

# CLARITY

PHOTOGRAPHY BEYOND THE CAMERA

Volume 1 - Sept. 2013



## LIGHTING ESSENTIALS

WITH KEVIN KUBOTA

### Creative Cloud

IS IT REALLY FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS?

### Change the World!


THE KILGORIS PROJECT BY JON MCCORMACK

# SEEING WITHOUT LOOKING

THE ART OF **CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY**

*Barry J. Brady*

As photographers, we have become obsessed with photographing subjects and this becomes the biggest hinderance to seeing things clearly. The goal of this series of articles is to discuss how we as photographers, or even as visual artists, can break through these creative barriers, learn how to see again, and this time - see things differently.



**H**ow often do you go out with your camera in hand with the intent to make some great photographs, but end up coming home with nothing or very few images that are edit-worthy. It is a common complaint of photographers that there is just “nothing to photograph!” I have heard this comment more often than I can remember... but is it true? Is there really nothing to photograph? Is there no light? Is there no colour?

What the photographer is actually saying is that there is nothing that they want to photograph, or that nothing is speaking to them or jumping out at them. At some point in time, we’ve probably all said this before. This often happens when we are in familiar surroundings, our home city, or the park near our home or

even photographing a local football or baseball game. The reason is that our creative eye has become familiar with the scene we are looking at, in a sense it has become numb to the scene. This is the reason why we think we cannot see anything to photograph; not because there is nothing new. We are simply not looking with fresh eyes. We are looking, but not seeing.

I have heard that Freeman Patterson does an interesting exercise in his photographic workshops. He asks the photographers to choose a spot, set up their tripod and equipment and without moving from that spot, make 35 DIFFERENT images. The images can be made from any angle, with any lens, and any position can be adopted. The only criteria is to make 35 different images. Sounds easy right? In practice, it is actually really tough. To better understand why this type of exercise can be truly a creative challenge, let's take a look at how we normally approach making a photograph.

## ▶ SUBJECT MATTER

As photographers, we constantly hear that we need to have a defined subject or point of interest. This is, of course, very good advice. The challenge is, when we have been photographing particular “subjects” for a while, we can only do so much to change how the subject is represented. This is the first hurdle to overcome. We are taught that good composition, subject matter, and the ever present rule-of-thirds will make our images amazing. This is partly true, but in general we go and “hunt” for our image based on the subject we like to photograph. This is how we, as photographers define ourselves. We call ourselves “landscape photographers”, “wedding photographers” or some other “subject photographer”. It is ingrained in the photography world to define ourselves by the subjects we photograph. Therefore, when the perfect composition or subject is not available, we say that there is nothing to photograph. However, when we see that yellow tulip or that gushing waterfall, we rush over to photograph it. If we don’t see that...we have nothing to photograph!

As photographers, we have become obsessed with photographing subjects and this becomes the biggest hinderance to seeing things clearly. The goal of this series of articles is to discuss how we as photographers, or even as visual artists, can break through these creative barriers, learn how to see again, and this time - see things differently.



## ▶ HONING YOUR CRAFT

To quote David duChemin, “Gear is good, vision is better”. We do need good equipment to make quality images, but knowing how to use the camera is the real key to making dramatic and impactful images. We need to be guided by vision. Vision means your ability to see, but also your ability to conceptualize a photograph; to visualize it before you capture it.

THE FIRST LESSON IN  
MAKING CREATIVE IMAGES IS  
UNDERSTANDING YOUR CAMERA.  
KNOW WHERE ALL THE BUTTONS  
ARE, KNOW WHAT THE BUTTONS  
DO AND WHEN TO USE THEM.



## ▶ HOW DO WE SEE?

Lets clarify what we mean by “seeing.” Seeing is the experience of our visual perception of the world around us. Seeing is a relative term. At times, we barely notice what is happening, and other times we are totally immersed in the visual world around us. Think of how much you notice during your morning commute to work versus how much you notice when you land in a foreign city for the first time. The two experiences are totally different. In the morning commute you may barely even remember how you arrived at work; the route, turns and buildings, everything becomes a visual blur. Alternatively, when you land in a foreign city for the first time, EVERYTHING seems to be new. The new visual sights become etched into your memory. You notice colours, shapes, textures, signs, letters, billboards, people, clothing and details that you never thought possible. Visually you become hyper-aware and your brain literally absorbs the information. This immersion is so profound that when you look at photographs of the meal you ate, your brain will bring back the smell to you too. All your senses become engaged and it is this experience we want to have when we enter the realm of creative photography. As photographers, all of our senses need to be engaged in order to effectively communicate the visual scene through our images.

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*At times, we barely notice what is happening, and other times we are totally immersed in the visual world around us.*

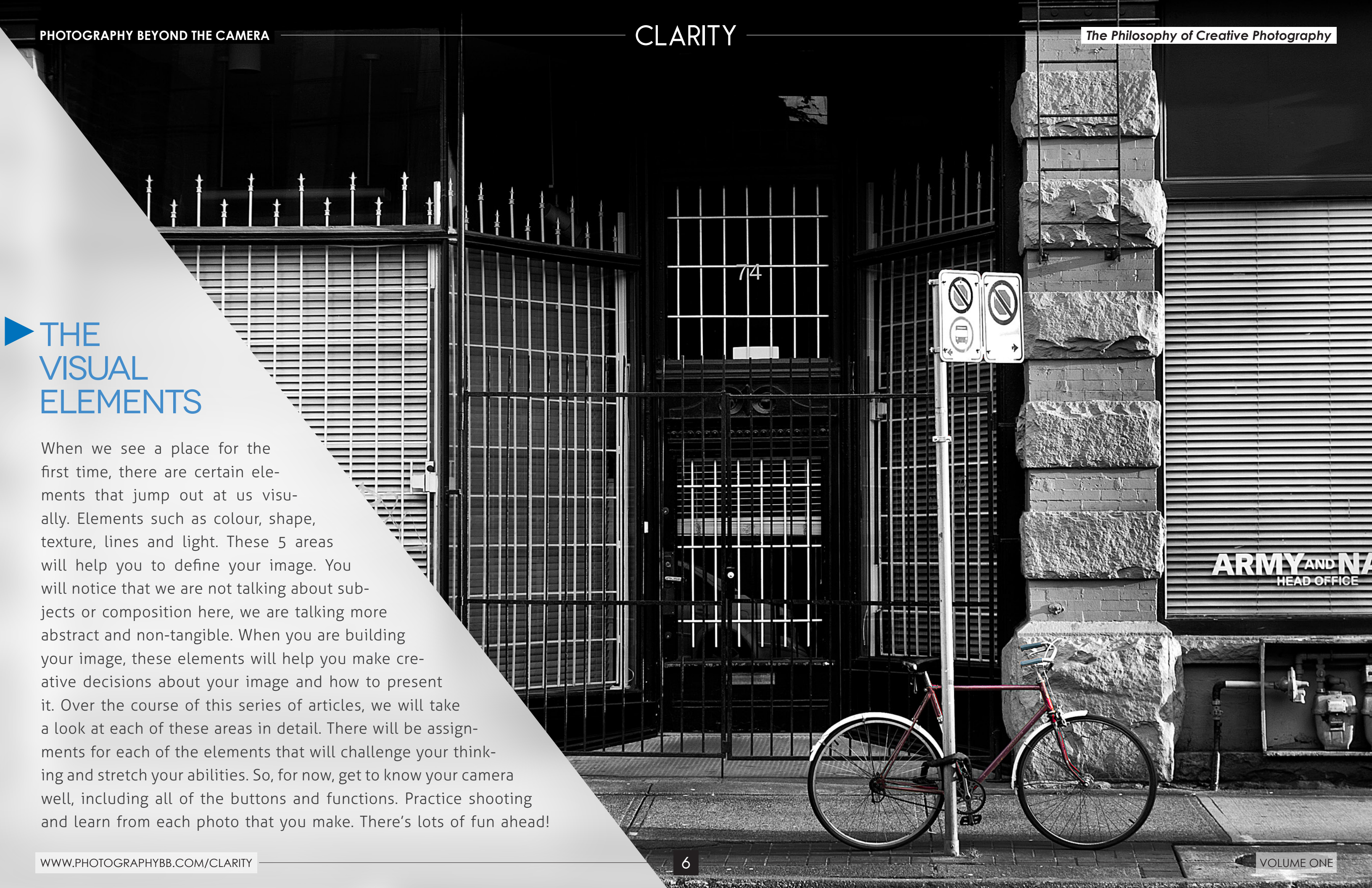
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**T**here are literally thousands of hours of video on the internet about these topics, so invest the time learning about the amazing camera you have. If you don't want to sit for hours through lots of youtube videos, then sign up for a photography course in your city. The important thing is to get to know your camera and know it well. It should be like driving

a car. You don't have to think about how to change lanes each time you drive or how to reverse park, you instinctively know how to do that and you should know instinctively how to use your camera in the same way. This takes time and practice. It means spending hours taking photos and learning from each image and each experience.

## ▶ THE VISUAL ELEMENTS

When we see a place for the first time, there are certain elements that jump out at us visually. Elements such as colour, shape, texture, lines and light. These 5 areas will help you to define your image. You will notice that we are not talking about subjects or composition here, we are talking more abstract and non-tangible. When you are building your image, these elements will help you make creative decisions about your image and how to present it. Over the course of this series of articles, we will take a look at each of these areas in detail. There will be assignments for each of the elements that will challenge your thinking and stretch your abilities. So, for now, get to know your camera well, including all of the buttons and functions. Practice shooting and learn from each photo that you make. There's lots of fun ahead!



# DATA PROTECTION AND THE CLOUD

by Jay Livens

Photography as both a hobby and profession has changed massively over the past decade. High-end cameras with extensive manual controls and excellent quality are no longer limited to professionals with huge budgets.

Advanced editing that used to require specialized and expensive dark room equipment is now available as simple software, which in some cases is even free. Yet, while so much has changed, one inalienable fact has not – photography is a rewarding hobby where we want to preserve content for years to come. This simple truth has become more difficult as technology advances, and so the photographer must consider new methods to protect their images.

The advent of digital photography has changed not only how we create images, but also how we

store and access them. In the film days, the output of our efforts was a set of negatives and prints or slides. These were a physical representation of our photographic efforts and we knew that if we took reasonable care, they would last a long time. As we have moved to digital photography, our images are stored as a series of ones and zeros on media such as memory cards or hard disk drives. These storage devices are relatively inexpensive and typically hold hundreds or even thousands of pictures. Now, we often do not maintain physical representations of our images (print, slide or negative). This is the challenge.



