

THE PROMISED LAND:

Zomi diaspora in Tulsa

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A Project presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

.....

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

.....

by

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DEDICATION

To my people, the Zomis in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for sharing their resilient lives through the images and words.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

So many people in the journalism school have shaped and molded my life. First, I would like to thank my committee chair Jackie Bell, for always being there to swiftly guide, respond, and provide valuable feedback. To David Rees and Joe Johnson, for mentoring my vision and being great listeners.

This project wouldn't have been possible without the financial support of my aunt Martha Vungkhanching and the Zoe C. Smith scholarship.

To my parents who have supported me, even when I told them that I was going to quit my job to go study photojournalism in the US (a profession that still puzzles them).

To all my friends at school, who educated me on culture, international politics, and love for food.

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ABSTRACT

“The Promised Land: Zomi diaspora in Tulsa” is a photographic essay that examines the entrepreneurial spirit, rituals and faith of the Zomi community in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The Zomi people are the second largest ethnic diaspora among the Burmese refugees in the US. It is estimated that about 6,000 Zomi people have resettled in Tulsa, which is now known as “Zomi town” among the Burmese population.

Since this exodus is fairly recent and Zomis started arriving in Tulsa post 2007, the community is transitioning. Due to this, it is crucial to document the cultural and human landscapes of Zomis in Tulsa, in order to explore their cultural lifestyle and relationship within the community.

SUMMARY OF PROFESSIONAL ANALYSIS

Seven photographers were interviewed using in-depth, open-ended interviews to explore their role as an insider to the stories they have covered. These seven people include Kholood Eid, Josué Rivas, Gabriella Angotti-Jones, Jessica Chou, Amr Alfinky, Wing Young Huie and Wesaam Al-Badry. The interviewees discussed their long-term photographic project of documenting their own communities in the United States. All

seven interviewees talked about the advantages and downfalls of being an insider. The photographers expressed how due to their unique position, they were able to dig deeper beneath the cultural and social layers to produce quieter, more nuanced work.

KEYWORDS

Photojournalism, Representation, Indigenous voices, Insider, Burmese, Zomi, Chin Hills, Myanmar, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Diaspora, Christian, Refugee, Immigration, Visual framing, Documentary Photography,

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I grew up in Northeastern India, home to more than 200 tribes with their own unique rituals and traditions. My hometown, Manipur, lies on the fringe of Myanmar, where the Zomi ethnic group resides. The Zomi people have lived in Northwestern Burma, Northeast India and Northeast Bangladesh and have been known as the Lushai, Chin and Kuki to outsiders. Due to the British policy of "Divide and Rule," the Zomi people were divided into three international boundaries, which segregated them further (Suan, 2011). Although divided by borders, the Zomi people share a common language called Zo (Vumson, 1986).



source: <http://www.zogam.org/maps>

As a result of the armed conflict between ethnic groups and the junta regime in Myanmar, a large number of ethnic groups fled from their war-torn country. Since 2000, more than 146,037 refugees from Myanmar have settled in the US through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Burmese American Community Institute, 2015). The Zomi people who were living in the Chin Hills of Myanmar had to flee their country as war refugees and the majority of them ended up in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees camps at Malaysia, Thailand and India. There they wait for relocation to first world countries such as the United States, Australia, United Kingdom and Japan (Pau, 2011). Between 2000 to 2015, about 50,147 Zomi people have settled in the United States (Burmese American Community Institute, 2015).

Since the beginning of graduate school at the University of Missouri, I was certain I wanted to document the Zomi diaspora in the United States. The popular visual representation of refugees in the US mainstream media has been fairly one-dimensional. I knew if I photographed the Zomi community, I had a unique voice that would look into the Zomi community past its complex layers and provide a more intimate insight into the social fabric and personal lives of the Zomi people. Being both an insider and outsider, I also ended up exploring my own identity as a photographer through this photographic process. Throughout the documentation, I

wanted to depict the Zomi community as a multifaceted people with everyday concerns, longing, joy and nostalgia for the past. My journalism education and experiences guided me to be very conscious of how the Zomi community would want to be represented visually.

While researching which state had the largest Zomi population in the US, I came across news articles and prominent Zomi leaders confirming that Tulsa, Oklahoma had the largest Zomi population. Tulsa is known as the “Zomi town” amongst the Burmese population with about 6000 Zomi (Tulsa World, 2018). The earliest Zomis that came to Tulsa from Myanmar in the 90’s were theology students at Oral Robert University. The Zomi community, which is predominantly Christian, considers their church pastors as leaders in their spiritual as well as social life. Today, due to the prevalence of about 18 Zomi churches and readily available mechanical jobs in factories in Tulsa where Zomis can interact in their own dialect, there is much internal migration to the “Zomi town”. Due to the prevalence of Zomi businesses, socio-cultural organizations and Zomi churches, it became apparent that Tulsa would be the best fit and have more visual narratives to tell.

The Zomi community is rich in oral history but due to the lack of academic rigor, has less literature in both English and Zo language about their lived

experiences, whether it be fleeing from their own country, their time in the refugee camps either at Malaysia, Thailand and India or their on-going transitioning phase as a people group in the US.

I understand that the images I produced during the period of June-November 2018 are only a small fragment of the lived experiences of the Zomi-American community. However, I want the work to be a visual reference for looking at the everyday life of Zomis on their resilience, entrepreneurial spirit and close-knit relationships within the community. If this experience is not documented both visually and textually, future generation Zomi-Americans will lack references to their grandparents' story.

This project of photographing the Zomi diaspora taught me that portraying them as a singular human being instead of an unidentified mass, would facilitate a sense of relatability and humanize individual experiences between the viewer and the people photographed. I used this method to tell the Zomi community story through the lives of few distinct individuals.

For my research component, I focused on how seven photographers based in the US document their own community. Through in-depths interview with

photographers Kholood Eid, Josué Rivas, Gabriella Angotti-Jones, Jessica Chou, Amr Alfinky, Wing Young Huie and Wesaam Al-Badry, my analysis offers important insights into working on visual stories as an insider.

In addition, I hope to help other journalists, photographers and members of the public get a glimpse of the lives of first-generation Zomi-Americans and their children. I believe this project will be the starting point to a larger project about the Zomi diaspora worldwide.

CHAPTER TWO: FIELD NOTES

FIELD NOTES 1 - June 24, 2018

Dear Jackie, David and Joe

My first field notes come in a bit late but will have a more consistent time-frame for it. I will update it once in two weeks every Monday from now on.

I finally have a website and have been working on it. It is still under construction- got some captions, summary details and layout management to polish.

Would love your feedback on it

The field notes in in my blog and is password protected. I have made the comments box option available on the blog for feedback as well

<https://www.danielmung.com/new-blog/>

Apologies on my first draft coming in so late, parent's love can be ferocious. I spent nearly a month with them traveling around Mid-West and they helped me move to Tulsa. Their presence lifted off a lot of financial weight I had to incur. After looking at my time-frame for completing of the project and possible internships for my one-year Optional Practical Training, I decided to push my defense date to middle of November, right after CPOY duties for Jackie. This will give me time to find internships for Spring 2019 as part of my OPT.

I moved into an apartment that is just adjacent to River Park Apartment complex, where Niang, my Picture Story long-term project character lives. I either walk or bike to the apartment complex which is brilliant. Majority of the tenants at River Park Apartment complex are Zomi families either who have recently arrived at Tulsa or have been living here for years until they can manage to buy a home.

I have been particularly drawn to work by Paul Graham- "Does Yellow Run forever," work that has made me think of metaphorical imagery I can make in working with the diaspora work. <http://www.paulgrahamarchive.com/yellow.html>. I have started photographing nearly everyday building contacts for about two weeks now and few key things I have been interested are:

1. The small lawns in the apartment was used by Zomi people to plant vegetables from back home and have a small kitchen garden. The concept of having a lawn isn't there culturally. So, this forced the management to address it by making about 8-9 community gardens within the complex that the Zomi people had to draw lottery of. If a family would win, they'd get a 6x6 plot to maintain. There are people like in the second photograph- making gardens right outside of their apartment in a sort of no man's land. This makes me think- would it be interesting to do a portrait series of the women with their garden produce? I am honestly not particularly drawn to making portraits but worth a shot?



2. The use of open spaces to dry cloths, that is cost and energy effective, and the skillfulness of using the environment they live is seems interesting. This is a practice very common in Asian countries and particularly in Chin Hills, Myanmar where the women would spend majority of their time either in the fields or household work.



3. I am starting to make friends with youth that I feel I can get better access to. Followed Pau Ngah Khual (red shorts), Mung Khan Lam (black cargo pants), Cin Suan Piang (green shorts) on their fishing day out in Arkansa river that flows just besides River park. Suan Piang arrived at the US just two months ago and is currently looking to join vocational schools.

The skill with which the trio handled the catch was a sight to watch. It seems that they usually go fishing either early morning around 4-5am or sometimes at night around 9-10pm.



4. Birth and death is something that I am drawn to in this community. I was fortunate to be the first visitor right after 4 hours of Lun Sian Zun's birth. Also, was there for the funeral service of Ngo Za Cing.



5. I am also drawn to the living room of the Zomi families, what they have in their refrigerators and how they would hang out. Currently Football World Cup is being consumed thoroughly.



From now on, I will update this blog once in two weeks, every Monday and send emails as reminders too. Looking forward to your feedback.

JACKIE'S RESPONSE on June 29, 2018:

Hi Dan,

Thank you for the galleries. I was able to pull up the images of the gardens and laundry, but I couldn't pull up the last three sections. I'd love to see those large as well, rather than small squares. It's hard to comment on them, although I can see there is a level of intimacy in the birth and funeral photos that makes me particularly eager to see them larger.

It's interesting to see the difference in this work compared to the Picture Story project. You are finding situations that reveal aspects of the community (the gardens, fishing, and laundry in particular). Also, I like seeing you shoot outside. These images show things about the subjects that I didn't learn from the class project.

The garden photos: After looking at the images, I think that portraits could work. It's definitely worth exploring. I'd like to see some wider shots, or images with more environment. Of course, you can do that with documentary photos, but portraits lend themselves to that as well. The interesting part of the gardens is that they plant vegetables from home, and they use the land like they used it at home. So, I like the idea of including more space, particularly the apartments. I think you could blend portraits and doc. Also, don't forget details so we can see what they are growing.

The laundry photos: I love these, particularly as a group. The repetition points out how many people do this (and it looks like the tree in front of my house).

Are you planning to shoot this as an essay? At this point you are working in several different situations and with different groups of people. Of course, it's early, and you're exploring. But you should keep the end product in mind, so you don't get lost.

A few comments about field notes. If possible, please try to send field notes weekly (you said every other week). They may be shorter, but you will get more feedback. The goal of the notes is to update your committee, to be accountable, and to get advice and feedback. I think weekly is best for that. Here is a suggested format for field notes (not a requirement, but it could help you organize your thoughts). I'm sorry this is late:

- 1 Weekly highlights: what important events occurred? How did you progress?*
- 2 Work issues: Was there anything that stood out? Anything tough you'd like to discuss?*
- 3 Research progress:*
- 4 Goals for the upcoming week*

I like how you grouped the photos and wrote comments for each section. This helps us see your progress (part of the "weekly progress" part). Don't forget to touch on any issues, your research, and what you hope to do next.

Dan, this is an excellent start. You made quite a bit of progress. Plus, it sounds like you enjoyed some much-needed time with family!

Keep up the good work, Jackie

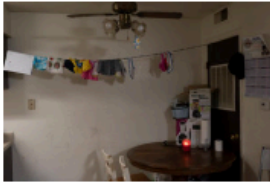
FIELD NOTES 2- July 9, 2018

1. Weekly highlights: Several important events that occurred over last week where I got to photograph the first day of work for Thawm (who recently immigrated to US, three months ago), was fortunate to get access to Cing Huai's family on the fourth of July when her three sons arrived from India after 10 years separation and got some behind the scenes for Zomi National Conference that is held twice a year promoting Zomi culture and tradition.

Although my target area is the apartment complexes, I also wanted to photograph these bigger events that were special to the community. The access has never been

an issue which is a great blessing. In Asian culture, the people I photograph tend to pose and be too conscious for camera because that is how they have always known their engagement with the device. I am slowly making them understand that I am looking for moments when they become more comfortable with me being around and not posed.

-This first few photographs are of Niangkok, a home-maker, taking care of her two sons and one daughter. She also knits and tailors Zomi outfits on the side. Since she spends all of her day tending to the kids, she usually starts working on customer's cloths around midnight when she has put the children to sleep. She usually does her tailoring from 12am-3am, waiting for her husband who works night shifts to come back home.



-This series of photographs are from a bridal shower but the literal translation from Zomi would be called "Bride's price". I photographed Henbawk and Sian's bridal shower where the family members of both parties discussed the price to be paid. In the past before converting to Christianity, the Zomi people would serve wine or rice beer in these occasions to the bride's side. Blessing by the elders are also given.



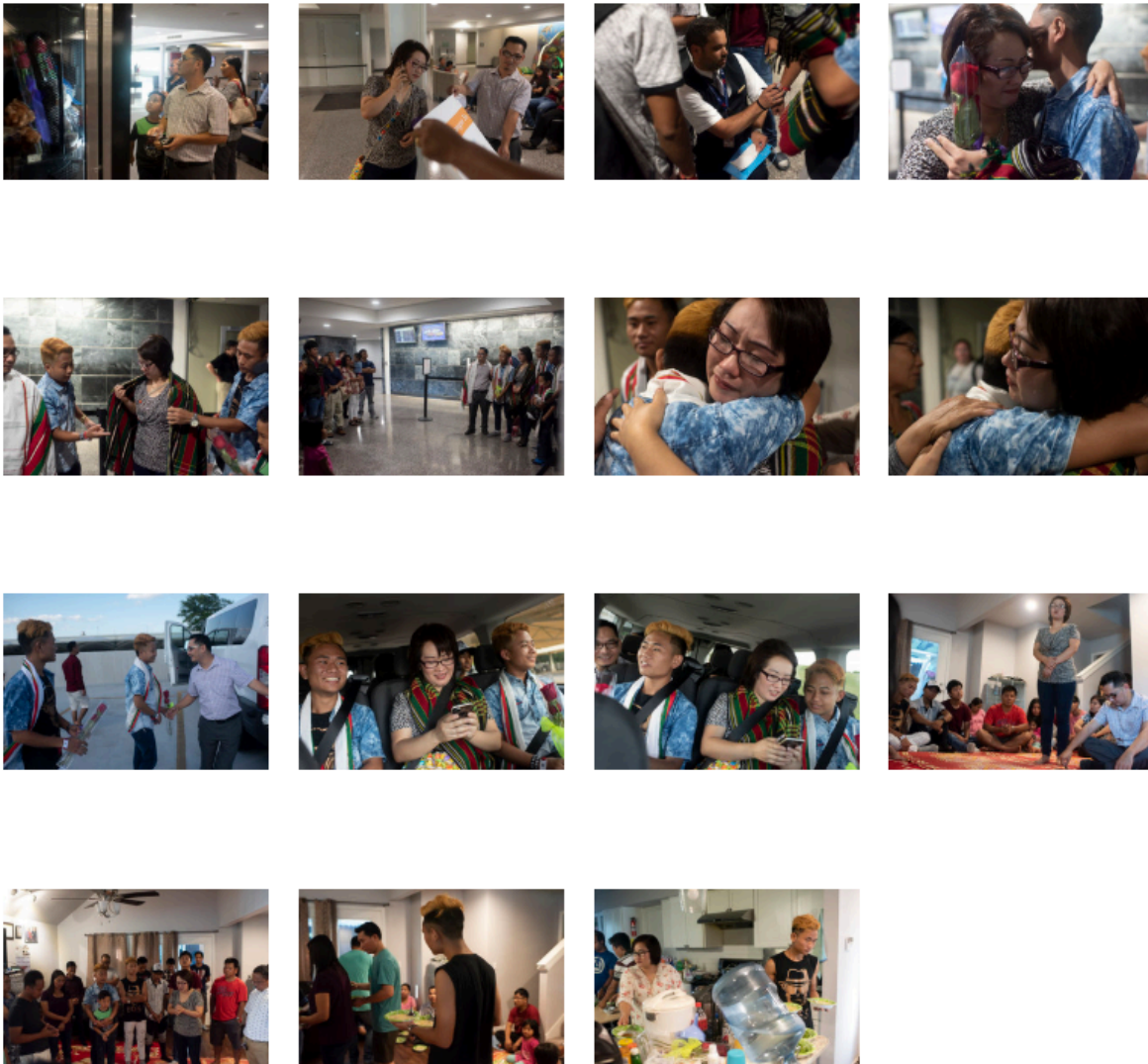
-The first day of work for Thuam, whose family recently migrated from Malaysia through the UNHCR. He will be working day shift at Whirpool (the home appliance company) from 5am-3pm four times a week. The couple prayed before the first day of work and Thawm has been jotting down his journey on a journal.



