Telling A Story

Portraiture Photography

Overview
There are many ways to take pictures that show people. Portraiture allows the photographer to capture the personalities and emotions of a particular person or group of persons, retaining focus on the figure. This guide will help you to learn to take better photographs of people and help you identify how the characteristics of an individual can be represented in the frame.

Preparation
1. On the Fly: When taking photographs of people, it is often necessary to capture them in the most natural character. Be ready to take photographs quickly to get people in their most natural pose. Although some portraits are posed, you may find that taking more spontaneously creates a better image.
2. Ask Permission: When you are taking photographs of people you may not know, it is important that you ask permission to take someone’s photograph. Even if you cannot communicate with someone verbally, just holding up the camera and nodding indicates that you would like to take his or her photograph. Be a courteous photographer.
3. Pack the Film: When you are shooting on location, make sure that you have plenty of film or disk memory. You may not get the best image the first try, so it is always better to shoot as much as possible.

Process
1. What to photograph?: Making photographs of people can be very easy once you find people that are interested being in front of the camera. You might be a “Street” photographer who likes to capture the essence of people at the market, or you may be commissioned to take a photograph of a teacher for a news article. Just remember that there are many different types of people to photograph. Think of new ways to capture different people in different places.
2. Construction the Portrait: There are specific techniques to taking portraits that enhance to image quality. Since portraiture is based on individuals, limit your framing to a particular person. Try to avoid people in the background, or too much clutter that might be distracting. Small groups can also be photographed as a portrait, but make sure that it
does not look like a “firing squad” that is lined up against a wall. Sometimes posing people proves more effective, and creates a better image.

3. **Background and Objects:** The background of a portrait can either help or hinder you photograph. The best background to use should be simple, uncluttered and one that does not distract the image of the person. Simple, dark backgrounds offer a backdrop that will emphasize the importance of the person. If you wish to include some items that are relative to the personality or characteristics of your subject, don’t let them be the dominant part of the photograph. A photograph of a writer may include some books in the foreground, or a musician might be holding an instrument. But the focus should be primarily on the person.

4. **Lighting your subject:** Carefully consider the lighting when taking a portrait. Lighting helps to evoke mood in an image. Soft, even light is used to convey a sense of serenity, while harsh, direct light may be more dramatic. Natural light is always best, but it is sometimes necessary to use artificial light, like a flash. Use the flash to fill.

**Summary**

1. **Take Lots of photographs**
2. **Ask permission**
3. **Convey Character**
4. **Consider Background and Objects**