Today's storage mediums are reliable; however, the reality is that they will fail eventually. There can be numerous reasons for failure, not all of which relate to hardware. Here are some typical examples:

- › **VIRUS:** This does bad things to your computer, including corrupting critical files and potentially destroying your images.
- › **USER ERROR:** Someone mistakenly deletes a small or large number of files.
- › **COMPUTER SOFTWARE FAILURE:** Internal software within your system goes awry and mistakenly corrupts data.
- › **HARDWARE FAILURE:** There are many potential problems; the most common is that the hard drive storing your images fails and all data is lost.

An outage as described above will eventually occur. It is not a question of if, but when, and you must be prepared. Backing up your data is critical and will allow your images to survive through a severe outage.

There is one more area of concern that you should consider as well. The above four outages can be addressed with a proper local protection strategy. However, what happens if your house burns down when you are not there? If all your data is stored in your house then you lose everything. This may sound extreme, but it happens.

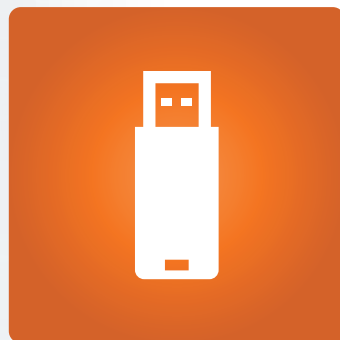
## Let's explore some commonly asked questions that will help us to determine the best solutions to the many challenges of backing up our digital images...

### WHAT IS BACKUP?

The concept of backup is simple. It is the process of moving critical data from one system to another for protection purposes.



### I COPY MY DATA TO A LOCAL EXTERNAL USB DRIVE. IS THAT SUFFICIENT?



Maybe. By copying your data to a USB drive, you now have a second copy, which is good.

However, most people leave their USB drives in their house and so you are not protected against a large scale outage like a fire.

### WHAT IF I COPY MY DATA TO A USB DRIVE AND GIVE IT TO MY FRIEND TO STORE IN HIS/HER HOUSE?

This is also a good strategy; however, the challenge becomes transporting the drive back and forth. The hard drive will require frequent updates as you capture new images and every time this happens, a round trip drive is required (e.g. pickup the drive, update the drive and return the drive). Frequent movement is not good for drives and any mishandling can result in data loss.

### WHAT IS THE BEST SOLUTION?

In my experience, the answer is relatively simple. You want a solution that can provide complete data protection consistently and reliably. It must be easy to use, automated, and avoid any cumbersome and risky data transport. The best solution – the cloud!

The cloud is very much an area of excitement and hype with much uncertainty about what and how it delivers. Fortunately, I am recommending a more mature and well-understood part of the cloud ecosystem; specifically, cloud backup. The concept of cloud may sound complex and scary, but in reality it is quite simple. The idea is to leverage a third party or "cloud provider" who will manage the process of sending copies of your images to a remote data center that is far from your house.



*Online PC backup & Cloud Storage has never been easier!*

## HOW DOES CLOUD BACKUP WORK?

It is quite simple in concept although the actual technology can be complex. You install some software on your computer that transparently monitors file changes or additions. When a file is modified or added to the system, the software will recognize the new information and use clever technology to shrink the size of the data and then send it over the Internet to a secure data center. A key feature is that the process is entirely automated and so no manual intervention is required. Furthermore, once the process is complete, you can be confident that you are protected no matter what happens to your local system or your house. Simply put, it solves the problem of data backup.



## ARE THERE DOWNSIDES TO CLOUD BACKUP?

There is a cost for cloud backups, and so you would incur a monthly or annual fee. Another obvious requirement is that all cloud backup solutions require an Internet connection to upload your data. Additionally, the first time you run a cloud backup, the process can be lengthy and bandwidth intensive since all data has to be sent. Subsequent backups will be less intensive as only new and changed data needs to be sent.

Also remember that restoring your data may take lots of time. If you lose all your data, you must copy all of your files over the Internet. Some vendors offer the ability to send a hard drive with your data, which can significantly simplify massive recoveries and is a great option to have.

## WHERE DO I FIND OUT MORE?

There are many cloud backup providers out there, and so I would encourage you to review the options. Some of the common vendors include Crashplan (I use this one), Mozy, Carbonite and Backblaze. You will find that each provider provides similar services although the cost and functionality differ.



## CONCLUSION

Simply put, image backup is critical. There are many ways to do this, but the cloud provides one of the most convenient and powerful methods. In the days of physical film, data backup was unknown and largely unnecessary. For the sake of your images, do not live in the past. Just as digital photography has significantly changed photography, it has also altered how we must protect our lifetime of captured memories.



THE  
**KILGORIS**  
PROJECT

# Giving through **Photography**

Vacation travel sparks  
schools for Kenyan kids

*by Jon McCormack*



**On my first trip to East Africa in 1999, I hoped to return home with a few good images. When I touched down in San Francisco, my camera, and my heart, held so much more.**

**M**y wife and I spent two weeks in Kenya and Tanzania, which set our lives on a new path. We came back with a love for the Maasai people and the start of a crazy journey. I never anticipated how my camera and Kenyan kids would shake up the status quo.

In one of the safari camps, we struck up a conversation with our waiter. There was a quick affinity among us, an easy exchange. Willie began to answer our questions about his family

and village. Willie radiated an enthusiasm for his Maasai tribe and community. So we pressed deeper with our naïve, curious questions. What was his home really like? How did he stay in touch with his family during his months away at the safari camp? Where did his kids go to school? His answers shouldn't have surprised us, but they did. (Mud hut. Only phone calls for emergencies. A long walk away.) We left the camp having exchanged snail mail addresses and pondering the needs of the Maasai.

*Long after the thrill of photographing lions and elephants faded, we continued to struggle with the prospects for Willie's community. We began to ask ourselves, could we do something that would really help? Many snail mails later, we had a plan.*

The community wanted a school building to benefit everyone. Students could use it during the week. Church and community groups could gather there on the weekends. We had no background in construction, education or international development. I'm a software engineer, who moonlights as a photographer. My wife is a writer. What we did have was a small amount of money and desire to do something for a group of people who had become real to us. Now they had names and faces and stories. Our small step forward would have to be enough.

Workers built the structure in 2003. Our school opened for the 2004 school year with two teachers and 40 kids. Community members celebrated with traditional songs and dancing. While this looked like a huge success, we soon realized it wasn't enough. On another visit to Kenya we heard from the teachers: Chronic diarrhea led to spotty attendance. Hungry kids fell asleep in class. Parents couldn't afford pencils and notebooks. Our challenge shifted from just building a school to, "How could we turn a school building into a great place to learn?"





*To do this, we needed help, and lots of it.*

We needed teachers to advise us, doctors to design health programs, and money to invest in the kids. We started a non-profit, The Kilgoris Project ([www.kilgoris.org](http://www.kilgoris.org)). I used my photographs from the school to tell the story and to inspire people to get involved.

*I used my photographs from the school to tell the story and to inspire people to get involved.*



# Fast forward to 2012

*Photography has been critical to sharing organization's vision. For people to get excited about something, they have to see it.*

The Kilgoris Project has grown into something beyond what we ever imagined. Today, in our 6 schools, we educate, feed, and provide health care to more than 600 kids. We foster economic development through a tea farm and a women's craft coop. And we employ a staff of 25 Kenyans.

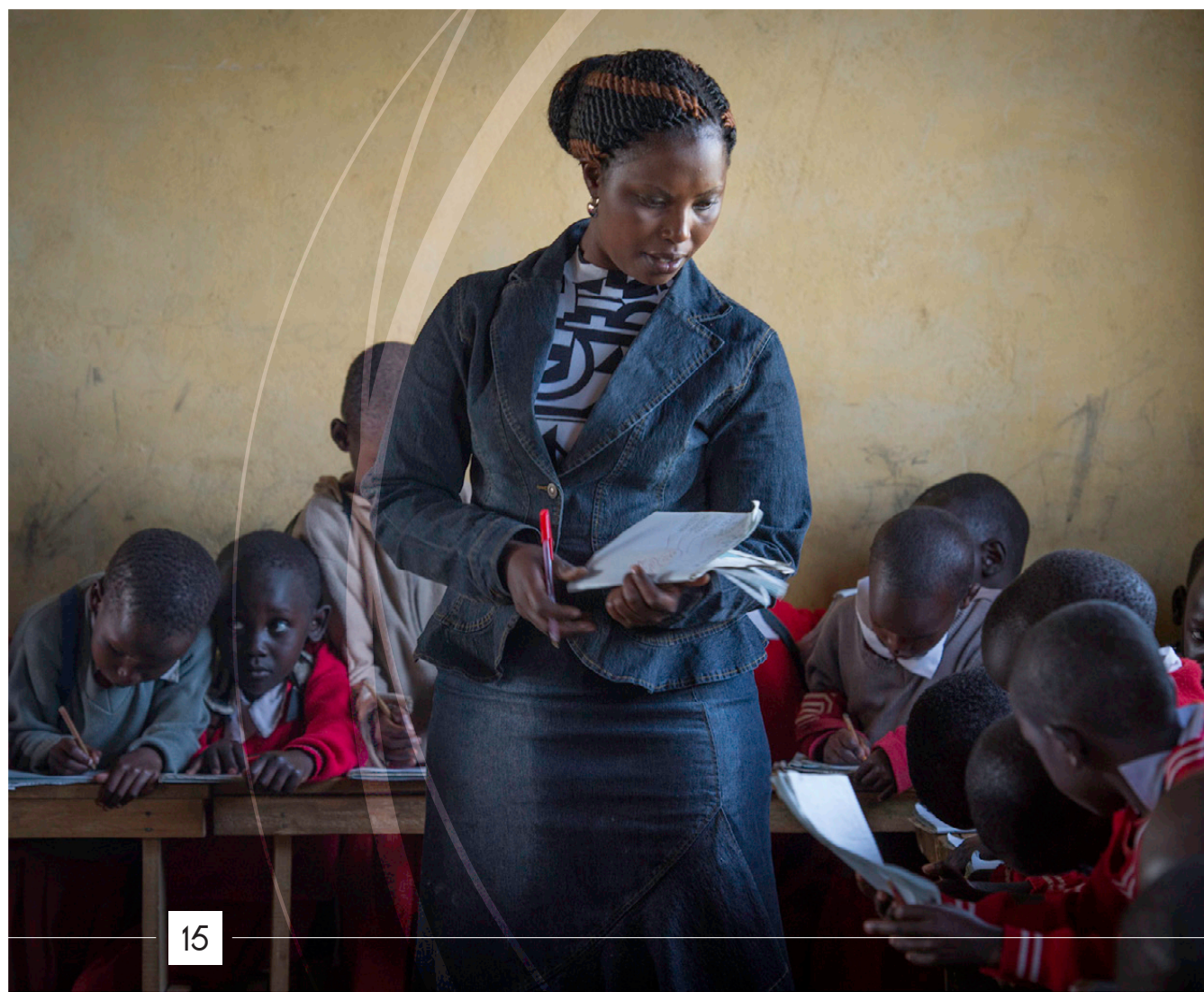
See the beautiful children's faces. See the storybooks and Kindles we've added to the schools. See Kenyans rallying in their own communities. Through my photographs, I'm able to build a bridge between the kids in Kenya, and people all over the world who care about them. Being able to positively affect the lives of others is so much better than what I envisioned from a roll of safari shots.