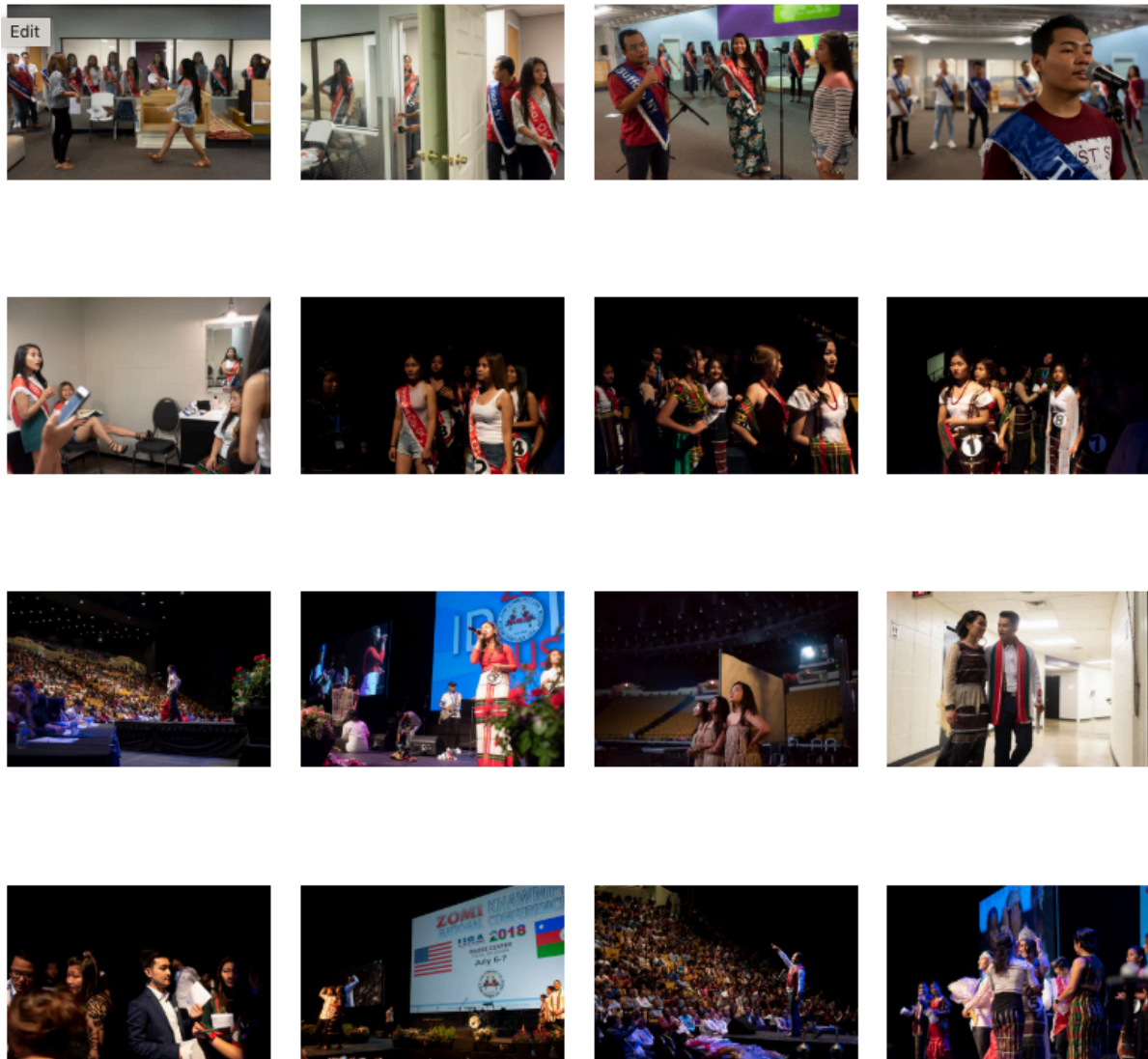
-On the fourth of July, Cin Sian Thang, Vum Lam Khai and Ciin Suan Kim arrived from Delhi, India after being separated from their parents, Jospeh and Huai for 10 years. The family had been separated when the couple left Myanmar for Malaysia to get the UNHCR refugee status. After two years, when they immigrated to the US in 2010, the

couple through lawyers applied for green card status and called their sons to the US. it took them 8 years to get through this whole process.

Since I met the family for the first time on the fourth, I wanted to do a more in-depth interview and get to know the circumstances they went through in the next visit. However, it was significant to be celebrating the Independence Day with this family.



-The Zomi National Conference was held in Oral Roberts University auditorium which is a mile from the apartment complexes. This is a meet organized by Zomi (Innkuan) Family US organization, where Zomi-Americans from around the country come to participant and celebrate. I managed to photograph few behind the scenes moments instead of the actual program itself. This most likely may not make it in the photo-essay but I wanted to explore this celebration anyways.



2 Work issues: I know deep down I need to engage with 4-5 characters more in depth to get more intimate and build a stronger narrative of their lives. I feel that I need to work towards that more consciously than photograph everything. I am looking for some elements that will tie them together. I love the cloths drying and garden, which I plan to explore this week

3 Research progress: My research progress is slower than I expected but am editing the required changes now and will come up with possible questions for the interviews. I should have contacted my respondents (photojournalist) by first week of August.

4 Goals for the upcoming week:

As discussed,

- I want to explore the apartment complex -look at the possible portraits of women and their harvest
- Since music and singing is a big part of the Zomi culture, I came across a Zomi rock band based in Tulsa. I plan to visit and check their home run studio and jam sessions.
- There is a Zomi lady in the apartment complex who is taking care of two disabled children full time. The children were involved in a car accident in Malaysia, lost their parents and were physically affected due to it.
- Cing Huai, the lady whose sons arrived from India on the fourth runs a home-based saloon for trimming hair. I want to go visit and follow up on their progress too.

FIELD NOTES 3- July 17, 2018

Last week, I really did not do much other than build more contacts and meet possible people I would photograph. I was super engrossed with watching the World Cup.

Through the introduction of Joe, I met with Dan Farnum who taught at the Art department in Mizzou and now is teaching at Tulsa University. Farnum, being a documentary photographer, I got really good feedback showing my work to him. He agreed to meet twice a month or so, when I have work to show for feedback and advices.

Farnum's valuable inputs were to work on getting the audience connect with the people I am photographing, for which I would explore making portraits. Also, the need to have landscapes that are important to the community- possibly churches, strip down malls in this part of the town. The need to show Zomi diaspora outside of their normal context and how it would look like. for an example- their interaction with non-Zomi in Tulsa.

This week:

- My goal is to work on whatever I promised on last week to do list.

DAVID'S RESPONSE on July 17, 2018:

Daniel -

Yes, good advice from Prof. Farnum - to "show the soup bowl" - the area, context, environment where your immigrant families live - it's important to show how they are within their own culture, of course, which you have a really good start at, but also to show the relationship/lack of relationship with Tulsa

This will be tougher to do perhaps, but certainly possible.

-david r.

JACKIE'S RESPONSE on July 18, 2018:

Hi Dan,

This field note reminded me that I didn't respond to your last post. I'm sorry for the delay - I just returned from a family trip.

You certainly made tremendous progress in your second field note. As I said in my previous email, you are continuing to break barriers and get close and personal with subjects. I've attached a screenshot of some of my choices. What most draws me to these images is the understanding I gain about your subjects, their culture, their lives and their relationships. There is an intimacy I like (as well as your lensing).

I wouldn't discount the Zomi National Conference images. I'm interested in their identification with American cities (3 of the images I picked). The 4th image I picked was different - it had a sense of awe. I like seeing your subjects in different settings, such as this empty "arena."



So far, you seem to be shooting a couple different things: events that are important in the lives of the Zomi in Tulsa, or daily occurrences that are part of their routine. It is developing into an essay with visual continuity, rather than a picture story. As you've said, you don't have any central characters, which you seem to want. I wonder how hard a few intimate picture stories would be to integrate into this developing essay. This is worth considering soon so you don't have editing problems later. What stories or subjects are you interested in?

I agree that you need to show more of the surrounding landscape, both literal landscape and the people of Tulsa. How do the Zomi fit into the larger scene? (That's partly why I like the national conference). It sounds like Farnum is a great advisor for you!

Finally, I urge you to reach out to the research subjects/photographers as soon as possible. Finding willing subjects to interview is often a difficult step - so starting soon would be good.

Good work Dan! Again, I'm sorry I forgot to answer #2.

Jackie

FIELD NOTES 4- July 24, 2018

Dear Jackie, David and Joe,

Thank you for the continual guidance and feedback on my progress.

I am as mentioned in the blog, spending more time now meeting with potential Zomi's who could help me get access and insights to the life led by Zomi Americans here.

1. Weekly highlights:

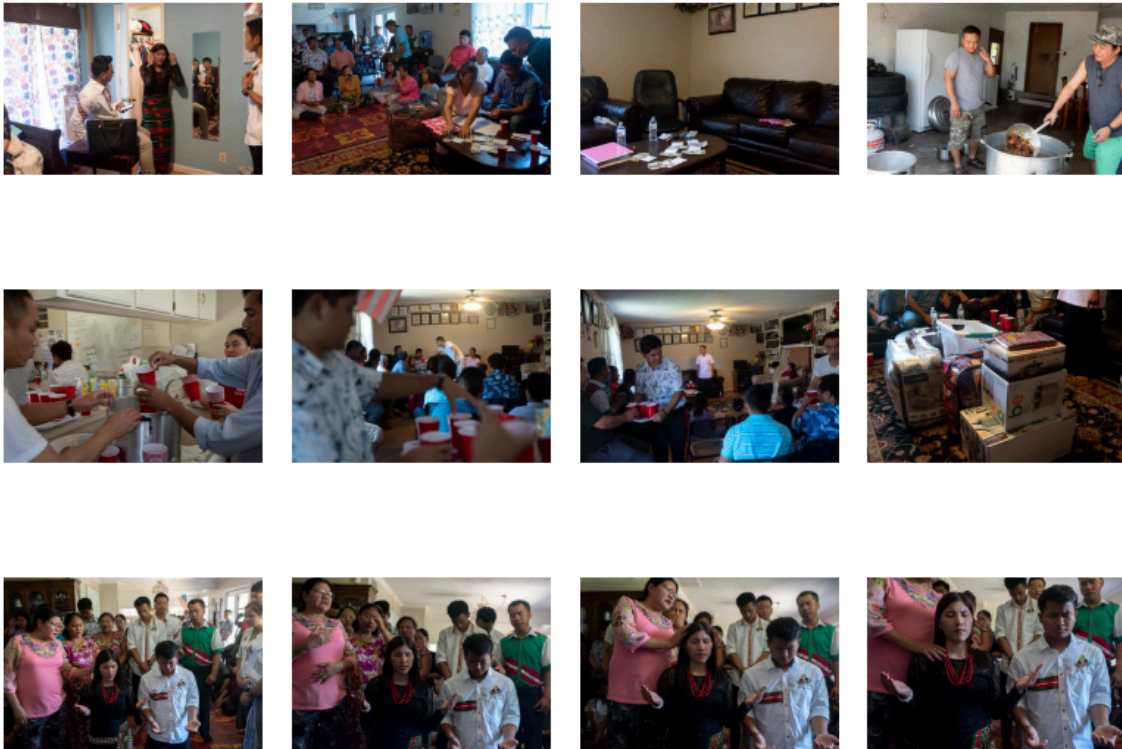
I spent most of this week meeting with key Zomi personnel who could provide me with potential subjects for the diaspora work. Since the Zomi people here are divided by 9-10 different churches, I'd have to try and find a representative from each church to inform me about the happenings in their respective spaces.

The significant people or events I photographed past week were:

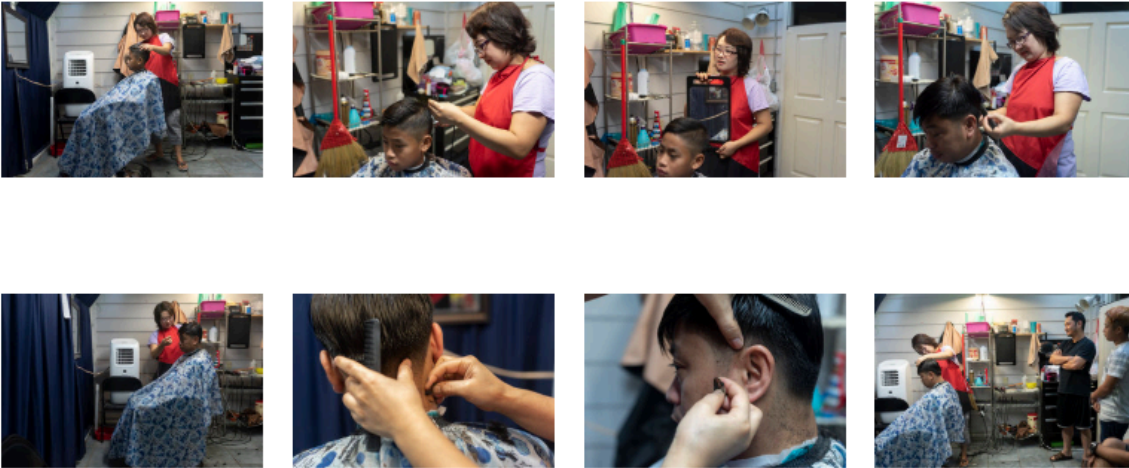
- About 3-4 Zomi churches are teaching the younger children how to read, speak and write the Zomi dialect during this summer break. I went to Myanmar Zomi Baptist Church where about 70-80 children were divided into 3 classes according to their age group and taught the Zomi dialect.



