

My name is Noah Stephens. I'm a portrait photographer from Detroit, Michigan, and founder of a portraiture project called *The People of Detroit*. Grew up in a working class community on public assistance. My mother was devoutly religious and I ended up adopting religion at a young age also. But I've always been the type of person who tried to have more evidence based view of the world. So eventually that belief fell away. But one artifact of that upbringing was... we weren't allowed to have photographs of living things... because the god of this particular religion apparently believes he has the copyright for living things and we were not allowed to infringe. So a consequence of that is I don't have many photographs of myself as a child and I think on some level that's what led me to really appreciate the visual arts, especially visual arts, focused on people.

One of the main things that drives me to create is a need to correct popular misconception. So doing *The People of Detroit* was driven by a need to correct a misconception that Detroit was only a wasteland of ruins I think going forward... that's what drives me to continue to create things.

I think creatives and I think that art has the power to change the way that people perceive things, especially things that they may not have firsthand experience with. So I take that as a duty and it's something that makes me feel like I have purpose.

I think storytelling is one of the most important things that people have, It's how we come to understand ourselves more deeply and understand the world around us. I think it's absolutely central to the human experience. And I really enjoy adding to that stream of creation too.