To provide long-term income for the schools, The Kilgoris Project invested in a 5-acre tea farm in mid-2007. Developed with the help of the Transmara Tea Project, an NGO, the farm will turn 27,000 tea seedlings into a steady cash flow. The first tea harvest arrived in August 2010.



Rural Kenyans struggle for access to books. Villages have no local library. Most students share textbooks with several others. The Kilgoris Project changed this when they rolled out Kindles at Ntimigom Primary School in June 2011. In partnership with Worldreader, e-readers and thousands of books were brought to primary students and teachers



When the children first saw the device, they guessed it was a giant phone. They followed along as the teacher taught them how to navigate the menu. They each selected a title. Then came the "ah-ha" moment. There were real books inside the Kindle!

*Through their six schools, the churches and the tea farm (now known as The Kilgoris Project), villagers are able to touch their neighbors. Many children are learning for the first time. Parents see hope for the future. And a community sees a visible expression of God's love.*



*The Kilgoris Project partners with the Massai village community in Southwest Kenya to operate schools, provide daily food and clean water, and foster economic development.*



THE  
**KILGORIS**  
PROJECT

Rural Kenyans struggle for access to books. Villages have no local library. Most students share textbooks with several others. The Kilgoris Project changed this when they rolled out Kindles at Ntimigom Primary School in June 2011. Please take a moment to visit their website and even throw out a small donation if you believe in their cause too.

[www.kilgoris.org](http://www.kilgoris.org)



# CLARITY

PHOTOGRAPHY BEYOND THE CAMERA

Volume 2 - Dec. 2013

## CHANGING LIVES

AN INTERVIEW WITH JEREMY COWART

## DIY LIGHTING ESSENTIALS

BUILD A COLLAPSABLE SCRIM FOR ONLY \$20

## STEALING CREATIVITY

WHAT GREAT ARTISTS DO BEST

# CHANGING LIVES

## An Interview With Help-Portrait Founder, Jeremy Cowart

In 2008, an idea that originated as a one-day event to be held annually every December has turned into a global movement that has a genuinely profound impact on the lives of those involved. Help-Portrait is committed to changing lives and demonstrating that the power of a single photograph can change a life (and lives) forever. You can make a difference with your camera. Whether it's December or any time of year, Help-Portrait provides the tools to do the most important thing we can with our photography – make a measurable and positive difference in this world.



Q

## WELCOME JEREMY, AND THANK YOU FOR SITTING DOWN WITH US TO TALK ABOUT HELP-PORTRAIT. TELL US ABOUT THE STORY OF THIS IDEA AND THE MOMENT THAT HELP-PORTRAIT WAS BORN.

A

In December of 2008, I had an idea to do a photo shoot with a local homeless shelter and to invite some local photographers to join me. The idea was sparked after I heard about a group of photographers in Seattle who took a day to share equipment and practice their craft together with hired models.

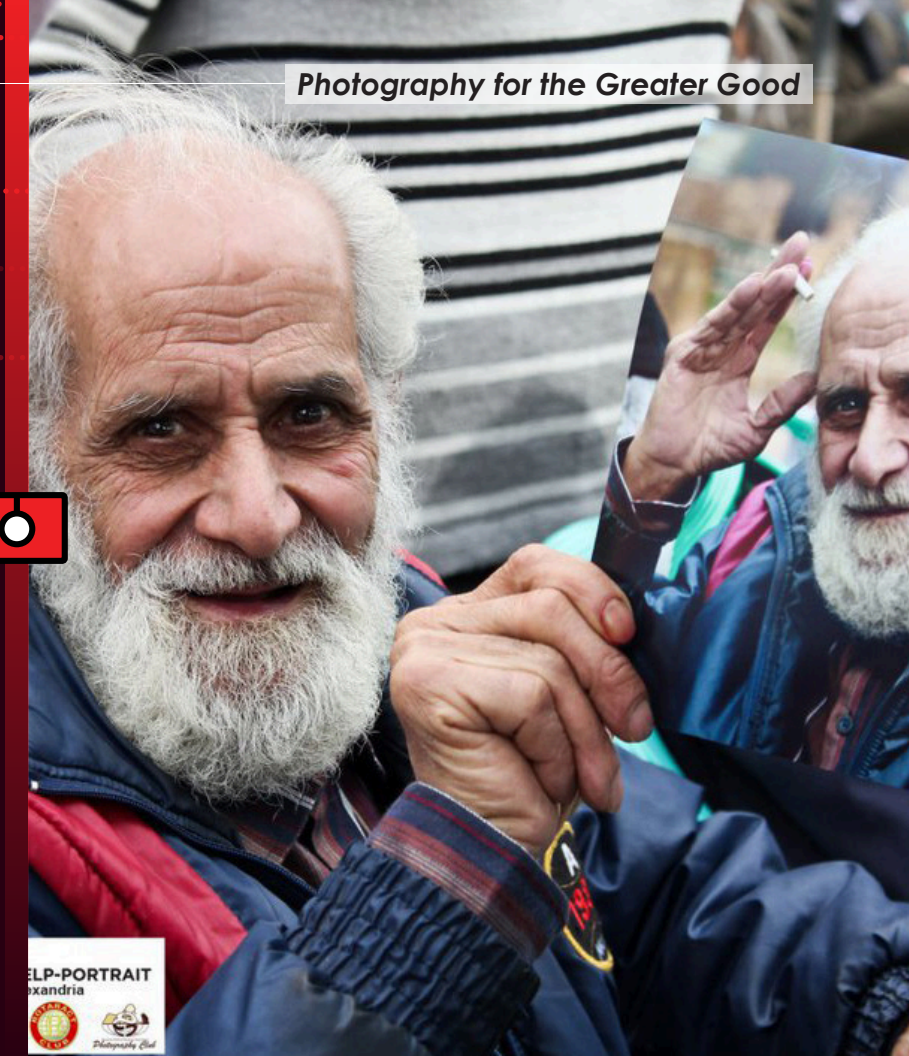
My work as a photographer has been a study in contrasts: celebrities in LA one month, Haitian earthquake victims the next. I appreciate the platform I've been given, and I've always enjoyed my work and the excitement that comes with it. But I found myself at 33 asking what difference it was really making. I felt compelled to give back and make a difference. I wanted to use the medium of photography to show people their dignity, value, and worth.

So I called and emailed a few other photographers and suggested we take some portraits of people in need. We partnered with a nonprofit and just used pictures as a core reason to be together and hangout. We had a great time and shot about 60 portraits that day between 10 photographers. What made it amazing was what happened both across the camera to the subject and between those holding the cameras – community was happening both ways.

We uploaded a video from that day in January 2009, and I was blown away by the response. That's when I knew this could turn into something everyone could share. I met with a friend, Kyle Chowning, and a few others, and we presented Help-Portrait as an idea to the global photography community in August through a video, which Scott Kelby generously posted on his blog.

It was simply a video of me explaining the idea: for photographers to unite on a single day in December and find people in need (meaning the homeless, the elderly, children in the hospital, army vets, the old lady next door that you've never spoken to; basically anyone that could use a gift at Christmas). We wanted to not only take their picture, but also deliver it by showing them their value and how beautiful they are.

That December, thousands of people responded by giving portraits to people in need around the world -- actually 40,000 people in 42 countries. Those numbers have increased significantly over the last five years, with 282,000 photos given to date in at least 67 countries.





## WHAT YOU ARE DOING IS INCREDIBLE AND I AM SURE THAT YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED COUNTLESS MEMORABLE MOMENTS. IS THERE ANY ONE STORY THAT PROFOUNDLY IMPACTED YOU?



There have been several. One happened at the first Nashville event. There was a girl who had acid poured on her face by her abusive father as a child, leaving terrible physical (as well as emotional) scars. Her whole life she dreamed of having a professional portrait done with enough hair and makeup to cover those scars. And at 36 years old, we were able to give her that gift – a beautiful picture with no scars. As you can imagine, tears were flowing from everyone there.



Another happened the next year when I joined a Help-Portrait event in Seattle. A family from the Middle East had recently relocated there after their father had been killed. The mother asked if I could Photoshop a picture of her husband in so they would have one family portrait together, even though he had passed away. I was able to do that for her and I was forever impacted by it.



**Q** YOU'VE QUITE LITERALLY PHOTOGRAPHED THE GAMUT OF HUMANITY FROM INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE MET WITH HARD-TIMES TO THE "RICH-N-FAMOUS". WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT OUR COMMON DIGNITY THROUGH YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH HELP-PORTRAIT?

**A** Well, what I found to be most interesting - when you compare celebs or just the middle and upper class in general with the people

we were giving portraits to -- is that when you take a picture of the forgotten, they're not fretting over "their good side" or what they're wearing. Their only thought is, "You want to do what? You want to take a picture of me? Do you understand how ignored by society I've been for my entire life?" So it's just an amazing, powerful thing that happens.

People need to feel normal. They need a sense of worth and a reason to feel beautiful. They need to remember. They need pictures of their kids before they're grown or before a child passes away with cancer. They need a picture, period. There are thousands of reasons. That's the beauty of this model - there are as many applications of Help-Portrait as there are needs.