- I was fortunate to have got the access to photograph the bridal ceremony a day before Khai and Mawi's wedding. This is the similar ceremony I photographed before in my second field note.



- I want to continue photograph women in entrepreneurial roles within the Zomi community. Although the Zomi people have a patriarchal society, it is the women who work the hardest and is tasked with the toughest responsibilities of taking care of the house, children and cooking. Cing Huai is the lady whose children arrived in the US on the fourth of July. I followed up on her work. She runs a haircut/beauty salon in her house. On a good day, is said to have about 25 clients in a single day. On an average, she told me that she has about 10-15 clients a week. On Saturday morning during the time I was there, she had about 6-7 clients.



2. Work issues: No particular work issues as such. I am curious as to how I could use churches that are integral part of the Zomi community as landscapes. Would be nice to have some feedback on it?

3 Research progress: As mentioned before, I should have contacted my respondents (photojournalist) by first week of August.

4 Goals for the upcoming week:

- Today I plan to go meet with a Kim, a Zomi lady who sells traditional cloths in her home garage.

- Last Saturday, I met with Thawnpi, a former casino and alcohol dependent person, who told me he will work on helping me get access to people who are still living his former lifestyle.

- Plan to follow another lady who sells vegetables door-to-door driving around in a van, 3 days a week

- I am going to photograph a Kimmung, a Zomi mechanic who repairs car at his home. I went and had my oil changed this weekend and Kimmung currently has two cars in his garage for repair.

- I am yet to get in touch with the Zomi rock band based in Tulsa that I mentioned in the earlier week. I plan to visit and check their home run studio and jam sessions.

JOE'S RESPONSE on July 27, 2018:

Hello Dan,

I enjoy the idea of photographing a classroom where children are learning the Zomi dialect. For any of your scenarios, I'm most interested in what the circumstance might represent in terms of what you want this work to mean. If the boy with the hip undercut haircut has something to do with assimilation, then the classroom pictures are about keeping the present from becoming the past. As you attempt to photograph interactions, I think it's important to reiterate that there is so much in the background that alludes to the provisional nature of your subjects' tenancy: a ceremony in a cramped space with a mattress against the wall, the wild children's crayon drawing directly on the wall of the apartment of one of the female entrepreneurs, the clothesline and the candle in the kitchen, the dry erase board. These items mean a lot to this project.

The areas where subject and content seem the most productive: worship, home business, youth culture, gardens, apartment complex. When these things can come together organically, like the boy in the salon chair, there is a different quality to the observation. A more layered experience.

Tell me what you mean by church/landscape idea. I might be confused.

Nice work Dan

Joe

DANIEL'S RESPONSE on July 27, 2018:

Thanks Joe for the insightful feedback and encouragement. Keeping these elements in mind.

By church/landscape I mean, I want to have environmental/exterior photographs showing a sense of place, economy and a structure that the Zomi's are bound upon. In this context, church plays a huge role in doing so- whether it be the events in the churches- like the children learning Zomi dialect, counselling, marriage/death, employment referral etc.

From what I have seen, it also acts as a therapeutic place where the families come every Sunday and cry out, meet with other Zomi's with similar experience.

So, I feel like photographing the church is essential. I am equally interested in photographing the churches on its own.

Hope I am able to explain myself.

Thanks

Dan

FIELD NOTES 5- August 1, 2018

1. Weekly highlights:

I could spend some time last week following entrepreneur that I talked about in my future goals from last week. I think last week particularly was extremely productive, making new connections within the Zomi community and will be revisiting some of them.

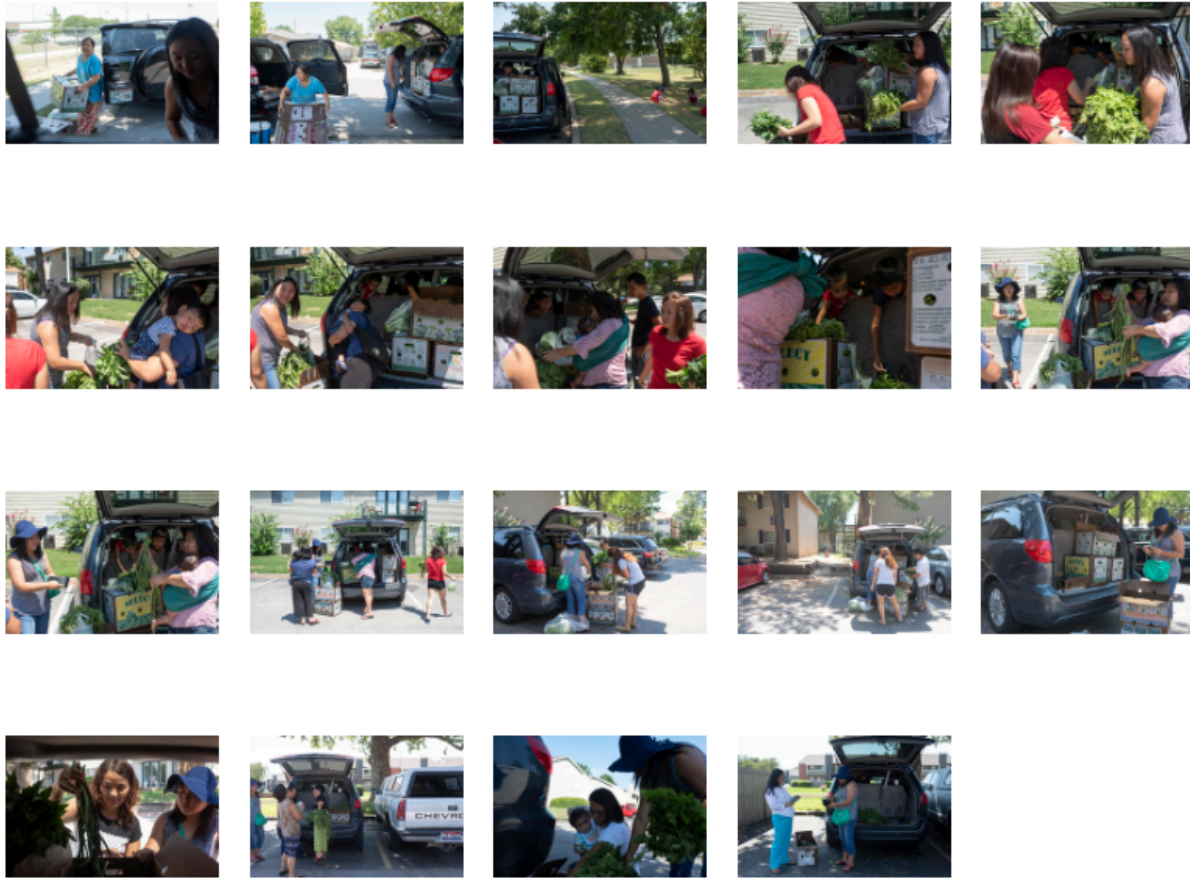
- Zen Za Ngaih started tailoring 28 years ago in Myanmar. During their 9 years stay at Malaysia from 2006 as UN refugee, her tailoring skills were put to use thoroughly, and their family did not have to work outside of home. Ngaih also worked as an instructor teaching tailoring during her time in Myanmar and Malaysia.

On arriving at the US, Ngaih did not resume tailoring as it was a skill-set that would not provide for any medical insurance or benefits. She works at St. Francis hospital in the house-keeping department and on her free time, teaches tailoring twice a week. Currently she has 3 students that come to learn from her at the apartment complex.



- Kha Khan started selling fresh vegetables from the back of her car since 2016. These vegetables are grown by Hmong farmers. Most of these vegetables are a delicacy within the Zomi community- mustard and pumpkin leaf, long beans etc. Since she has 4 children and is a stay-at-home mother, she wanted to earn some income for the family.

Khan's work is seasonal from May to October and she sells these vegetables twice a week. She communicates with her clients through Viber group messaging app, which is very popular communication tool amongst the Zomi community. Majority of her clients are from the apartment complexes where they are fairly new to the country and don't have the means of transport to go for grocery shopping. We visited 4 apartment complexes and sold out 8 cartons of vegetables within 3 hours.



- Resuming my exploration of the use of public spaces for drying cloths and neighborhood garden at the Riverpark apartment complex. In my Field note 1, I had photographed the same leafy vegetable from similar location as image 4-6. I wanted to continue photographing this particular space and its growth or decay since it is a garden just outside of the apartment complex near the storm drains. It is sort of in a no-man's land overlooking one of the tallest structures in South Tulsa.

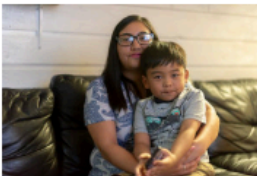
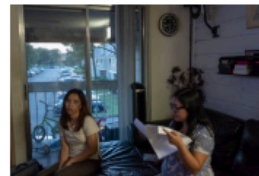
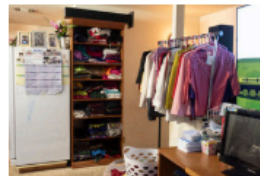
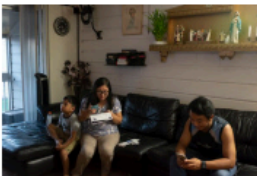


- In 2012, Zen Hau Vung was invited to the US through tourist visa by her ex-husband and they separated after a year. Her husband left for Myanmar and never returned back to the US. Vung was left with their child, Peter Van Tung.

Vung got her undergraduate degree in English from Myanmar and worked for the United Nations Development Program in Myanmar for about 6 years. Vung had never really put her English degree to use, until arriving in the US. After much consultation with lawyers, Vung's visa situation can only be resolved when Peter turns 18 years old and she can apply for citizenship. Peter is 5 years old currently.

Vung does not have social security, she does not own any identification cards or driving license. Since she cannot work outside, she has been using her education to help the Zomi community in riverpark apartment complex with translations for their bills, letters from government, hospital visits etc. Vung also sells traditional cloths from Myanmar at her home to her clients.

Vung told me that Habitat for Humanity works with the Zomi community in Tulsa, making home for the low-income families. I plan to go explore that with her in the coming weeks.



- The first image is the last day of the Zo lai (Zomi language) teaching to the younger Zomi-American children at Far East Mission church.

Image 2-5 is the garage turned traditional cloth shop of Ciin Kim. She probably has the largest collection of Zomi traditional attires in Tulsa and has been selling it for the past five years now. The day I went to Kim's place, she had no customers. I asked her to call me when the shipment of new cloths from Myanmar arrives.

The last image is of Cing Ngaih Huai, who arrived in the US on March 2017. Knowing the situation that awaits in the US, she decided to borrow about 14,000 USD worth of traditional attire and brought it with them to the US. Huai has nearly repaid her loan within a year.



-About 10 Zomi-American teens volunteer at St. Andrew's church to teach ESL and citizenship 101 to the Zomi adults. The classes meet twice a week (Monday and Tuesday) for two hours. These teens piqued my interest because nearly all of them (studying in 9-12 grade) were doing it as volunteers without pay. I did do a more detailed interview with each of them. The teens expressed that this experience helped them understand their parent's struggles better and can empathize with them. This ESL program has been running since April 2016 and has about 55 students signed up.

The church opened their backyard for community gardening to the Zomi families living right across in the apartment complexes.



2. Work issues: No particular work issues as such.

3 Research progress: I will work on some of my research aspects this week and have it sent to Jackie for feedback. I should have started contacting photojournalist to interview by next week.

4 Goals for the upcoming week:

- I am excited to have found some of the Zomi-American teens giving back to their community and are in leadership roles very early on. I would like to explore the youth and their lifestyle in the following months.

-Jenk's high school is having enrollment for students on August 2 and 7, 2018. Majority of the Zomi children study at Jenk's high school and I have got permission to photograph from the school authorities on the enrollment dates. Some of the Zomi youth will be volunteering as translators and helping out Zomi families with the process.

- There is a Zomi lady, whose delivery is due this week. They live at riverpark apartment complex and I have been checking in with them on calling me before they leave for the hospital. I want to follow this whole process of delivering the baby through. They have agreed to provide me the access.

JACKIE'S RESPONSE on August 1, 2018:

Dan, you've done a lot of hard work recently - good for you!

First, I want to echo Joe's comments about the context and background in the images. Many of your images have details and backgrounds that offer rich information (clothes on hangars, pots and ladles, boards and papers with scribbled notes, crayon drawings as Joe mentioned, etc). Some of your strongest work is when you back up and include those details. It also serves to differentiate and personalize different households and families.

I think your church as landscape idea may work best if you do the same with a few other environments in order to make comparisons and draw similarities (the gardens, the clothes outside, the apartment structure itself). Also, context would help - perhaps in the form of people, signs, etc.

One thing I find myself wanting is a sense of environment within the context of the greater community. Your subjects are in a vacuum, somewhat isolated. I imagine this may be true to some extent, but they must interact with Tulsa and other citizens. We talked about this earlier (in other blog posts or responses?), but I think it would help to show your subjects in their new environment. At this point you are focusing on family events (weddings, birth hopefully, funeral, etc), church, and daily chores/jobs. I assumed you were mainly working in the apartment building, but you have done some shoots outside of this. I think you could balance that with other situations. Perhaps shopping, doctor visits, driver's license, etc. I'm obviously guessing at situations, but that's a basic idea.

Finally, have you started to form a structure for the final product? That will help as you plan your next shoots.

Dan, don't hesitate to ask us specific questions in your field notes, when needed. That can be helpful for us all.

*Keep up the good work!
Jackie*

DAN'S RESPONSE on August 1, 2018:

Dear Jackie,

Thanks again for the detailed email, suggestions and feedback. I do realize the need to step back and include details. I will keep that in the back of my mind. My widest lens is a 35mm and I do struggle sometimes in tight spaces, thus losing out information.

About the church, will keep that in mind and explore the possibilities.

I just came back having a detailed talk with some key people about the interaction with others of the Zomi community. Actually, the matter of fact is there hardly is any interaction outside of their community for the elders.

So, most of the adults work either of the three jobs- at Whirlpool home appliances factory (where about 600-700 Zomi work and they speak in Zomi language), School Bus factory (about 300-400 Zomi) and AAON Inc where another (400-500 Zomi work). Other than home, it is Zomi church, Walmart and Zomi grocery stores that majority of the people frequent. I know that is reflective in my work as well and is the state of things.

I will try and check with the younger generation that grew up here and might hang out with people outside of their community.

The final product in my head as of now is sort of chapters- maybe 1. Entrepreneurs 2. Zomi culture (too broad but can work on it)

3. Zomi-American youth life

Please do feel free to give insights on to it, when you can.

Tomorrow I hope to get the Zomi parents and students outside of their community at Jenks high school.

