenting social, environmental and cultural issues, especially those regarding the intersectionality between gender and religion. Her work has been published in *The New York Times*, *Al Jazeera*, *The Diplomat*, *Open Society Foundations*, *Religion News Service*, among others.

ANIMALS OF MPW.73



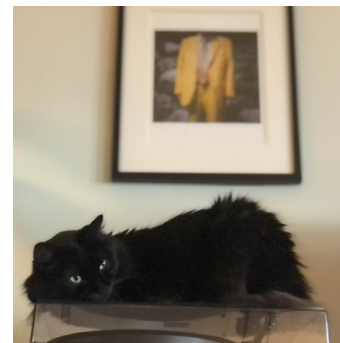
Sharbat Yazdi



Crunch Lebowitz-Hanger



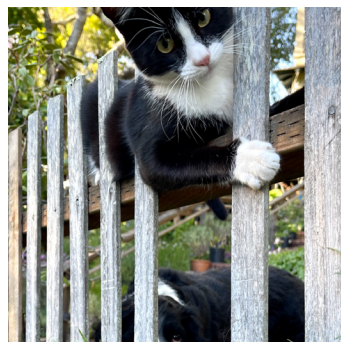
Toivo and Libby Kjellstrand



Bear Schukar



Nelson Rees



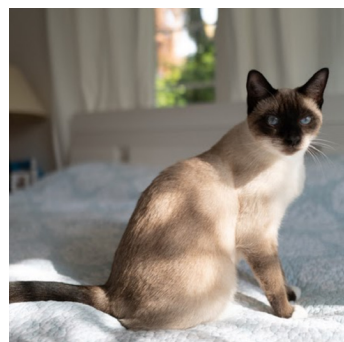
Kim Komenich's neighbor's cat



Mary Dodge



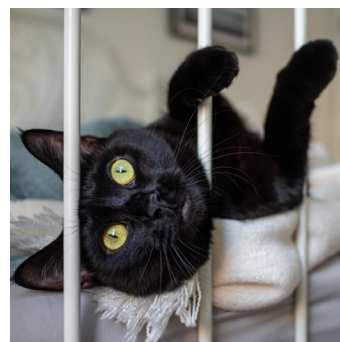
Boomer and Oreo Rees



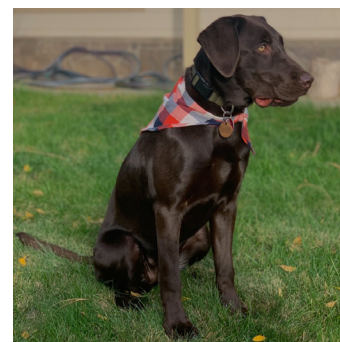
Lynxie Clark



Andy and Zoe Kratzer



Moosh Hawasly



Nalah Mosbrucker



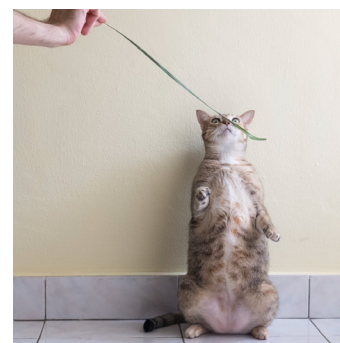
Checker, Champ and Alvin Kratzer



Maro Wagner's roommate's hamster, Squirt



Lindbergh Pendleton



Spunky Radu



Photo by Idris Solomon

Home is many places. It can be a combination of people or a mixture of emotions. Some people need to leave home in order to appreciate what makes it important. Chase White's attempt to move away for college was short-lived. Chase returned to Mountain Grove and rediscovered love for his hometown in the form of service — Postman. Football Coach. Church Deacon. Hunter. He has recreated a home for himself and his family doing the things he loves.

ONLY ONE

idris solomon

As a self taught photographer, MPW was an essential part of my photography foundation. The concept of flying into a new town, in a rural part of the country (I am a native New Yorker), and finding stories on my own is equally challenging and exciting. I was out of my comfort zone in many areas. Being the only Black student in a town that didn't have many Black residents was extremely challenging. I had to consider many factors regarding my safety. I attended the workshop at the height of Trump's presidency. I was uncomfortable in Mountain Grove.

As a journalist, I was forced to tap into my people skills before my photographic skills. It was important that I learned to establish a commonality with the person I was photographing in order to build trust. Whenever he brought up topics regarding race, politics, religion or any other potentially polarizing subjects, I steered the conversation

back to sports, family, and other subjects where shared something in common.

Overall, MPW taught me how to see without the camera. I learned how to observe my surroundings. I learned how to make portraits of people without asking them to look at the camera - not without their permission, but in a more natural way without their attention or awareness of the camera.

While my photography career has shifted from photojournalism more into documentary, lifestyle and commercial photography, I still apply the lessons learned at MPW. I have created a short documentary video and many of my clients hire me for lifestyle and commercial assignments because of the way I see the world. And a lot of that is rooted in my experience at MPW. I would love to attend the workshop again as time reminded of how to be more human behind the camera.



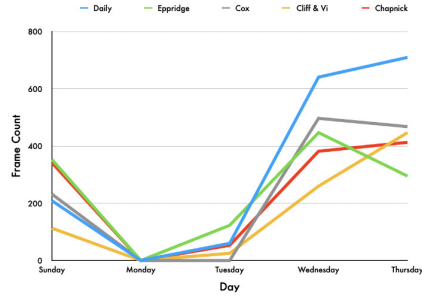
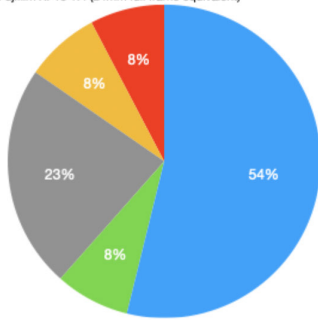
Idris Solomon is a photographer in New York whose work focuses on stories that are overlooked and lack proper representation. He has photographed dancers and gymnasts in Harlem, funeral homes in East New York, muralists in Bushwick, and Black cowboys in Houston. He awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to photograph Hip Hop culture in Ghana.

Solomon is the creative director and host of The Black Shutter Podcast.

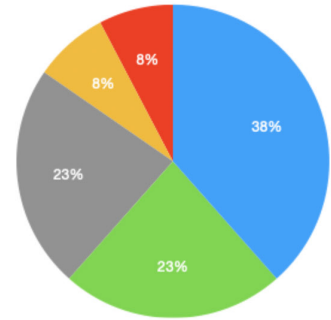
His work has been featured by Netflix, HBO, Amazon Prime, New York Times, Bloomberg News, NBC News, Drone Racing League, YouTube and Swatch, among others.

MPW.73 BY THE NUMBERS

● 35mm
● 24-70mm
● Fujifilm XF16 1.4 (24mm full frame equivalent)



● Nikon
● Canon
● Sony
● Fujifilm X-T3
● Leica



TWO TABLES



Scan the QR code above to watch a video from MPW history called "Two Tables."



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