## FROM WHAT YOU'VE EXPERIENCED, WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE EXPERIENCE FOR BOTH THE PHOTOGRAPHERS AND THOSE HAVING THEIR PHOTOS TAKEN?



While not everyone does hair and makeup at events (and they certainly don't have to), a lot of the magic happens there. Can you imagine going your whole life conditioned to think, "I'm not beautiful, I'm not special?" Something as simple as having someone do your hair and makeup and creating a permanent image like that can remind you of your beauty.

So we do hair and makeup, but we also feed them, bring blankets, whatever we can do to fully pamper them for the first time in their lives. We meet some physical needs, but we believe the photo provides the most value. At these events, the portrait becomes more than a representation of a person's likeness or a keepsake. It becomes the vehicle of love, the excuse to exchange hope and restore dignity.



The other important part of this exchange is what it does for the photographers and volunteers. Over and over we hear that this is the most meaningful work the professionals have ever done. A great side effect of this is the boundaries and borders this event takes down among a very competitive industry. This day is about taking time to get out of our comfort zones and build community. We encourage photographers to let their subjects get behind the camera -- to take some photos of their own family, to feel empowered. The whole day is just a celebration. It's a highlight of the year for many people.





## WHAT'S NEXT FOR HELP-PORTRAIT? ARE THERE ANY FUTURE PLANS THAT YOU CAN SHARE WITH US?



We're getting more into disaster response -- not as first responders, but coming in when the dust settles and allowing victims to have a day to regroup and mark a new beginning. After Hurricane Sandy, the thing I kept hearing in media interviews from victims was that, out of everything that they lost or had destroyed, the photos were the one thing that were irreplaceable. We partnered with groups in Long Island and New York and provided some photos for people and gave them hard drives and cloud storage to keep future memories safe. We'd like to do more of that in the future.

Help-Portrait as an organization is in a place where we need investors to grow. We've had an all-volunteer staff until this year when donations made it possible to hire a part-time person. There's great potential in what we could do as an organization, but it takes funding to make some of that happen.



For now, we're excited to see how Help-Portrait continues to grow around the world, and to watch groups like Ubuntu Help-Portrait in South Africa, which has multiplied the Help-Portrait movement locally, nationally, and across their borders. They do an entire season of Help-Portrait, with workshops, training, events, working with underprivileged kids, and even sending portrait messages to celebrate Nelson Mandela's birthday. They give about 25,000 portraits a year.

The organizers believe that if we do what we do well, and focus on growing volunteers who are deeply passionate about giving back through Help-Portrait, we will attract – not seek – the resources we need to succeed.

I can't argue with that.



## ABOUT HELP-PORTRAIT



Founded by Celebrity Photographer **Jeremy Cowart**, Help-Portrait is a community of photographers coming together across the world to use their photography skills to give back to their local community.

The Help-Portrait mission is simply to equip and mobilize photographers, and the photography community. Help-Portrait wants to make sure you have all the information that you need to successfully participate in future Help-Portrait events, and to help you find other people in your area that want to be part of Help-Portrait or have already started to plan the event. Help-Portrait wants you to have the opportunity to give.

Help-Portrait started as a one-day event held on the second Saturday of every December. While this will always be their anchor event, the goal and purpose of Help-Portrait is to inspire photographers to use their skill, time and expertise to give back. So, join Help-Portrait in December, or do it in March. The goal is to give and give freely—no matter when, no matter where.

For more information on Help-Portrait including how to connect with other photographers, download important documents, and read up on some useful Help-Portrait planning tips, visit the [Help-Portrait COMMUNITY SITE](#).

## ABOUT JEREMY COWART

At his core, Jeremy is an artist. Starting out as a painter first, Jeremy fell in love with the creative process and came to realize that photography was his true passion. In a short amount of time, Jeremy has earned the respect of artists, photographers, and celebrities alike. Hailed as one of the trailblazers in the industry, Jeremy sees photography as a natural extension of his passion for the arts.

Jeremy has taken portraits of many familiar names such as Taylor Swift, Tim Tebow, The Kardashians, Sting, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Heidi Klum, Gwyneth Paltrow, The Civil Wars, Emma Stone, Courtney Cox, and Ryan Seacrest, just to name a few. His clients, mostly entertainment based, include ABC, FOX, A&E, F/X, Discovery Channel, ESPN, People, US

Weekly, VIBE, E!, Universal Records, Sony Records and Warner Brothers Records. His work has been published in Rolling Stone, ESPN Magazine, People Magazine, USA Today, Fast Company, NYTimes, TIME, Nylon and more.

Photography has taken Jeremy to six continents. He traveled with Britney Spears in 2009 as her “Circus World Tour” photographer, documented seventeen countries with the Passion World Tour in 2008, and has been on numerous trips to Africa and Haiti with various organizations. After the devastating earthquake in Haiti, Jeremy responded with his “Voices of Haiti” photo essay, letting the people of Haiti write their own thoughts and prayers on found rubble. This project was displayed



prominently at the entrance of a very important gathering of world leaders at the United Nations in March of 2010. They were meeting to discuss the rebuild of Haiti and they ended up pledging ten billion dollars to the effort. On that day, Jeremy’s “Voices of Haiti” project proved that art can help change the world.

Knowing the value that a photograph can have in just one person’s life, Jeremy founded Help-Portrait, a worldwide movement of photographers using their time, equipment, and expertise to give back to those less fortunate. Help-Portrait continues to grow, encouraging all photographers to use their platform to make a difference with their cameras.



I'm a whole new person!  
Love Dwen



♥ GET WELL  
WE LOVE YOU

I never expected this much love and kindness.  
God Bless you all!  
Sincerely,  
Marcia McKinley

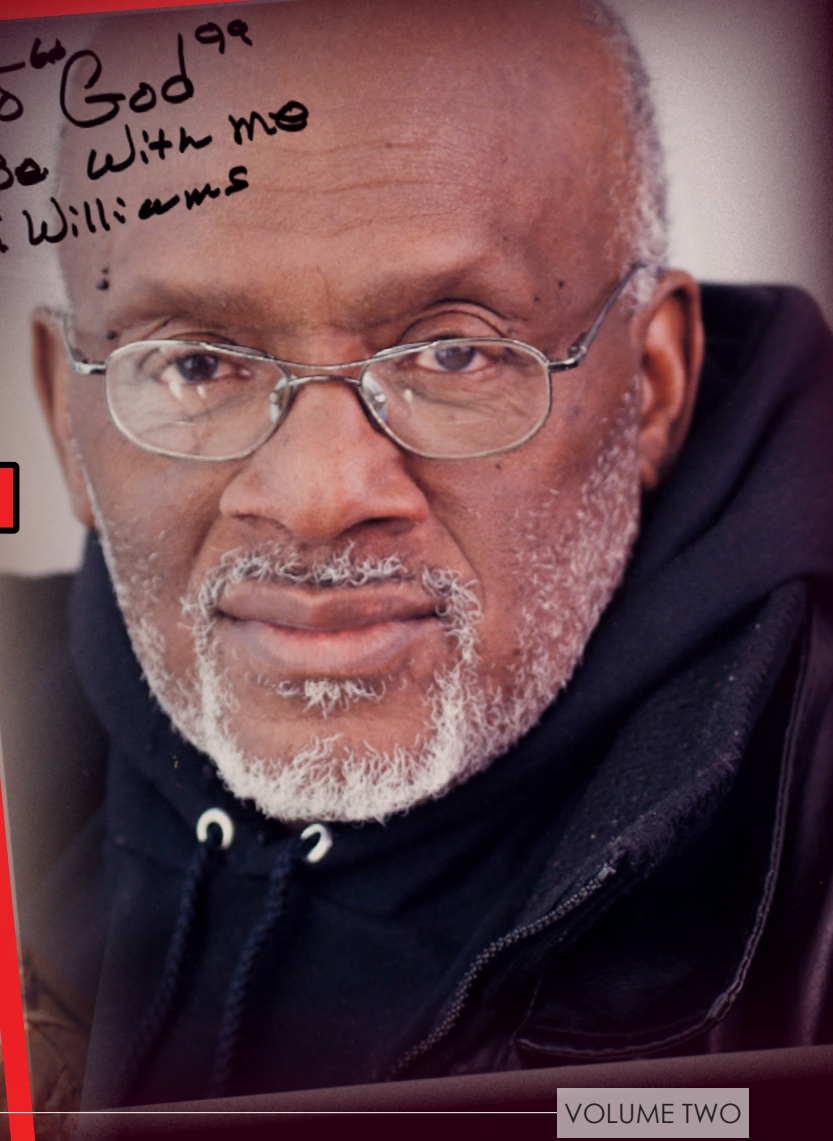
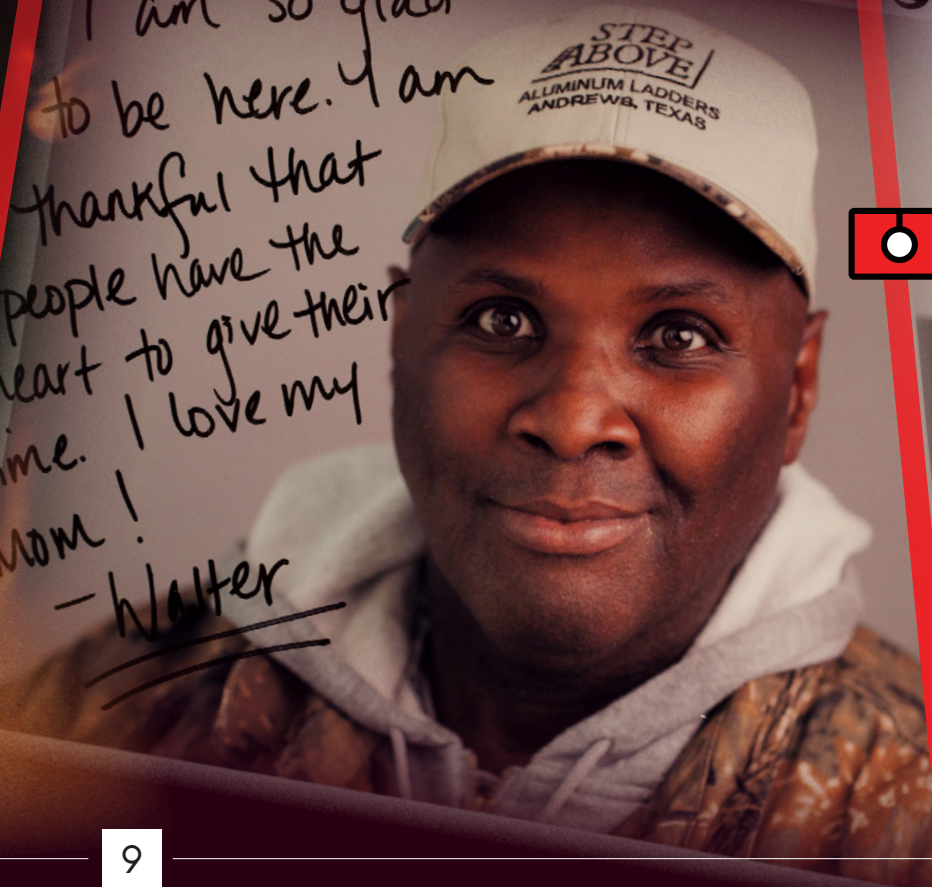