Dan

FIELD NOTES 6- August 15, 2018

Dear Jackie, David and Joe,

Just got last week's field notes up on my blog. I did make a lot of progress in terms of making connections and understanding the shape my essay might take up.

I did manage to get two situations where the Zomi community interact outside of their circle- school and workplace.

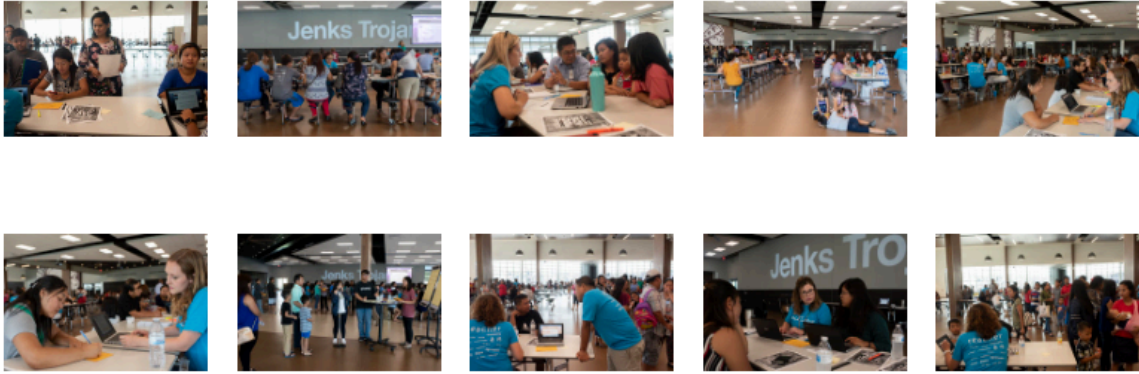
1. I really am struck with Zomi entrepreneurs and how they contribute back to the economy and community,
2. The Zomi youth, their transition and integration that I want to further explore, and
3. Cultural ties of back home that show the two worlds' that the Zomi community live in within the US.

<https://www.danielmung.com/new-blog/>

I will be at Denver for close to two weeks from Friday to spend some time making videos for my brother's band. So, I will work mostly on the research aspect for the next coming days.

1. Weekly highlights:

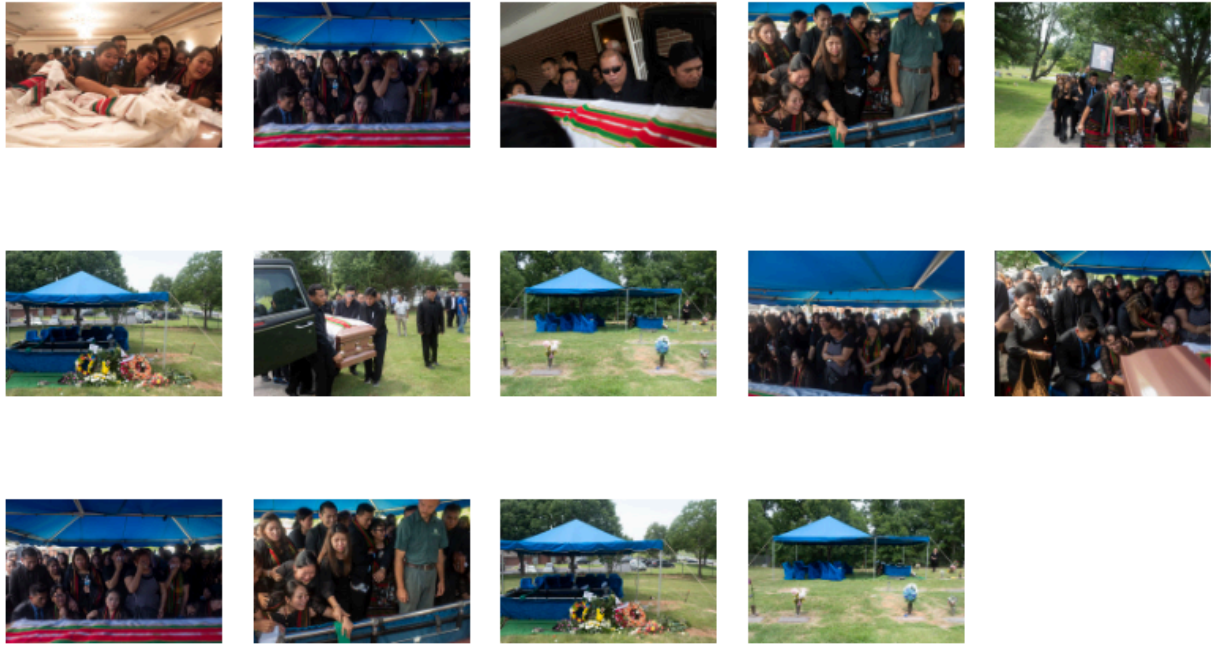
Last week, I visited Jenks high school enrollment day. Majority of the Zomi students' study at Jenks public school. This is one of the few places where you can see members interacting outside of the Zomi community. There are few Zomi teacher and administrators working at the school in different capacities. I interacted with few of them and will be following up on the Zomi teens at the high school in the coming weeks. I am not really happy with the images made below, but it is a start.



-In the Zomi tradition, when someone passes away, the community would go to the deceased home to mourn with the family by singing songs, cooking meals together and celebrating the life of the person. In this context, Mr. Sel Khan Lian passed away on July 27, 2018 but was only buried on August 4, 2018. This was done to include as many community members as possible during the funeral service. Five different churches spent every night with the family comforting each other through songs and prayers.







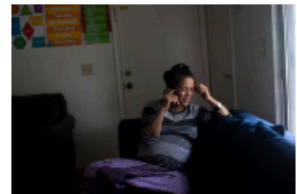
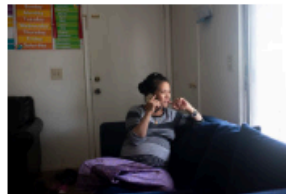
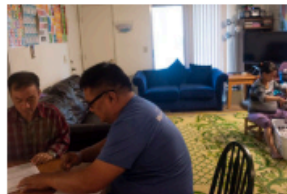
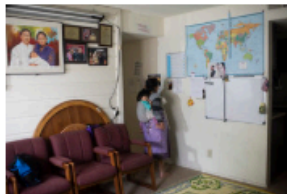
- Myanmar Christian Church is the oldest Zomi service that was started on December 7, 1997 with eight people. Currently, MCC have around 400 congregation members. About 11 different Zomi church divisions have emerged from MCC. They are currently renovating their church which is a gym they bought in 2016.



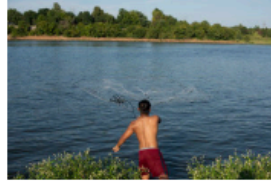
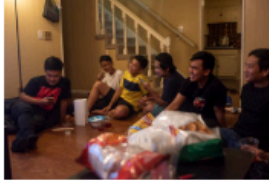
- Cing Liam Zam, a home-maker has been growing kitchen garden with various indigenous produces in her backyard. Since the only source of income is from her husband, Thawn's employment, the fresh produce keeps her engaged with during her leisure time and also brings food to the table. They also sell their produce to neighbors or relatives in Tulsa.



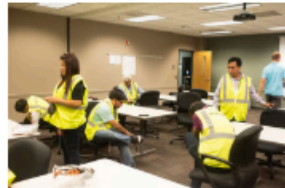
- I followed Luan Khawm Ciin and her husband Nang Khen Khup to the hospital on the delivery night to Hill crest hospital. The very same day evening, Khup and family bought a house and had a Zomi realtor come with papers to sign for the new house (image 2). I will follow Khup's family transitioning with the baby and new home in the coming month.



- I am slowly making more connections within the Zomi youth to gain access to how they spend their time outside of school. When not playing soccer, a bunch of them enjoy fishing at a nearby lake. I will be exploring this more in detail and want to focus a lot more on the Zomi youth and their situation in this environment.



-Last week, I followed four Member of Parliament representatives from Myanmar who came to visit Zomi community in the US. During their tour to the three major companies- School Bus Plant (350 Zomis employed), Whirpool cooperation (600-700 Zomis employed) and AAON Inc. (500-600 Zomis employed) where majority of the Zomis work, I made connections with the communications department and in one case, the Vice-President of the company inquiring for access to photograph inside their factories. The concerned representatives did say they could work certain access out with me and I will be following up with them.



2. Work issues: No particular work issues. I will work on my research aspect the coming weeks since I will be travelling to Denver next week to visit my brother. Their band is releasing an EP and has a concert for it at Denver on 23rd August, so I want to shoot some videos for them.

3. Research progress: I will be working on this component more in-depth for the next 2-3 weeks.

4. Goals for the upcoming week:

- Start conducting interviews with photojournalist on my research component.

DAVID'S RESPONSE on August 16, 2018:

Daniel - you're getting into some good situations and really broadening/deepening the coverage.

i know the school is not the most exciting situation (compared with childbirth or a wake for someone who has died) but those pictures - or that situation - is really important, and hope you'll have a chance to be in the schools again, where the cultures intersect.

Maybe my favorite picture from this group is of the funeral procession through the cemetery with a framed photo of the deceased being held high. I also like the boys playing on the mattresses, and several of the grieving family/friends at coffin-side, and the men sitting outside in folding chairs.

When you're in a situation that is maybe "marginal" in terms of natural interest, would encourage you to concentrate even more on creating a graphically-compelling, well-organized image, and to think about just what it is you are going to convey in terms of information or emotion, and then work that even more deliberately. Some of the work is quite eloquent; some seems like you aren't really sure there's a picture there....but you need to find and make it.

Hang in there - and good luck with the next phase. You're getting there! Probably it will be good to be away from the community for a bit; perhaps you can think about doing an edit from all of the work so far, and get it down to 20 or 25 of your "favorites" that are storytelling and most meaningful.....?

Might help you as you enter the homestretch of photography -

Are you "chapterizing" the project....?

-david r.

DANIEL'S RESPONSE August 16, 2018:

Thanks David for the detailed feedback and suggestions.

Yes, at times I feel being an insider, you tend to not see more deliberately. I know I need to work more on portraiture too. I am sort of not exploring that yet.

The suggestion of selecting 20-25 favorites is great. That'll definitely help me understand where I stand in terms of the images I have. I will try and print a larger select at Wallgreens to work out of.

Yes, I do plan to chapterize the photograph. Yet to do so. Probably the next week, would be a good time to do and see what I have in hand.

Thanks

Dan

JACKIE'S RESPONSE August 16, 2018:

Hi Dan,

I agree with David's comments about editing at this point. Your trip could be a perfect time to reflect on the project and think about what you have, as well as what you lack. It's hard to do that while you're in the middle of shooting. You've shot so many wonderful situations, but I think it will be easy to start repeating yourself.

I suggest you whittle down the images. Go with your gut at first. What are the common events, themes, stories, characters, etc? Start grouping the images into essays, stories or chapters. Get rid of redundancies. I think it will be tough to bring it down to 20 or 25 at this point, but that's a good goal. (start with 80-100?)

I'd like to start looking at edits soon. I can work from dropbox, if you want to set up folders for successive edits - whatever works for you.

An edit will give you focus and help you see what you're missing. It's important to do this soon.

I'm impressed with your tenacity and ability to be part of your subjects' lives. You've gained access to some intimate situations (birth and funeral in particular this time). I also appreciated the boardroom/whirlpool situation and think it would be great to follow up with this. The fishing is better this time as well.

I agree that some situations are not as visually compelling - such as the school. I see you doing two things: you work on clean lines with subjects/ objects often in one plane, or you get in the middle of the action and layer your subjects. You do both well. Your less successful images are somewhere in the middle, like you haven't really worked the image thoroughly.

Dan, I can't believe you were with a family buying a house - and then they went into labor. What a night!

*Good work Dan. You've made great progress.
Jackie*

DANIEL'S RESPONSE August 21, 2018:

Dear Jackie

Thank you for the encouraging feedback. Will be working on the Dropbox folder soon and share the selects. Will try grouping them as I can.

I will be working in the coming weeks to gain more access in the school, workplace (like discussed) and inter-cultural marriages too.

Will be writing to you on my update relating to the research aspect soon.

*Regards
Dan*

FIELD NOTES 7- September 14, 2018

Dear Jackie, David and Joe

It was great to see you in Columbia. Thank you for seeing me in such short notice. In case I visit next time (which probably might be during the last days of CPOY judging), I will let you know in advance and make appointments.

I just updated my field notes after quite a long break. I have made progress in the research part

As per my discussion with Jackie, I am looking at defending my project either on the 26th or 27th of November 2018. Do let me know if these dates do not work. I will start a poll shortly for the time and place.

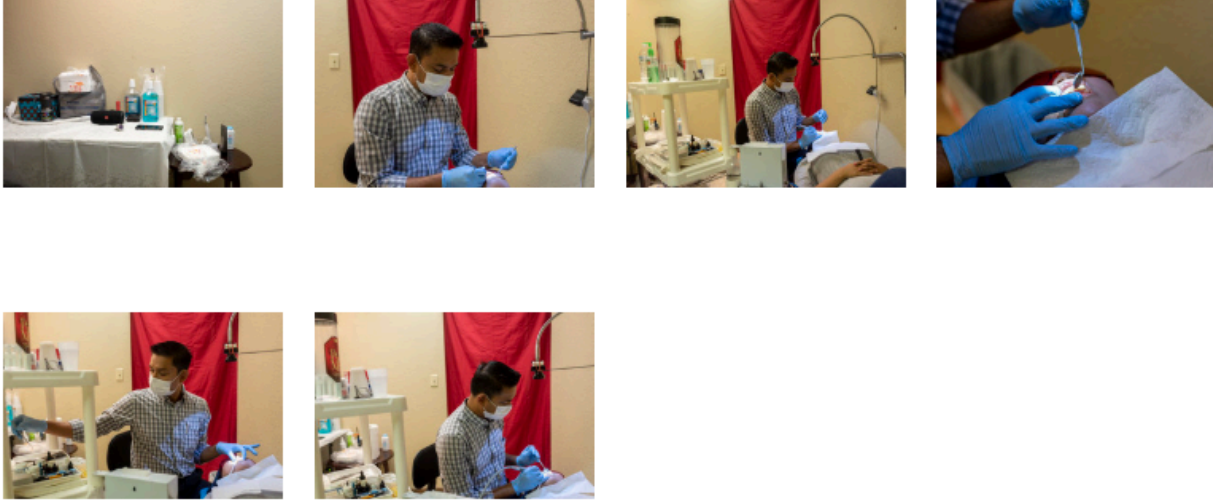
I have not updated my blog for a while and it was partly because I am working on my one-year practicum process in the International center and am still writing to various non-profit for opportunities to work in the communication sector. It was good to see all of you at school and talk briefly about my work, progress and shortcomings.

1. Weekly highlights:

As discussed before, church is a place of catharsis and healing where the Zomi community facing similar difficulties meet and let out all their worries/sorrows. I want to continue exploring the church as a place that functions way beyond just Sunday service.



- Lwin Myint is a Burmese American dentist from Florida and in the past has been practiced in Myanmar and Malaysia. For the past two years, he has been traveling across the US where Zomis live and performing dental services at a cheaper rate. He is currently using one of the rooms in the Sunday school as office for the next two weeks at Tulsa.



2. Research progress: I met with Jackie when visiting Columbia and we had a detailed discussion on my research aspect. I interviewed Wing Huie, artist based in Minnesota on being an insider and photographing his own community this Tuesday. He is a Chinese American artist who documented "Looking for Asian American" in the early 2000's.

<https://www.wingyounghuie.com/allprojects>

Mary Beth Meehan has also agreed to be interviewed and since she is coming as a faculty at MPW, I have arranged to meet her for breakfast on 26th September for the interview.

<http://www.marybethmeehan.com/>

3. Goals for the upcoming week:

- Complete working on my edits and selects for my project as per themes- Entrepreneur, Rituals/Customs, Youth.
- I contacted Whirlpool Inc. which employees about 700 Zomis for access to photograph and the media personnel seemed very interested in my project and said she would get back to me.
- Continue contacting photojournalist who have documented their own community for my interview. Since I am focusing only US based photographers, so it is taking more time. As per our discussion earlier, I am supposed to do about 3 interviews. I am trying to see if I can get more than that.

DANIEL'S EMAIL FORMAT FOR INTERVIEWEES:

Dear Huie,

Hope this mail finds you well. This is Daniel Mung, a photojournalism graduate student at the University of Missouri. To see your work exploring identity, culture realities, Asian-American communities through interactive workshops and presentation for the past decades is a great testament and documentation.

I am reaching out regarding talking about being an insider and documenting your own community in the US. Very close to your project in a way, I am currently working on my graduate final project photographing "Burmese Zomi diaspora in Tulsa, Oklahoma".

Being a Zomi myself from India, I am an insider who speaks the same dialect and have already been making photographs in Tulsa, OK beginning of June 2018. For the diaspora project, I am exploring the entrepreneurial, cultural, social and youth life within the Zomi community living in Tulsa. Their challenges in assimilating to the new culture and the on-going immigrant experience that is singular and unique. My goal for this project is to humanize a community that has close to no representation and to create a cultural documentation of the Zomi people. The final product would be in a photo-book format that at the completion of this project, can be given back to them.

On the research aspect, I am looking to interview photographers who have visually documented their own community within the US. In the current day climate, when our photo-community is having fierce discussions about the insider/outsider approach, I feel this is an interesting discussion to be had. I have few open-ended questions I wanted to interview regarding your approach, how you navigated being an insider with a fresh set of eyes. This can be done through skype call and wanted to request you to spare about an hour for this. The end product for this eventually is publication at journalism journals.

Looking forward to hearing from you and the date/time that could be scheduled for the interview.

Regards,

Daniel Mung

<https://www.danielmung.com/>

JACKIE'S RESPONSE on September 16, 2018:

Dan, I'm sorry I can't read this now - please email me any questions you have though, and I'll be able to answer that. Or if you have a quick update on research/shooting, just shoot me a quick email.

I'll catch up in a couple days.

FYI: here are my available times on 26/27 NOV

26, Monday: after 2pm anytime (I'm fine late)

27, Tuesday: after 12:30 anytime (I'm fine late)

If we can't find a time in my open hours, I can check on changing my 11am Tuesday 27th doc appointment. I can probably switch it, this far ahead. That would then allow me to be free Tuesday after 10:30.

Jackie

September 24, 2018

Hello Dan,

Thank you for your patience with this blog response.

I'm glad you're working on the interviews. Don't forget to focus on the commonalities when you do the second and third interview. That will help when you organize the information to write the article. I am curious about Mary Beth. Is her experience in her own community? I know her project was local, yet she was photographing people different than her own background and experience. I think that will make for interesting comparisons, as she is an insider and outsider at the same time. Was this something you were looking for?

Also, how did the first interview go? Were you pleased with it?

I'm looking forward to seeing your edits soon. You keep shooting, but we haven't seen an edit or compilation of the work. This will help you determine what you have and what you need and is a critical step to take as soon as possible. We did come up with themes, but you still need to edit.

Dan, if you shoot more, try getting closer to some of your subjects. I felt an emotional distance in the church images that physical proximity might have helped.

I hope this last week was fruitful. I imagine we'll have another blog post soon.

Cheers, Jackie

DANIEL'S RESPONSE on September 25, 2018:

Dear Jackie

Thank you for the feedback. Like you said, Mary Beth has an insider as well as outsider approach of photographer her town, Brockton.

I feel that her position is interesting and the way she worked with public installations to give back to the community.

I will be driving to MPW today and scheduled the interview with Mary Beth for tomorrow as she is one of the faculty members.

My first interview was alright. Wing Huie's engagement with public installations was interesting.

The photographers I have scheduled for interviewing that have documented their own community in the US are:

- *Amr Alfinky, an Egyptian documentary photographer based in NYC*
- *Salwan Georges, photographer with the Washington Post.*
- *Carl Jutse, Maimi Herald photographer.*

I will have the edits ready for your viewing and critique by tomorrow.

I have been very caught up with writing to various organizations and contacts for my one-year practicum starting spring 2019.

Dan

JACKIE'S RESPONSE on September 25, 2018:

Thank you for the feedback Dan.

Enjoy talking with Mary Beth tomorrow. She'll be great to interview.

Looking forward to seeing the edits! Jackie

FIELD NOTES 8- October 2, 2018

Dear Jackie, David and Joe,

I know been a while since I have updated my blog.

I have been writing to Jackie on my progress relating to the research aspect of it and am going to be done with four interviews by tomorrow evening.

I have been asked by Dan Farnum, photo-faculty in University of Tulsa to speak to his advanced students on October 17, 2018 about my work. I wrote to him about what aspects he'd like me to share on.

Would love to hear your suggestions as well on what I could talk to the students about?

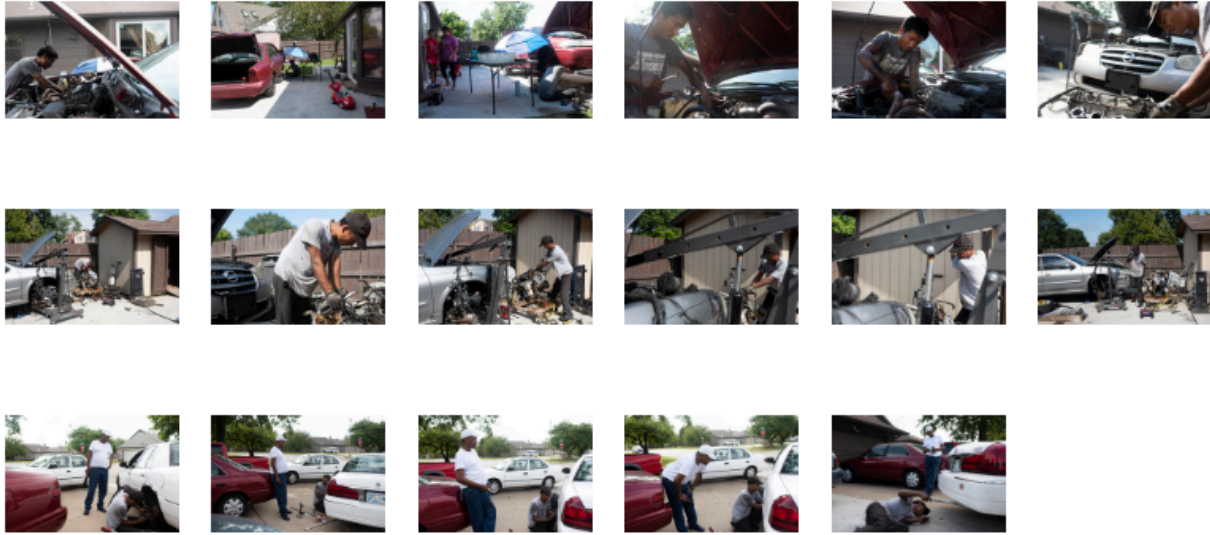
Looking forward to your feedback and suggestions on this work. I have been starting to make more conscious choices of what to photograph.

Warning: This is a very long note with lots of images from the past two weeks.

1. Weekly highlights:

Entrepreneurs within the Zomi community:

-I photographed Kim Mung, who in his spare time repairs automobiles at his home as a hobby and extra livelihood income. (Btw Mung is not a surname, in case you think we are related in any way). His customers consist mainly of Zomi and African American communities.



- Kam Buansing started the Zomi Martial Arts academy at his home with about 13 children of his relatives in Tulsa. Buansing had received black belt from Myanmar and during the peak years of drug smuggling (1989-1997) within the Golden triangle, he travelled across Northeast India equipping youth with a routine, focus and a philosophy to abide by. His dream is to use martial arts as a means of reaching out to the second-generation children to imbibe Biblical principles and Zomi culture in them.



-Khan Kham Lian and Ning San Cing, started expanding their small-scale home-business by screen printing, binding books, embroidery etc. for the Zomi community beginning 2015. Their garage is turned into a work studio and the couple work on products in the weekends since Lian has a regular job working Monday to Thursday. They just moved to this a new home in the suburbs of Tulsa in June 2018. Prior to

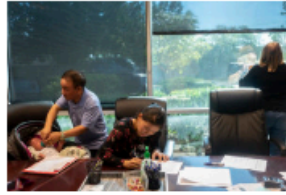
that, they lived with all the equipment's in their two-bedroom apartment complex. In the near future, they want to expand their business and register it.



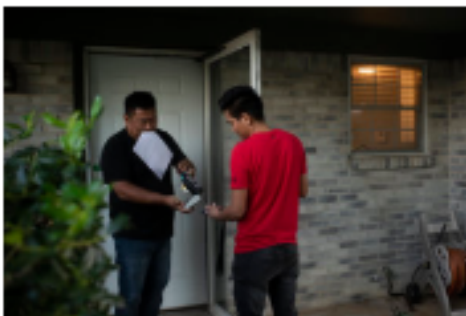
-Thangpi and his siblings are all musicians both in Myanmar and the US. They are the only ones to have a home recording studio and mixing equipment in Tulsa, OK. They have clients from the Burmese population in US, Malaysia and Myanmar. (I will follow up on this and get more images when recording is taking place and also their band practices before the Zomi Harvest festival on October 13, 2018). The images include Thangpi and a customer doing final mixing of the songs recorded.



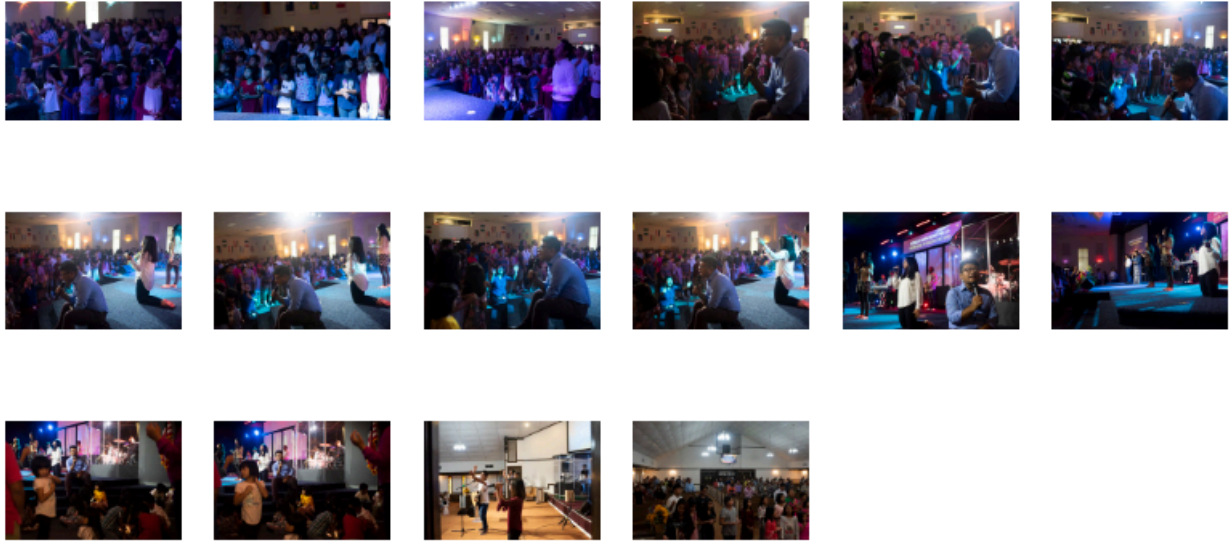
-Pastor Nang Khen Khup (who i have been following with the child birth) on the final closing day of buying a home for their family.



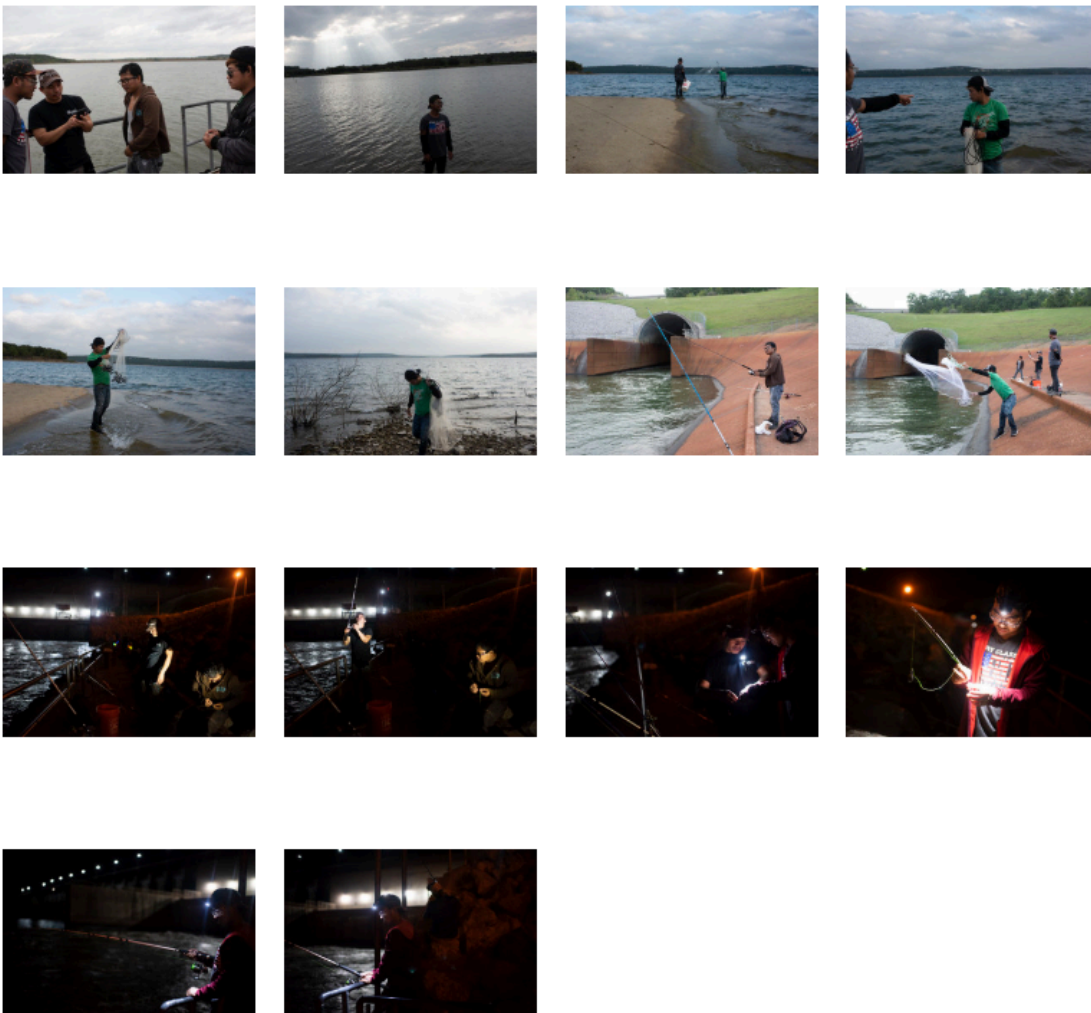
-Lang Sian Khup is a Zomi realtor and business is good because a lot of Zomi people buy homes within 3-4 years of living in the US. He was the realtor for Pastor Khup and is in the third image above. Most Zomi get a home right after they are eligible to receive 410K from the company they work. His clients are primarily Zomi. I will continue to check with him in the coming days as well.