To God  
Be with me  
S Williams



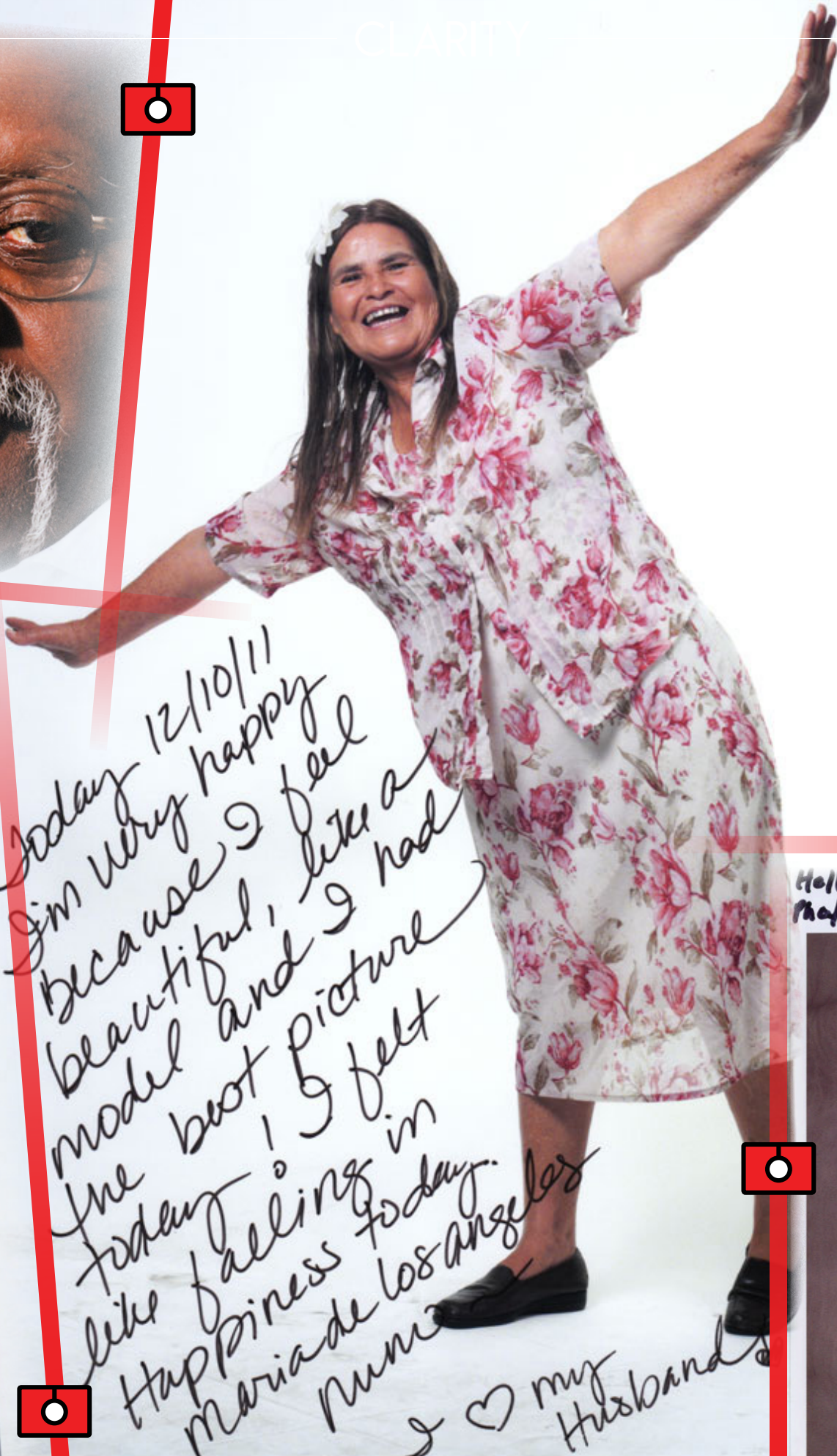
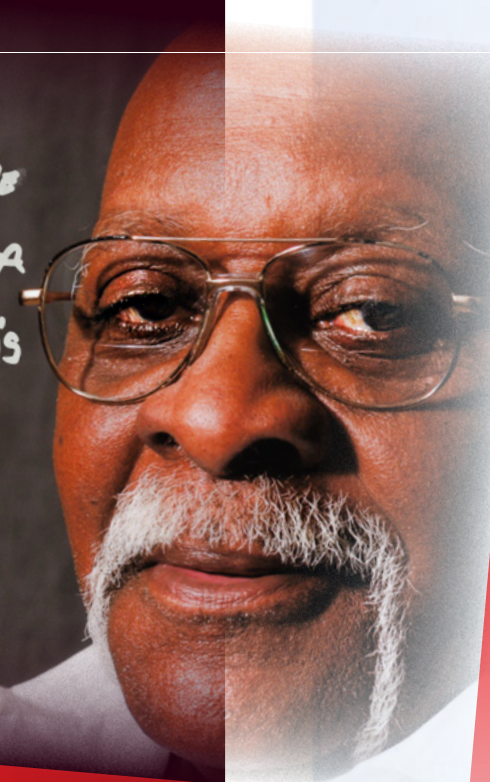
This is me and my daughter's first picture. I'll always remember this moment and cherish this beautiful picture forever and ever. I'm so blessed this was captured.  
Jeneva

I am so glad to be here. I am thankful that people have the heart to give their time. I love my Mom!  
-Walter



HAVING BEEN HOMELESS IN SEATTLE PEOPLE HAVE GIVEN ME A LOT OF THINGS BUT THIS IS THE FIRST GIFT I WILL KEEP FOREVER.

John S. Jackson

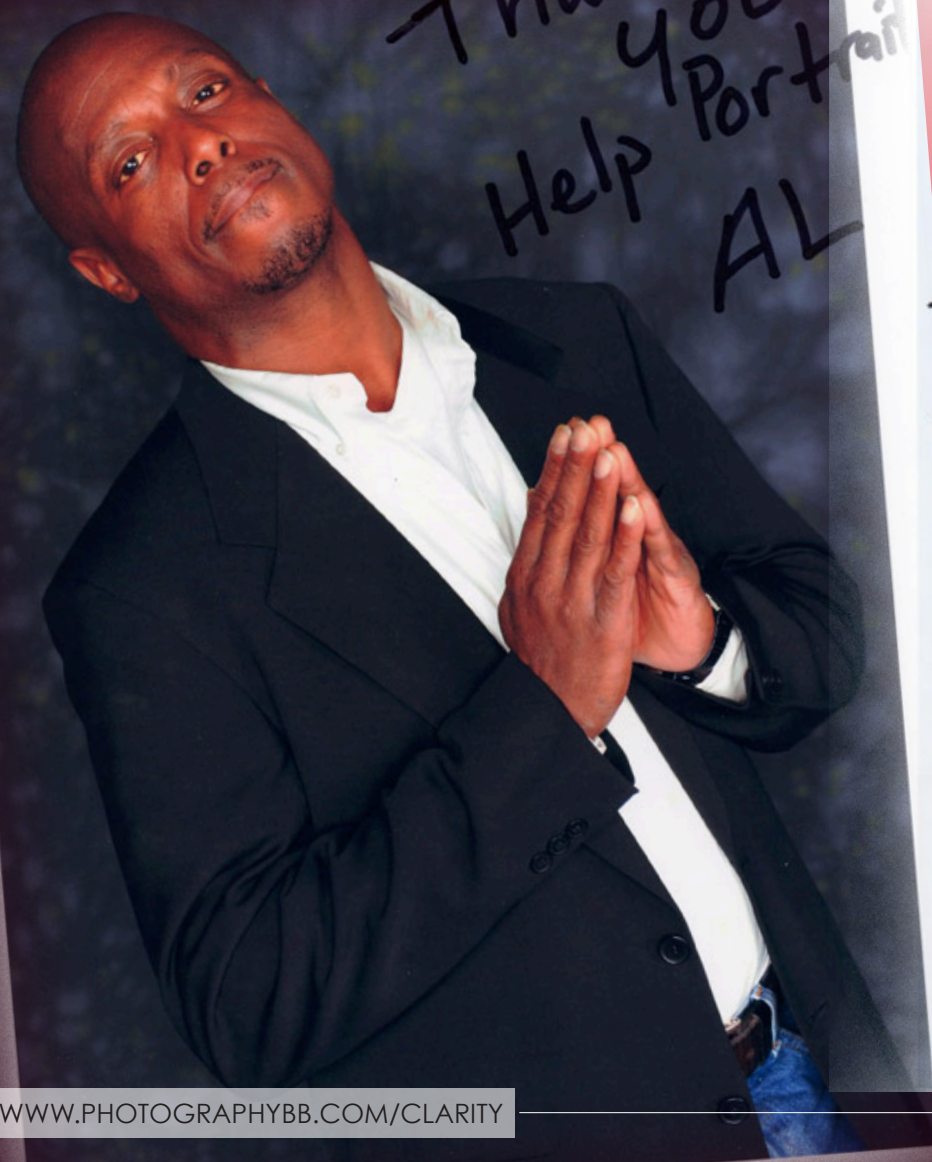


Today 12/10/11 Jim was happy because I feel beautiful, like a model and I had the best picture today! I felt like falling in happiness today. Mariade los Angeles Nunez  
I love my husband