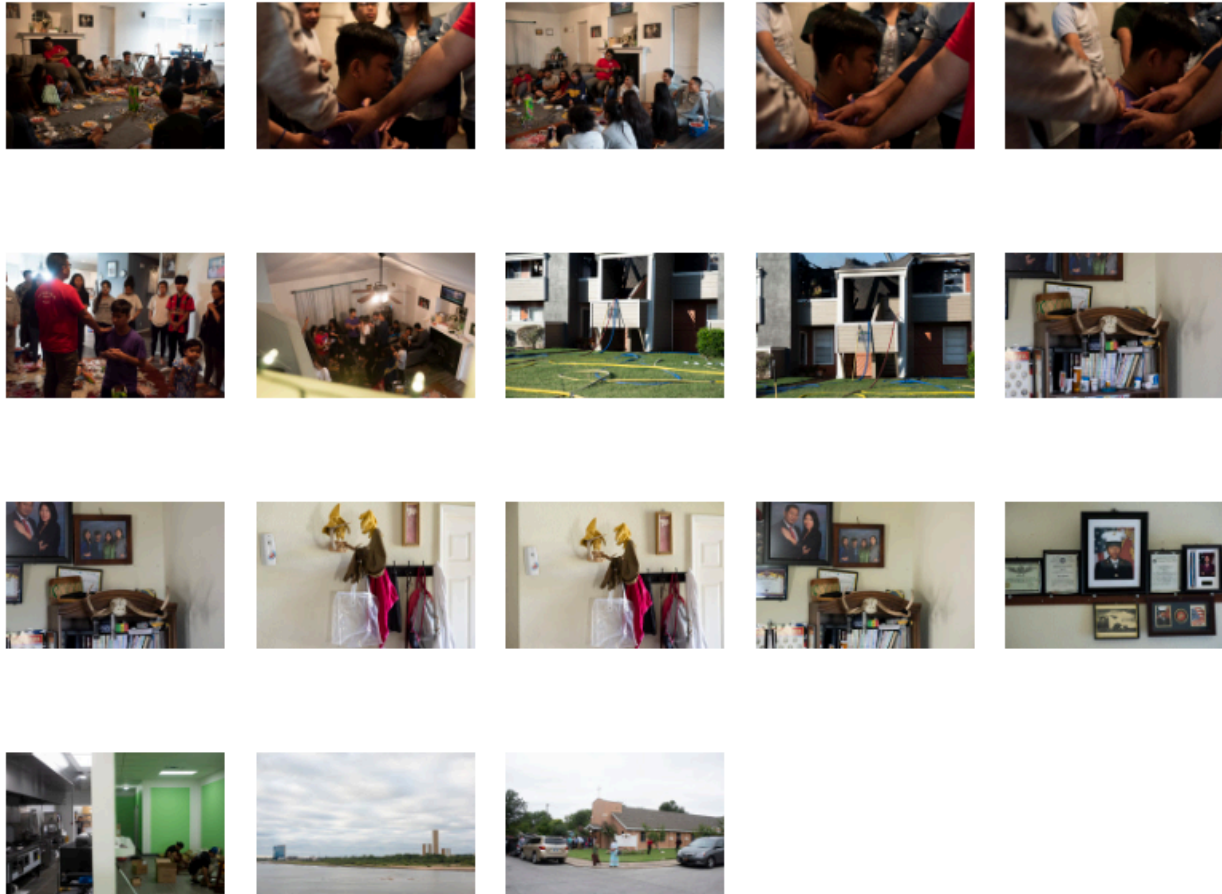
-Photographing the Zomi Sunday services at Far East Mission and Myanmar Zomi Baptist churches. I am looking for how children are required to be at the front rows and their reactions during the praise and worship.



-Fishing is very popular within the adults in the Zomi community. It is one of the few leisure activities they engage in outside of work, family and church. So, I want to explore this area a little bit more too in the coming days.



-Other miscellaneous photographs include sending off for Mungpu to California to pursue associate guitar course in LA at Musicians Institute; one of the apartment complexes where Zomis live, caught fire over last week. About 136 units were destroyed by the fire. I got some detail shots of a family whose daughter is in the marines and trying to follow a Zomi cafe opening in one of the strip malls at South Tulsa.



2. Research progress:

I interviewed Mary Beth Meehan during Missouri Photo Workshop. She was very interactive and wanted me to reach out to her again regarding my project. I will write to her this week.

Last Sunday skyped with Amr Alfiky. Amr is an Egyptian photojournalist with Reuters and a regularly contribute to NYTimes. I had a very interesting discussion with him since he also just wrote about Insider/Outsider approach for his paper at CUNY where is he currently studying.

One of his work recently is really interesting:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/07/us/muslim-gun-owners-america.html>

I have a scheduled Skype interview with Gabriella Angotti-Jones, past CPOY winner and a NYTimes photo editing intern for tomorrow evening, October 2 to talk about her approach documenting her community in the US.

<https://www.gabriellaangojo.com/>

As of now, with Gabriella, I will be done with 4 interviewees. I plan to continue reaching out to more photographers until mid-October after which I will start writing my research part of the project. I am looking for a larger pool of diverse photographers for the interviews.

3. Goals for the upcoming week:

- I tracked down the first Zomi refugee who arrived in Tulsa and he runs a sushi stall in a departmental store. I will photograph and follow up on him.

-I did get an edit down for my themes but I want to further narrow it before showing it to all of you.

-I want to start making portraits of the people I am photographing.

JACKIE'S RESPONSE on October 6, 2018:

Hi Daniel,

You warned of a long field note. Now I'm warning of a long reply. Sorry!

First, I'll talk about the rough edit that you shared with me in Dropbox. I copied the entire thing into my edited folder and then made 1, 2 and 3 star edits in Bridge. Dan, I'm sure you have more. You edited this too tightly and only gave me a couple choices per situation - sometimes only 1 choice. I've seen images I prefer in earlier field notes. Can you please add images for a looser edit? I can handle a lot more images.

You gave me four folders (Entrepreneur, Ritual, Youth and Church). The first two are stronger and more cohesive, and the last two (Youth and Church) are lacking. They can easily fit into Ritual. The youth fishing images and the church images are part of ritual

and culture. In essence, I see this as an essay about the community, concentrating on their rituals and entrepreneurial spirit.

Now comments about this field note: Dan, you really are most drawn to the home businesses, which is much of what you're shooting. I do advise you to now turn more attention to editing and a bit less attention to shooting. It's time.

I like some of the mechanic photographs and wish you had considered adding more choices to your dropbox edit. In the end you may find that you like pairings of photos. So put more of these into dropbox (a tighter shot of him working under the hood, the 13th frame with someone watching, surrounded by three cars - and of course the one with the child's toy in the foreground)

Martial arts: This also fits with your Entrepreneur theme (I'd get rid of "youth"). Dan, I wasn't sure why you kept cutting off their fit in most frames, while having much room up top. Toss some of these into the edit!

You have some wonderful screen printing shots, showing both culture (prints on the wall, wearing the child, etc). Again, it's the entrepreneur theme. The realtor also fits into entrepreneur.

Church shots: I think you could use one of these church shots (maybe the 7th, without the girl's feet cut off) with rituals - if that's how you edit in the end. You do have some previous church images that are strong as well.

The send off: I like some other images more than the one you put into the dropbox folder. Add more images!

Research: I advise you to compile the interviews into related topics. I know you want to interview more, and that's fine, but you should start to pull together the information. Have you transcribed the important parts? If you haven't started, get moving on that. The second step is to find commonalities and topics you can discuss. Begin that now as well.

Portraits: Remind me why you want to take portraits now. I don't see a strong reason to do that, as you have solid documentary images. We discussed it earlier as a way to break the ice, but that is no longer necessary. How do you see portraits fitting into a final project? If you don't see that, I wouldn't shoot them.

Dan, add more images to our folder! Perhaps Joe and David want to look at edits at some point soon?

*Sorry for the length of this email and the short paragraphs. Lots of things to talk about!
Jackie*

DANIEL'S RESPONSE on October 9, 2018:

Dear Jackie,

Thanks for that detailed email and constructive suggestions. Apologies for the late reply since I went for a commercial photo-shoot at Dallas.

I will get more photographs on the Dropbox folder as suggested and also start editing from now on. I have some new material.

The photo-essay is indeed about the community - their rituals, faith and entrepreneurial spirit. I feel like from the 4 months I have spent here, that is what I have seen resonating the most.

On the research aspect- I am done with 4 interviews and have another one set up this week. I am yet to transcribe them but have jotted down the important thread of conversations I have had with the photographers.

I will work on transcribing and starting to write the structure of the article. I have used close to the same open-ended questions with all of them to maintain commonalities of topic.

I will have a field note update with all the suggestions ready by end of the week.

Thanks

Dan

DANIEL'S e-mail on October 10, 2018:

Dear Jackie, David and Joe,

Thank you for participating in the poll quickly and finalizing the date that works best for all of you.

As per the poll, everyone has agreed on November 26, 2018 from 2:00-3:30pm.

*Will be writing my field notes on where I am at soon.
I am scheduled to submit all my material by November 7, 2018 to Jackie.*

*Thank you
Dan*

FIELD NOTES 9- October 22, 2018

Dear Jackie, David and Joe,

Thank you everyone for finalizing the defense date to November 26th, 2018. As discussed with Jackie, I will hand over my research component by November 7th. After editing my research paper with Jackie, it should reach to you both well ahead of Thanksgiving break, so that you do not have to go through it during the holidays.

I have finally started editing down my work and have a larger edit of 57 images on my blog. Would really like your feedback on it- whether it be sequencing, getting rid of some more images etc?

I mentioned in the blog that it is not necessarily arranged in order, but I tried to put them thematically as of now.

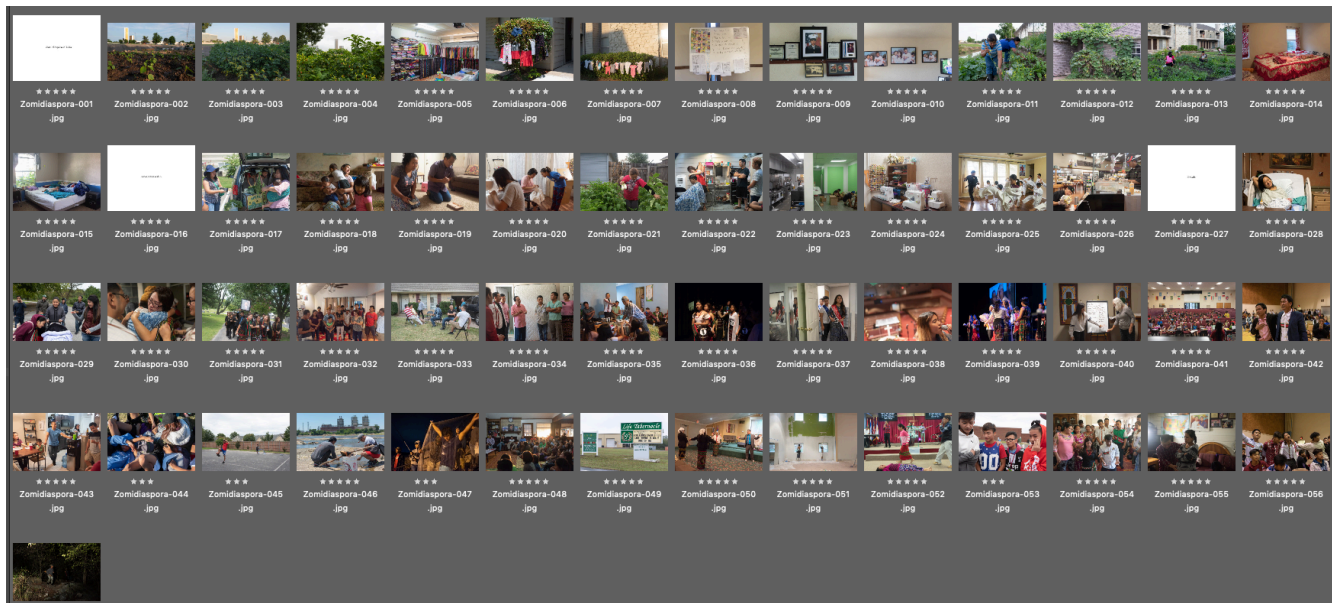
The 57 photographs are also on a dropbox account for you to access.

<https://www.dropbox.com/home/Zomi%20diaspora%20edits>

Last week, I was given an opportunity to present my work on the Zomi diaspora at Dan Farnum's class in the University of Tulsa. It was mutually beneficial, and I showed them a larger edit of 52 images. I stacked them thematically- Entrepreneurship and Rituals/Church.

I want both David and Joe to take a look into it and give me suggestions on it since I am slowly beginning to edit my work now. I have added few more images into the mix of 52 selects from this update.

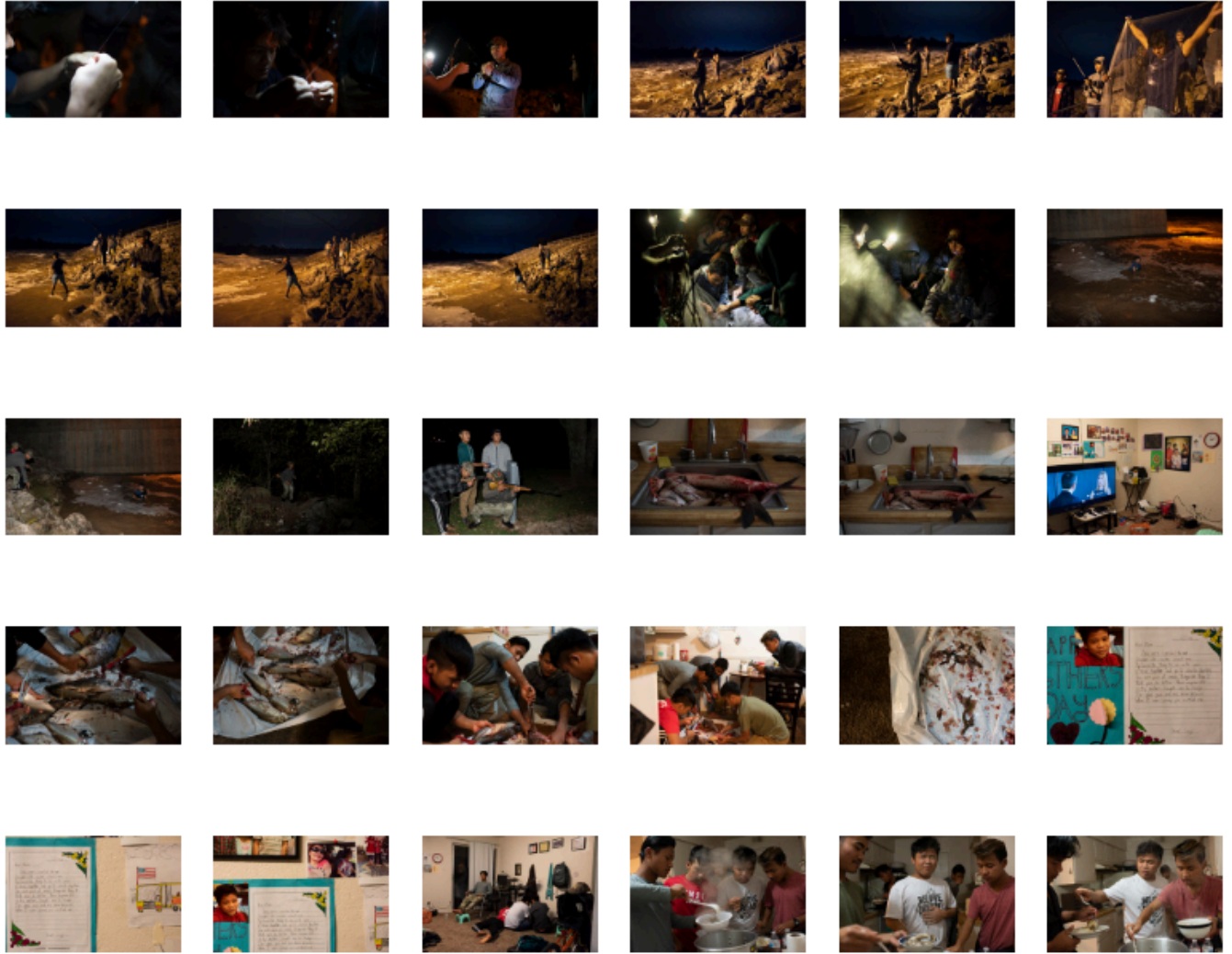
As of now, I am hoping for the end product to be an online publication. I would really like to do a dummy book for my project defense presentation and use it for portfolio reviews.



1. Weekly highlights:

-I followed some of the Zomi high school youth that usually hang out at Keystone lake for fishing during the evening last week. Like I mentioned earlier, fishing is one of the popular outdoor activities amongst the Zomi youth along with soccer.

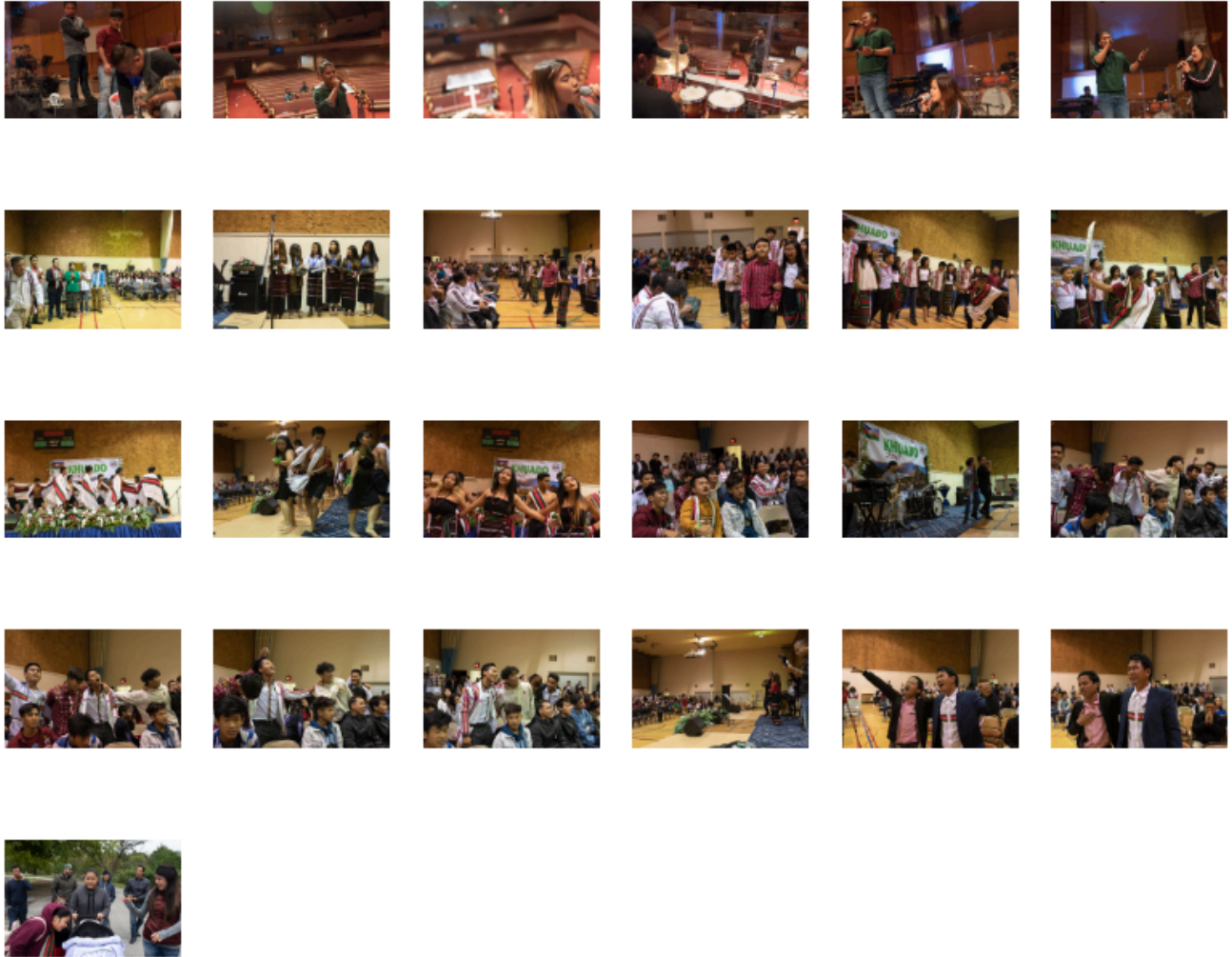
Right after the catch, they cooked fish stew.



-I am combining three outdoor events here- Zomi Youth food and sports fair at Full Gospel Church campus, Golf and soccer tournament with the Zomi community. Soccer probably is the biggest attraction for the Zomi youth- both men and women alike.

- Khuado Pawi is one of the biggest festivals for the Zomi community.

Khuado (Harvest **Festival**) is traditionally held in the month of October after the harvest is over. It resembles “Thanksgiving Day” **celebration** in the US. The initial plan by the Zomi community was to have it outdoors but due to bad weather, they had to shift the program indoors.



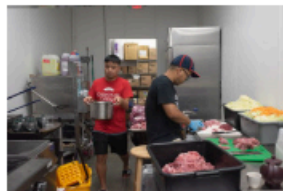
-Since church is a huge institution and integral to the identity of Zomis, I am still going to various Zomi church services on Sundays.



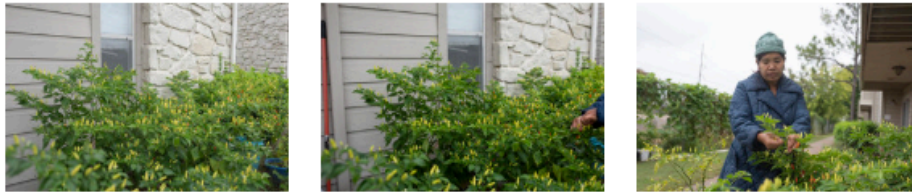
-I managed to track down the first Zomi who arrived with a refugee status to Tulsa on December 12, 2005. Cin Lian Pau Gin Do Thang runs a sushi shop in one of the departmental stores at Tulsa.

Having a sushi store is considered a high blue-collar job with the Zomi community at the moment. However, sushi owners work 7 days a week.

Below are few photos of the kitchen at a new cafe that recently opened called 'Zogam cafe' in one of the strip malls at South Tulsa.



-I want to continue photographing the gardens in the apartment complexes. It also shows the change in the season and crops grown.



- Millionaires club is a small business venture that seeks to promote trust-building, invest money together and lend it to each other in times of need. They have about 200 people investing 20 dollars every month to the club. Members can take loans with no interest.

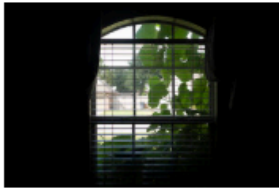


-This is a project that I am really interested in and will work on it over the coming years.

This is a joined bed in a three-bedroom home, where all 5 members (3 children and their parents) of the family sleep together. For a lot of the Zomi people, family comes first, sometimes even over a couple's privacy. It shows the fabric of the community and how close-knit they are.



-Miscellaneous



2. Research progress:

In regard to interview, I have managed to talk to more photographers that I am required to. Talking to insiders documenting their own community has really helped me in my editing and also way of approaching the community.

As of now, I have interviewed-

-Wing Young Huie,

-Mary Beth Meehan,

-Amr Alfinky,

-Gabriella Angotti-Jones,

-Josué Rivas,

-Mary Kang (she is a Korean American and has been documenting the Nepali diaspora in Austin, Texas. I will probably skip her but we had a very rich and meaningful conversation)

-Jessica Chou (I will be interviewing her this Thursday on her work Suburban Chinatown)

The plan is to start transcribing the important parts of the interview by this weekend. I used close to the same open-ended questions for all of the interviewees, so it should be easier to highlight their responses.

3. Goals for the upcoming week:

-After talking to the management at Whirlpool Cooperation for nearly 2 months, I finally managed to get limited access inside their production area for about an hour to photograph on October 31, 2018. This company employs around 700 Zomis and plays in a huge factor in terms of internal migration as well. Would love your comments on how I should approach it photographically and what I should be looking at?

-Work on editing the photographs into an essay and start writing the research part.

JACKIE'S RESPONSE on November 4, 2018:

Hi Joe and David,

If any of you are able to peek at Dan's photos that he sent a week or so ago, that would be wonderful. I'm still deep in the weeds with CPOY (have been for about 2 weeks), but I will be able to start looking early this week. However, your input would be great as well!

Thank you both, Jackie

DAVID'S RESPONSE on November 4, 2018:

Daniel - sorry for not having gotten back to you sooner.

You're doing wonderful work.

I like your edit quite a lot. Mostly it seems good except a few notes;

1- the first "chapter" has too many of the skyline-type images - probably just the last one is all that is needed, imho (zomidiaspora04) - if you were hoping to show a sequence of planting and growth, etc., then you'll need to do it again next season when you have more carefully controlled your camera placement so that it reads as a sequence - here it just seems redundant

2- I think there are a few places where you can't decide between similar images, and you just need to. Also encourage you to keep edit a little "spare" and "surprising". Quirky pictures are good; informational pictures are good to help you write meaningful captions, but maybe don't need to be used as a visual.

3- Continue to look for relationships between pictures, as pairings, or as sequences. Look for similarities, look for contrast.

4- are your division titles the ones that the Zomi would use - or are these being assigned by you? I guess they probably are your invention, and that's fair enough, but I wonder if they would "divide" their lives differently? And what terms they would use? I find your way comprehensible and helps give me a hand-hold in looking at the work, but I wonder if it is representative from their point of view? Does this make sense?

Sounds like you are doing good work on the professional analysis and like you are bringing things toward completion.

At this point, think about trying to bring it all to a conclusion, but also be open to suggestions - from yourself as well as from your committee. Inevitably in the editing process new insights are gained that will alter the project.

Your notion of an online presentation (Atravist-type, that allows for photos and some good caption material?) makes sense, as does trying to do a book. Do you envision the same edit for both?

Many aspects of this project seem to point to a Marketplace or Propublica type publication because of their ideology-fed enthusiasm and entrepreneurship - and apparent success. Seems fascinating.

What do YOU feel is missing?

*From my vantage point, I still feel somewhat distant from many of the people, that you are concentrating more on graphics, showing people and environments in structural way, that you aren't reaching into the inside of people's hearts and minds as much as maybe *I'd* like to see. This is tough stuff.*

As you are in the home stretch here, if you're still making pictures, think about not showing any more of what people do, but more about who they are, and what their relationships are with each other. Show us more eyes. And thoughts, head-on. Just a few of these images will provide the human connection to make the project even more powerful.

–david r.

DANIEL'S RESPONSE on November 5, 2018:

Dear David,

Thank you for getting back on this with such insightful and constructive observations. I will be sending my majority of my professional analysis aspect to Jackie by today. The goal is for all of you to have gone through the project before Thanksgiving.

- 1. Understood on the skyline images. I wanted to show passage of time, season or weather as you mentioned. And also, the significance of ORU, which is the building. The first Zomis that came to Tulsa in the early 90's came as theology students to ORU. They slowly started their a Zomi fellowship and never imagined that their own people would one day come in as refugees to this country.*
- 2. Thank you on the note about keeping the edit "spare" and "surprising"; and pairing or sequencing. I have been constantly photographing as I edit as well. I will be devoting my time from now solely on editing the work*
- 3. On talking to many Zomi leaders about the thematic approach, they were encouraged to see that portrayal of the Zomi community in that light. Most of*

the people being photographed appear only once in the edit, so there is most likely no disruption in terms of division of their lives. The observation that I have had working within the Zomi community in Tulsa since early April 2018, is reflective of the themes chosen of their resilience and entrepreneurial spirit, family ties/bond, culture and church.

4. *On the presentation aspect- I would love to do two edits- one for an online format and the other for a book/zine production.*
5. *Lastly, on my talk with Jackie, we decided that this work as of now, would be a snapshot of the Zomi people at this moment in time, that is more about the observation of the community. That is why I also ended up photographing certain people only once and moved to the next topic in certain situations.*

I have mentioned more in my evaluation and introduction in the research component of it. I believe I have just scratched the surface documenting the community. Hopefully I will expand it to wherever I get my one-year internship starting next spring and continue working on it.

Dan

FIELD NOTES 10- November 13, 2018

Dear David and Joe,

Hope this mail finds you both well.

After going through revisions with Jackie, I am finally done with my MA project report titled "The Promised Land: Zomi Diaspora in Tulsa".

I have attached a Dropbox link to the document for your feedback.

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fiuydh6nxbmvgne/AADHuypCpznS6eGgkzoG_n_4a?dl=0

On discussing with Jackie, I have decided that my physical evidence component will be working on the photographs in a book format.