Thank God for giving me a new start at THE U.R.M  
Lore



Hello I want to thank The URM and all the professional photographer who took this picture



Thank you Help Portrait AL

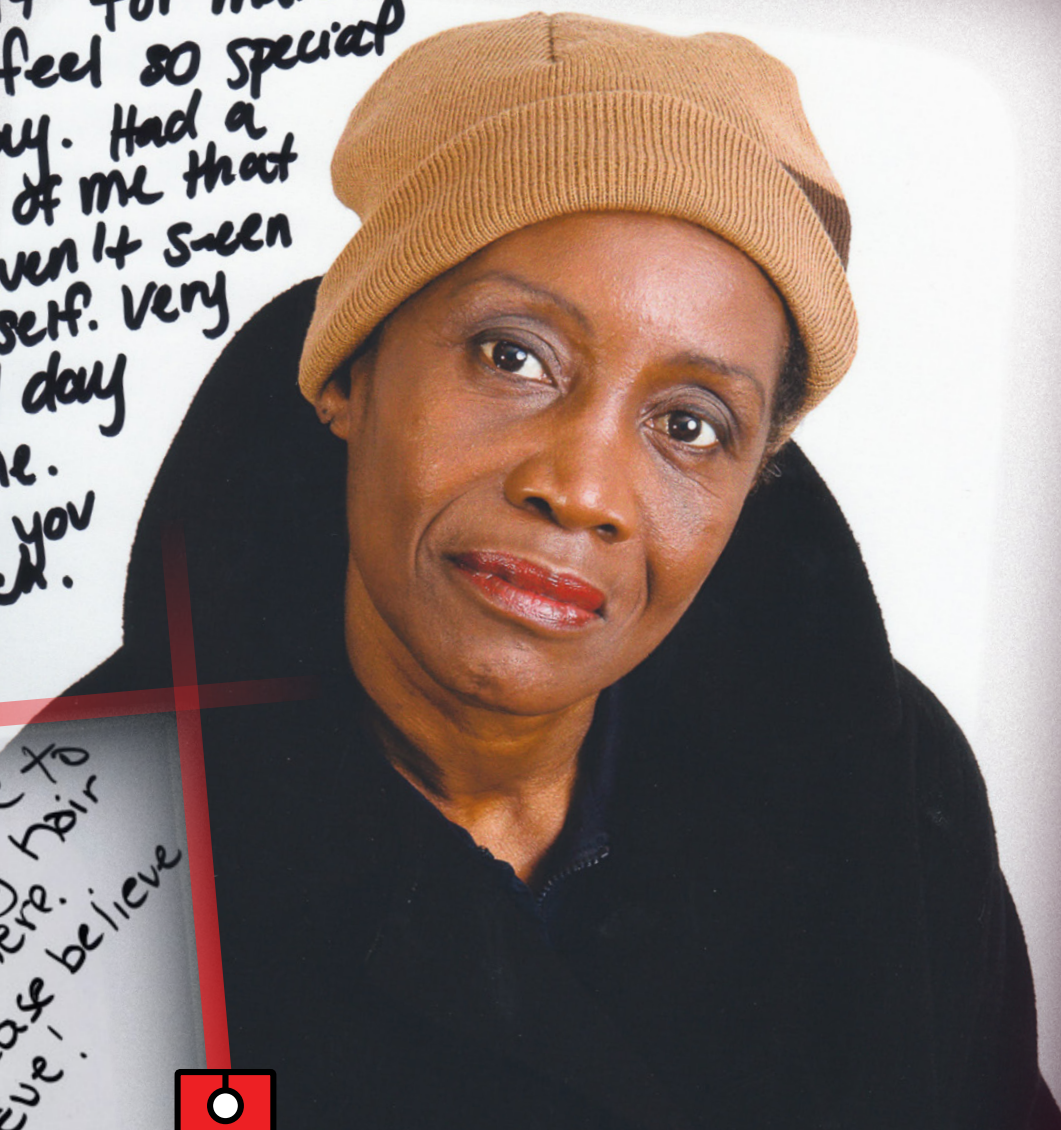


I told my daughter last night. We would make each other a christmas gift with out spending any money. This is perfect God blesses every one who walks with him

Dary L Eaves



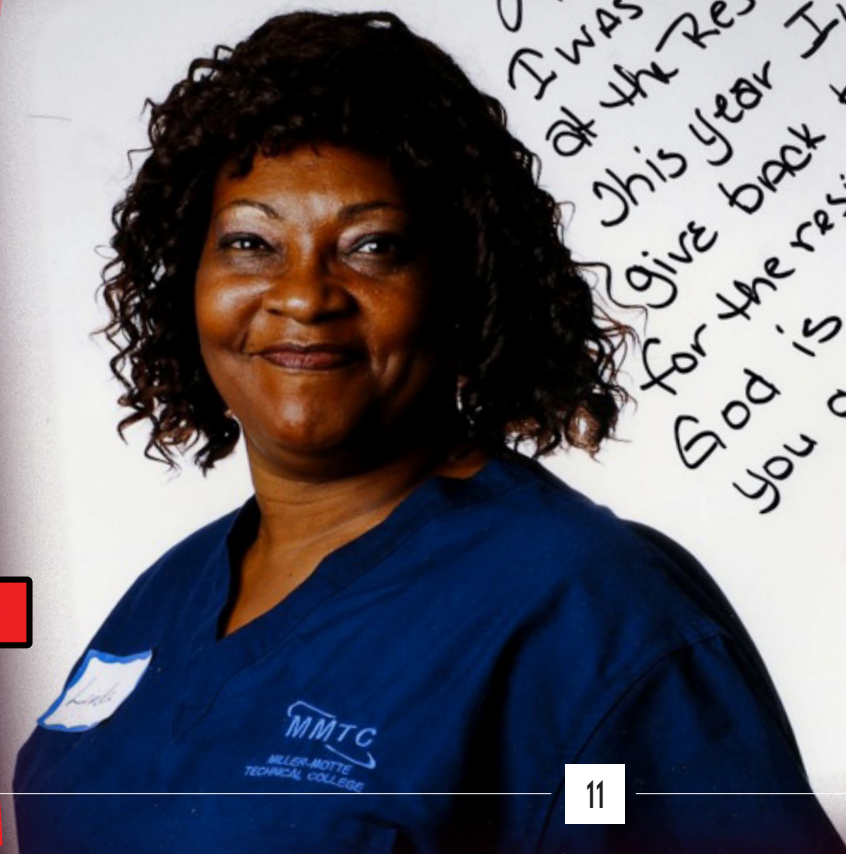
Thank the Row House Staff for making me feel so special today. Had a side of me that I haven't seen in myself. Very Special day for me. Thank you so much.



My Daughter has not seen me in 4-years. Now she will. Thank you and God bless you Robert



Last year I was a guest at the Rescue Mission. This year I was able to give back by doing hair for the residents there. God is good please believe you can achieve!  
Jork  
Jinda  
Mease



# LIGHTING TOOLS

Understanding the tools of  
*Lightweight Location Lighting*

*by Kevin Kubota*

This is the second of a 7-part series on Lightweight Location Lighting by Kevin Kubota, author of the award-winning book, *Kevin Kubota's Lighting Notebook: 101 Lighting Styles and Setups for Digital Photographers*.



# Less is more, unless you don't have enough.

**In our previous edition, we talked about some essential lighting terms, concepts, and styles. I'm quite sure you've studied that opus forward and back, up and down, and inside-out; so now it's time to discuss lighting gear. Yes, gear heads can stand up and rejoice now - your day has come.**



**The setup for the cave boudoir shoot. I used just two speedlights: one aiming at the back of the scrim and the other placed far back in the cave pointing directly at the camera, with no modifier on it. I used warm colored gels on the flash units to blend with the candlelight.**

**W**hen I first started doing “professional” photography over 20 years ago, I built a studio in my tiny garage. I ordered the cheapest set of lights I could find from the ads in the back of my photography magazines, and I built my own light modifiers from left over wood scraps and some doo-dads from hardware and fabric stores. It wasn't pretty. You know what though? The resulting images were actually quite beautiful and the fact that I paid attention to the *concepts* of lighting returned dividends that led to more and more jobs – and eventually, more and better lighting gear.

To be quite honest, the eventual acquisition of better and more expensive lighting tools didn't produce quantum differences in the quality of my imagery. However, it did make a big difference in my efficiency while working in the studio, the reliability of the gear, and my professional appearance to clients.

The point is this: you can do really nice work with some very basic tools – and they don't have to be expensive. The difference in the quality of your lighting can be significant when you go from nothing to a basic setup. After that, as you add more and better gear, your gains in *quality* are smaller but your efficiency and confidence grow noticeably.

## Essential Lighting Tools

So let's start with your basic setup. Here's what you need to create nice portrait lighting in your studio, garage, or on location somewhere. First, I have to make the universal disclaimer to protect myself from rampant noodle lashing: There is no ONE right way to light anything! You are an artist and may truly prefer the look of sickly green light from a sodium vapor lamp up-lighting your beautiful model's nose. Someone else may prefer soft, sensual warm window light from slightly above the eyes and just left of the camera. It's your call. The most important thing is to know HOW to achieve, and WHAT tools will create, the light you actually envision.

A speedlight is your first necessity. This can be used off-camera or on. Flash used on-camera is not necessarily "lighting" – it is basic illumination of your scene. Lighting is a creative process and techniques for achieving the mood and style that you and your subject need. Illumination is just providing the volume of light to make a proper exposure.

You could substitute a constant light source (like LED or fluorescent lights), but I don't find them as versatile for an "essentials"

kit. They are great tools though, and I'll talk about using constant lights in a future installment. Start with a good, portable speedlight from your camera manufacturer (or the dedicated type for your camera make and model). For Nikon, I use the SB series strobe units. While you're shopping, buy 2 matching units. You'll always want a backup light anyway, and with two light sources you can do amazing things.

There are less expensive alternatives to your camera manufacturer's speedlight, and some of them are perfectly good – especially if you intend to use them in manual mode anyway, as opposed to TTL controlled. You can generally buy three of a generic brand speedlight for less than the price of two name brand units. Power output is going to be less with cheaper units as well as the potential for TTL, or feature compatibility problems with the camera. Again, if you are



planning to use them manually anyway, then the TTL and compatibility won't be an issue. I think having at least two matched speedlights from your camera maker is a good idea to start with, and then add supplemental speedlights of the less expensive variety.

To trigger the light wirelessly, use a reliable transmitter/receiver system like those from PocketWizard. Reliable is the operative word here. Nothing is more frustrating than having your flash fail to fire when you had that perfect moment in front of your lens. Wired triggering is a pain in the ass. Just don't go there. I did it for years and swore that I would shin-kick the person who invented the PC terminal if I ever met him face-to-face. Cables always come loose, have bad connections, get tripped over, and are a choking hazard. Stay in the 21st century and go wireless.

The PocketWizard Plus III system is a solid and affordable wireless setup for any level user. This is one area where I don't really recommend going with cheap generic brands. It's not worth saving a few bucks up front and then forever risking a misfire on that potential portfolio image. I've been there, done that. I own several cheapo trigger systems that now live in my scrap electronics box. Buy three wireless transceivers, one for the camera and one for each portable flash unit. By nature, transceivers will send and/or receive signals so they are completely interchangeable.



Our speedlights should come with little footie stands so they can be plopped on a table, shelf, or floor. You'll probably want to buy some light stands too so you can give your assistant a break. Go cheap here if you want, I won't hold it against you. Just make sure to buy an angle adapter to connect the flash to the stand and allow you to aim it up, down, and all around.



## Light Modifiers to the rescue

You've probably heard of the softbox, umbrella, scrim, and parabolic partial differential disseminator... scratch that last one. These are light modifiers, and essential to shaping and diffusing your light so that it is more flattering and/or controlled. The general idea of these tools is to soften and diffuse the rather hard, point light source from your flash unit and make it look like hazy sky light, or light filtering through a large frosted window.

The light doesn't care if you use a \$1000 soft box or an old crusty bed sheet. It will diffuse either way. I think that one of the most versatile and useful light modifiers is a large scrim (a light modifier used to reduce the intensity or harshness of the light) with translucent white fabric, of about 4' x 6' dimensions. You can buy ready-made modifiers like this from companies like Photoflex, who call them their LitePanels. I have several of these and they are quick to set up and sturdy in the wind.





**DIY Scrim**

If you're on a budget, however, don't let that stop you from achieving lighting nirvana! You can make your own scrim with a trip to the hardware and fabric store, some hand tools, and a little patience. Your homebrew scrim will not be as light, quick to assemble and disassemble, or look as spiffy as the pro units, but the lighting quality can be exactly the same. I've included a video that shows you exactly how to make one of these babies in one afternoon.

The other, most useful lighting modifier is a medium sized soft box that can be attached to your portable strobe. Two of my favorites are the Photoflex small Octodome and the 24" Impact Quikbox from B&H. The Quikbox comes with everything you need to attach your portable speedlight and is very affordable. It is designed exclusively for speedlights. The Octodome is a bit larger (36") but is very sturdy and produces beautiful light. You'll need to buy the kit to attach a speedlight to it separately, but it can also be used with most studio light systems via the correct adapter.



When I'm out and about, I prefer to mount the softboxes on a monopod style pole instead of a stationary light stand – assuming you have a handy assistant or bystander to hold it for you. This gives you the freedom to move around with your subject and keep the light source pointed at their nose when they turn this way or that. It's perfect for outside locations where the ground isn't smooth enough for a light stand, or you need to move from spot to spot quickly before the authorities catch you. My favorite is the Lastolite Extension pole.



Finally, every photographer worth their weight in photons should have a 42" 5-in-1 Multidisc (a Photoflex product) – which is a collapsible circular frame with diffusion fabric and an additional cover to provide white, silver, warm silver, and gold reflective surfaces. The 42" size is just about right for lighting one or two people, and it collapses perfectly to fit in the back of your camera bag. You can fire your speedlight through the diffusion for a softbox quality light, or diffuse the sunlight and other bright stars with it. Many manufacturers make this type of product, but don't buy cheap here. High quality units stay flat when opened and the fabric won't fall apart after repeated opening and closing. Ask me how I know.



## When it's time to step it up

When you become comfortable with your two light setups, you may want to start adding additional lights for accent, hair light, etc. You may also want to combine two lights in one modifier to give you extra output and/or faster recycle times (due to the ability to cut your power in half). This is when you'll grab another speedlight or two. As I mentioned earlier, if you already have two speedlights from your camera maker, then it makes sense to save a bit and buy additional lights from generic or 3rd party makers. Do some research and make sure they are still reliable though; there is a lot of crap out there!

Add another wireless transceiver for the additional light, unless you plan to combine two lights in one modifier, in which case you can trigger both lights with one transceiver using the headphone splitter trick. PocketWizards, for example, use the same size mini plug that your iPod earbuds do. If you attach a standard headphone splitter (designed to share an iPod with two sets of headphones) to the transceiver, you can send the same trigger signal to both flash units. Be sure to check the transceiver you buy to make sure what type of cable connection it uses. If it uses the standard mini plug size, you can likely use the headphone splitter trick.



There are some other gadgets and modifiers I don't leave home without. GorillaPods. You may be familiar with these monkey armed little tripods for holding cameras, but I actually love them for holding speedlights and attaching them to random objects where light stands do not dare to venture. Buy the medium duty size designed for SLR cameras and they'll hold your speedlight just fine. Wrap the legs over the top of your assistants head and you have a hands-free, mobile, light holder, assist-o-matic!

Sticky Filter gels are actually pretty essential to me. They are color correction gels that behave like a post-it® note and can be quickly stuck to the front of your flash to modify the color. They are re-usable so just peel them off and save for the next shoot when you're done. They are ingeniously simple and effective. I use them to make my speedlight tungsten color to match the existing light in a reception hall or candle-lit dining room. Use a slower shutter speed to capture some of the existing ambient lighting and when you balance the flash and ambient color temperature, then you have more natural and professional looking lighting.





**M**ost of the tools here have focused on diffusing your light source, but sometimes you want to actually focus it. A grid spot attachment is the hot ticket here. Rogue Imaging makes a great product called the RogueGrid that is a variable angle grid spot attachment for speedlights. It's perfect for hair, accent, and edge lights. For a dramatic portrait, aim your grid-covered speedlight at your subject's face and adjust your exposure, then use your scrim or softbox for soft fill light at an f-stop or so lower.

## Beyond the speedlight

**T**he inconspicuous speedlight actually packs quite a punch in terms of light output. You can squeeze even more by adjusting the flash head zoom – often gaining an f-stop or more by setting it to the maximum. In one of my tests, I used a light meter to compare the output of a Nikon SB-900 speedlight to my AlienBees B800 studio monolight. I was surprised to find that the measured output was exactly the same! Why have I been lugging those bulky monolights around?! Well, there are good reasons. Mainly, you have modeling lights that can be very handy when you are still learning to visualize how light will look before you snap the shutter. Monolights are definitely better for heavy studio use, necessitating fast recycle times and various lighting modifier attachments. However, for an all-around, compact and efficient lighting system, speedlights are hard to beat.

If you do think that monolights would suit you better, consider the battery and A/C powered combo units like the Impact Lite Trek, Photoflex Triton, or PRIOLITE MBX500. These can be plugged in for use in the studio and battery powered when out in the middle of nowhere. Some have standard modeling lights and some have model lights with timed durations. I also use these and find them a good compromise between studio versatility and off-site portability.

## Now you have it!

**Y**ou don't need a ton of gear to create beautiful light – just the right gear and the knowledge to go with it. In future articles, I'll show you some example lighting setups using these same tools and surprise you as to just how much you can do with this basic gear collection.

In our next episode, we'll first discuss how to get the most out of the natural or existing light on location. We'll talk about the right modifiers to use and how to turn seemingly useless, boring light in to something special. I'll give you examples of how to use the tools and where to place them. If time permits, I'll share a great recipe for healthy, homemade, paleo Sriracha sauce too! Until we meet again, I welcome your thoughts and comments. If you would like to discover more about what I do, please visit:

[KevinKubotaBlog.com](http://KevinKubotaBlog.com) and [KubotaImageTools.com](http://KubotaImageTools.com) Ciao for now!

## Equipment mentioned (clickable)

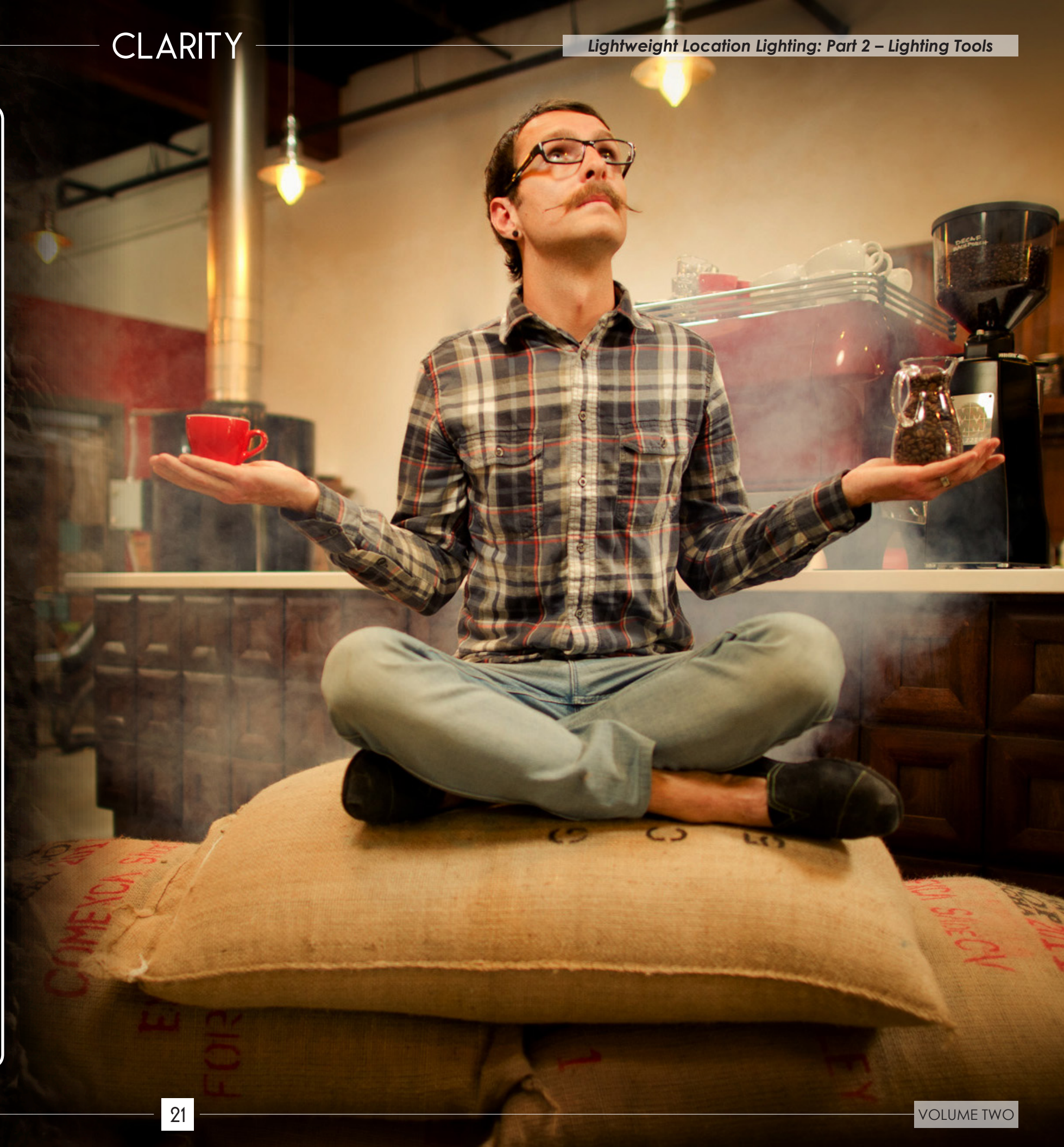
- PocketWizard Plus III wireless transceivers
- Photoflex Small Octodome
- Photoflex 42" 5-in-1 LiteDisc
- Photoflex 39"x72" LitePanel with diffusion fabric
- Rogue Grid for speedlights
- Nikon speedlights
- AlienBees monolight
- Photoflex Triton flash unit
- Impact LiteTrek flash unit
- PRIOLITE MBX500 flash unit
- Sticky Filter gels
- Impact Quikbox
- Lastolite extension pole
- Gorilla Pods



## DOWNLOAD NOW Lighting Notebook App!

Kevin Kubota's Lighting Notebook app covers 101 lighting scenarios with intense functionality to help you search, sort, and organize each of the scenarios for the quickest reference to the information you need most. Not only can you search, mark favorites, and get specifics on lighting gear for each shoot, you can also watch any of the 101 video tutorials that go along with each scenario!

**The app is free on the Apple App Store** and includes 5 lighting scenarios, and a full-version upgrade with all 101 scenarios is available for purchase in-app at an introductory price of \$14.99



# GOOEY OATMEAL BUTTERSCTOTCH PUMPKIN BARS

How to light and shoot  
tasty food photos

*by Lindsay Ostrom*

Two of my favorite flavors are meeting up today in the form of this warm, gooey, house-smells-amazing dessert bar. These bars remind me of everything that is good about the holiday season, like warm cinnamon and spiced pumpkin, hugged on both sides by oatmeal cookies with butterscotch thrown in the mix for a little extra creamy sweetness.



To photograph these cozy bars, I used natural window lighting. That isn't really a surprise because I strongly favor natural window lighting over any other kind of light when it comes to food photography. Today I'm going to show you why I love my window light and what you can do as a second-best option if you don't have a window (or daylight) available during your shoot.

*Here are three photographs taken with the same camera and the same set up. All three of these shots were illuminated with different light sources.*



The first picture was taken with no special lighting set up; I just used the regular lights and lamps in my house to illuminate the food. Look at the “white” plate. It makes me shudder! I find that a lot of people just default to photographing food in the very unnatural light of a kitchen because it’s the most convenient. If you cannot get natural light on your food, don’t resort to just shooting under any old light. The picture will start to look unnaturally yellow thanks to those tungsten light bulbs, and in my experience, the white balance of a photo like this is hard to correct even with heavy editing.



This set-up is an awesome alternative to natural window light. I really appreciate having this option in case I can’t get my shoot done before the sun goes down.

The second picture was taken with my artificial lighting set up. I use a special light that’s called a digital imaging fluorescent lamp as well as a white folded cardboard as a reflector to bounce the light back over the food. I also cover my lamp with an old t-shirt to reduce the amount of glare on the white plates and silverware.



The third and final photograph here (see larger version on the following page) were illuminated with natural window light. This is my favorite because it is the least invasive and it creates the most natural looking colors. I love a good stream of window light!

Prioritize your light sources, and if you can't get your light from a window, then choose an alternative set up instead of opting for the harsh tungsten lighting of the kitchen so that you get the most natural looking colors for your food.



## Goosey Oatmeal Butterscotch Pumpkin Bars

### For the sauce:

- ½ cup pumpkin
- 1 ½ cups butterscotch chips
- ½ cup cinnamon chips
- 1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 tablespoons butter

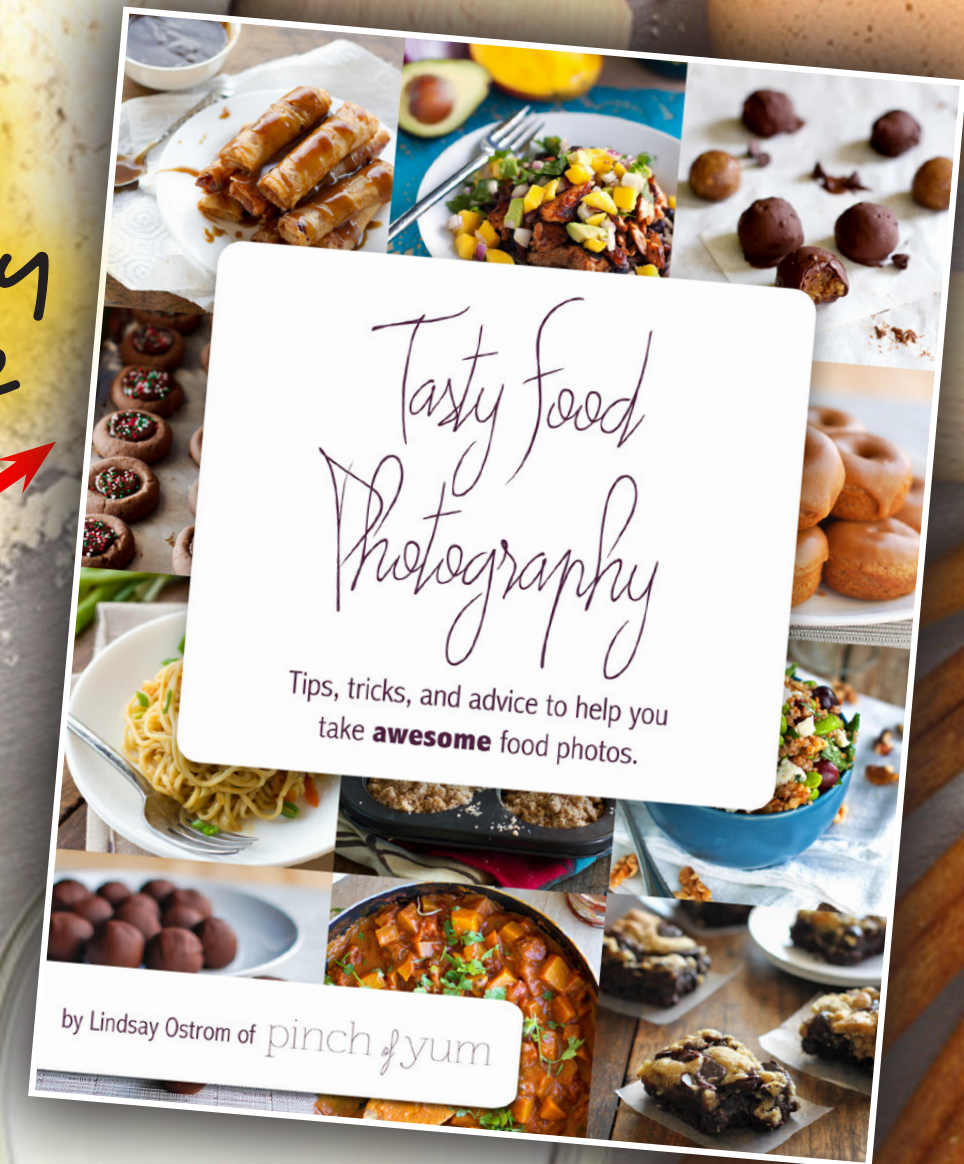
### For the oatmeal cookie crust:

- ¾ cup butter, softened
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 2 ¼ cups flour
- 1 ½ cups rolled oats
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt

1. Melt the pumpkin, butterscotch chips, cinnamon chips, sweetened condensed milk, and butter in a medium saucepan over low heat until melted. Remove from heat and set aside.
2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Cream the butter and brown sugar until smooth. Add the eggs, one at a time, and the vanilla, mixing well after each addition.
3. Pulse the oats in a food processor for 5 seconds or until broken down slightly. Stir the flour, oats, baking soda, and salt into the butter and sugar mixture until just incorporated.
4. Spread ⅔ of the dough over the bottom of a greased 9x13 pan. Cover with the sauce from step one. Crumble the remaining dough over the top, or press it in your hands to make a more flat layer like you see in the picture. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until the top is golden brown.
5. Let the bars cool in the fridge for at least a few hours if you want them to hold together enough to easily serve at a party. Otherwise, if it's just you, cut into that warm gooey mess and enjoy!

**Notes:** If you want to reduce the sweetness (and the gooey-factor), don't use all of the sauce and reserve a half of a cup or so for an ice cream topping or a homemade pumpkin spice coffee creamer.

Get the  
Tasty Food  
Photography  
eBook Here



**Lindsay Ostrom** is the author and food photographer behind Pinch of Yum, a blog where she shares photos and recipes with over half a million monthly visitors. Her practical eBook Tasty Food Photography has helped thousands of new food photographers take their photos from average to amazing.

Visit [PinchOfYum.com](http://PinchOfYum.com) to get Lindsay's Tasty Food Photography eBook where you will learn her secret photo recipes including composition and lighting tips. Lindsay also covers props & setup, editing tips, workflows, and video tutorials.

# Photography is a Lifestyle

Thank you for reading. We hope you have enjoyed this special sample edition of CLARITY: Photography Beyond the Camera.

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