After defense, if I want to pitch it to online news publications, I hope to work from the book edit.

Jackie and I have been working on the dummy book sequence. I have been laying the prints out and playing with the edit.

I will be working on the InDesign layout by today or tomorrow. Please give me a couple of days before I can get you a PDF of the book.



Thank you for all your valuable advice and suggestions through this past six months.

Regards

Dan

JACKIE'S RESPONSE on November 13, 2018:

Thank you, Dan.

Joe and David, I hope you're OK with the "words" coming first. I thought it was better to get the bulk of the project to you well before Thanksgiving break in order to get that part done. The book chapter should be coming soon.

Thanks all! Jackie

FIELD NOTES 11- November 20, 2018

Dear David and Joe,

Hope the holidays are going well.

I apologize for taking longer than expected with the book PDF layout and captions.

I went to majority of the people I photographed to show them their photos that are being using to get their feedback.

This process took around 2-3 days since I photographed a lot of Zomi people. I also wanted to get everyone's names right too. As you are aware, we Zomis have very long names.

I really want to thank Jackie for her patience, as she went through the caption information and introduction thoroughly.

I first worked with a portrait orientation layout for the book. But after going through revisions, I realized that I wasn't using the full real estate of the paper. I changed the whole layout of the book and the images instantly worked better.

Each page is letter size and images are 5x8 for the smaller ones and 6 ½ x 9 for the larger photos.

So, I have uploaded a two layout of the book. One as a whole spread and the other as single pages. I will have this printed for you to view at my defense.

The link to the PDF is below:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fiuydh6nxbmvgne/AADHuypCpznS6eGgkzoG_n_4a?dl=0

Looking forward to seeing you folks soon

Happy Thanksgiving to you and your family!

Regards
Daniel

JOE'S RESPONSE on November 24, 2018:

Daniel,

I hope you are able to breathe these days and I look forward to seeing you this week. I wanted to say two things; that I regret that my feedback in the last few months has been sparse, and that the book edit with captions is very well done. I'm also glad you went away from the chapter headings. While this seems appropriate for your PJ-MA, I do think a captionless edit is possible here that can make productive use of ambiguity. There are picture tendencies that are worth noting, beginning as a matter of formal logic but ending in a coherent revelation of your intent. Your most interesting frames are integrative, contextualizing, establishing. Your initial impulse to revisit themes is related to this. The building on the horizon, the garden, various acts of teaching/ these themes speak to the sometimes tenuous push and pull of assimilation versus maintenance of cultural identity. I do think that Tulsa itself can be a character in this, at the core of a centrifugal sense of Zomi growth. Really nice work Daniel.

best,

Joe

CHAPTER THREE: EVALUATION

“We began with traditional assumptions about diaspora as involving a history of dispersion among those people; a strong sense of a homeland from which those people have been dispersed; a desire to return to a place of origin; and a lack of full assimilation in a host county,” Tanya Sheehan (2018) said in her book *Photography and Migration*.

These words really struck me when I read the book and reflected on the people I was meeting on how their social identities were in flux; how their citizenship and concept of ‘home’ could be multiple, fractured; and how the Zomis celebrated their cultural difference. Although majority of the Zomi people have difficulty speaking in English and worked in lower paying jobs, I found that due to the strong Zomi community presence in Tulsa, there was lesser feeling of alienation. I learned that the Zomi churches play a vital role in catharsis, where the Zomi congregation go to church service to cry out, sing and announce their hardships alongside other Zomis having the similar lived experience.

This project made me dig deeper into how diaspora communities have been represented in the past and what I was adding to this body of knowledge. Looking

back at the images, I feel I have strong content filled with layered information and context, but I needed strengthening of the poetic potential of the photographs. The photographs in some instances lack the pull, mystery and power in arranging the world within the frames. I believe this has to do with the fact that I am meeting these individuals for the first time when photographing for a few hours, and then I quickly mark it off my checklist and move on to the next topic or individual. During one of my conversations with my committee chair, Jackie Bell, we quickly decided that this project would look at providing a community snapshot of the Zomi people in Tulsa at this current period of time.

I played a dual role as an insider to the community but also an outsider, with a very different lived experience than the Zomi refugees. This unique position gave me a deeper knowledge and access to the Zomis. Although the inherent way of looking at a refugee community is through the lens of assimilation, I was more intrigued by the warmth, strong kinship and community-oriented Zomi people. My photographs are a testament to the insular nature of the Zomi community in Tulsa.

On several occasions, I was a translator for Zomi families by facilitating interactions in the hospitals, job interviews, helping them sign leases to a new apartment, purchasing electronic goods and driving them to appointments. I was also

entrusted with the role of baby-sitting when both the parents would be out of home, either for work or shopping. I have shared meals with Zomi families to engage in a more meaningful conversation over dinner and show my association with them. I also ended up meeting with two Zomi families who are from the same clan as myself. These were moments when I chose not to photograph.

Through this project, I quickly realized that I liked working slowly and trying to be more thoughtful and intentional. I only started seeing the quietness within the frames during the later days of photographing the Zomi community. The offshoot of this project, which I plan to work on in the coming years, is my interest in photographing the family bedroom of the Zomi people. In many homes, even if they have two-three rooms, the parents would sleep with the children, joining their mattresses together. This shows the priority of family over privacy and the closeness within the lives of Zomi families.

Although getting access was not my primary concern, I struggled with getting information about Zomi entrepreneurs, cultural and social events in Tulsa. I relied on word-of-mouth and Facebook. There were several times when I have jumped into the car as soon as I saw someone post a Facebook live video of an event. I really utilized social media to document the Zomi community.

Since there are about 18 Zomi churches in Tulsa, each with their own cultural and social activities, I managed to have a few key people for each congregation as informants. Over this period of time, I continually met them and kept checking in for information. However, they too were busy with their own lives and at times did not know about the activities themselves. I interviewed and talked to about 9-10 Zomi pastors, ministers, counselor and social leaders on the current situation of Zomis and the future of the community to get diverse opinions, worldview and fact-checking.

What this project has taught me is the importance of time and the significance of constant feedback on the images that I was making. The feedback by my committee members guided me through this photographic process, and I realize that after graduate school, these educational advices would be what I would miss the most. Over this six-month period from June to November 2018, I made about 17,000 images. I realized the importance of editing your work as you continue photographing the project in order to see the central themes that continue to re-occur and where your images are headed.

For the research component, I reached out to about 15 insider photographers of diverse gender, color and issues about what they have documented within the US. Out of the 15, I interviewed seven photographers. What struck me the most during

my conversation with the photographers is the constant need to remind myself of my privilege as an educated migrant with a different lived experience to the people I am photographing. The interviews taught me the amount of time and personal sacrifice each photographer invested on their projects. In the context of one of the interviewees, it meant quitting his job and living at a protest camp site with his wife and children for several months. I resonated deeply with the fact that it was my burden to tell the story my people and portray them as they would want to be remembered.

Due to my past experiences interacting with photographers and editors through Pictures of the Year International and College Photographer of the Year competitions, I greatly enjoyed the conversations I had with the interviewees. On many occasions, we talked outside of the interview questions and ended up building a good networking contact.

During my photographic experience with the Zomi people, I was significantly influenced by the level of kinship and bond that the community shared. My experiences have taught me that they are the most industrious, hardworking and family-oriented people I know. Although being a very patriarchal society, I found that the women in the Zomi community are the backbone. For them to open their lives for

me to photograph in their most intimate moments, whether it be going to the hospital before delivery to the mourning of a deceased family member, I can't be thankful enough.

In the coming months, I would like to pitch the photo-essay to publications such as Insight by Washington Post, New Yorker-Photo Booth, Time Lightbox, New York Times- Lens Blog to name a few. I believe that these online news platforms can share and celebrate the vibrant lives of Zomi-Americans in Tulsa, Oklahoma with its vast audience. I believe the Zomi community worldwide would be incredibly honored to see themselves reflected in these publications. I would like to continue photographing the Zomi diaspora across the US as a long-term project that can eventually be a document for the Zomi community.

Overall, this experience has taught me about my position in the photographic world, the point of view I want to express through my images and the stories I would like to cover in the future.

CHAPTER FOUR: PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Please refer to the "Media Folder" and find enclosed the .PDF file. "The Promised Land: Zomi diaspora in Tulsa" book. Per discussion with committee chair Jackie Bell, the final book should be included as the Abundant Physical Evidence for the project.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

Who gets to tell whose story? Questions about identity, proximity and objectivity usually emerge when photographic work is being discussed. The photojournalism community has pushed for the perspectives of more insiders when covering a visual story. As a result, there has been a paradigm shift of indigenous and diverse voices within photojournalism in the United States, with groups such as Reclaim, The Authority Collective, Women Photograph and Diversify Photo to name a few, that are looking at how their stories have been told.

In her book 'On Photography,' Susan Sontag writes, "The camera is a kind of passport that annihilates moral boundaries and social inhibitions, freeing the photographer from any responsibility towards the people photographed. The photographer is always trying to colonize new experiences or find new ways to look at familiar subjects- to fight against boredom. For boredom is just the reverse side of fascination: both depend on being outside rather than inside a situation, and one leads to the other." In this context, Sontag associates the insider position with an empathetic gaze, respect and dignity, while the outsider position produces work that voyeuristic, colonizing and lacking compassion.

Visual journalists have carried the responsibility of documenting the complex nature of refugee communities. In order to understand how photojournalists who are part of a particular community document stories ranging from indigenous land rights, mental illness to breaking stereotypes of Muslim-Americans, I interviewed seven photographers.

Role as insiders

Wesaam Al-Badry, a documentary photographer and artist based in Berkeley, California, said, "I grew up in a refugee camp at Saudi Arabia and journalists would come in their vans, take pictures and leave. Then, the ugliest picture of you would appear in the newspaper the next day." Al-Badry explains that it is important to have a non-stigmatizing approach when doing long-term documentary projects.

Gabriella Angotti-Jones says, "When I am working with women of color, because historically we have been disenfranchised, I try and show their power as a person through my images. They can be just released from a detention center or living in a homeless shelter, but they still radiate this power and energy that they are able to survive, thrive and become who they want to be." Angotti-Jones identifies

herself as biracial, with both Black and Italian background and currently a photo intern at the New York Times.

In his project "Northern Lights," New York City-based Egyptian documentary photographer and filmmaker Amr Alfiky documents his own journey to humanize his experience as an immigrant to the US after the Egyptian revolution. Alfiky points out that many engineers, pharmacists and journalists had to flee Egypt after the revolution and ended up dishwashing in the middle of Virginia. So, he started his photography project as a visual diary because he felt this aftermath phase was not being talked about and was invisible from the narrative. "After these people sacrificed their lives for their country and freedom, the least I could do is tell their stories," said Alfiky. He further explains that as an insider, you share the same experience with the people you are photographing; you understand where they are coming from, how things have been for them and what is changing.

For Kholood Eid, a Middle Eastern Midwestern documentary photographer based in New York, her personal ongoing project, "Diagnosed," dealt with the side effects of medication. In 2013, Eid had been diagnosed with depression. Many editors have asked Eid to include herself in the "Diagnosed" project. Eid said, "For most of the time while working on the project, I couldn't afford therapy. So, talking to

people, hearing their own experiences and photographing them was really cathartic for me. I actually ended up making one of my best friends from the project.

Jessica Chou adds to this topic, saying, "In general, you understand where the people you are photographing are coming from, because you are part of it and there is a lot less layer to peel back." Chou is a Taiwanese-American documentary photographer based in San Francisco and has been documenting her neighborhood in California for the project "Suburbia Chinatown."

Josué Rivas, a Mexica/Otomi visual storyteller based in Portland, has been documenting the Standing Rock community. His resulting project won the 2018 FotoEvidence award with World Press Photo. He discusses how telling stories about your ancestors is connected to your DNA. Rivas says that telling these narratives can sometimes trigger emotions within you and the people you are photographing. When talking about his work from Standing Rock, Rivas says "When photographing, I am looking for what is genuinely my own experience and how can I connect with the people I am documenting in the environment of my experience." Rivas further states that he is very conscious when photographing native people because he is aware of how his grandchildren or great grandchildren would like to see themselves portrayed, 100 years from now.

“Native people have never been perceived as intellectuals. We are not viewed as creative content makers,” said Al Badry on his portrait work, “Al-Kouture,” which plays with the idea of symbolism, culture and consumerism. “Al-Kouture” questions the western world: would it accept the niqab, were it made by luxury fashion designers? Although numerous international publications and agencies showed interest on the project initially, Al-Badry said that they responded saying it was too “political” and that they did not have the appropriate columnists to write about it.

All the interviewees expressed their emotional connection, personal attachment to the stories covered and their ability to amplify a more authentic and deeper story-telling.

Disadvantages of an insider

A lot of times, insiders face issues of being biased, too close or subjective in telling stories from their own community.

Wing Young Huie, a Chinese-American artist based in Minnesota, has worked on projects covering immigration, identity and race. He explains that “the goal is to make it feel like it’s from the inside, but that is not easy to do sometimes. I feel that

being on the inside does not give you the same perspective as being on the outside. I can see it with my own family. It is hard to have perspective on my own family.”

Rivas adds to this point, saying, “It is even harder to photograph when you are an insider. Native photographers want to go document other people because it is too painful to document your own people.” Al-Badry further points out that, “sometimes your own people do not want you to do their story. Revisiting the past is a painful experience for a lot of refugees because you have been stripped away from everything.”

Both Angotti-Jones and Eid talk about how as a person of color you can be pigeonholed as exclusively a “female Muslim or Black photographer.” “What photographers of color often struggle with is when editors can’t conceptualize them working outside of what they are passionate about,” said Angotti-Jones. Eid agrees, saying how a particular publication will reach out to her twice a year to document the two major Muslim holidays.

Rivas argues that a lot of insider photographers struggle with normalizing how to best represent native communities. “The challenge is to show people respectfully, even when they are in their worst self, whether it be an alcoholic or addict,” said Rivas.

He adds that when there is a personal bond and a connection with the people you are documenting, it affects the photographer internally as well.

Advantages of being an insider

The interviewees expressed that when documenting a community, it is established that both insider and outsider photographers need to represent the people they are photographing with respect, equality and compassion.

Alfiky claims that when covering a story, the people you are documenting often want to control the narrative. As a result, they may selectively tell you what they want you to hear. "As an insider, since you understand the community, the people you photograph do not have control over the messaging. You get to ask deeper questions and try to demystify and normalize an issue," he adds. In visual stories, Alfiky looks out for Muslims that are unapologetic and going against what mainstream media deems as a "good" or "bad" Muslim. Through his work, he wants to continue working on deconstructing the stereotype of Muslim Americans in mainstream media and reconstructing their identity as a multi-layered, complex and nuanced.

In June 2018, New York Times published Alfiky's story on American Muslims and the different reasons they own guns. "The feedback from the Muslim community worldwide was heartwarming. Many Muslim-Americans, who grew up in the US struggling with surveillance, stereotyping and profiling reached out saying you are the first person to cover such a sensitive issue in a nuanced way," said Alfiky. When the readers wrote back saying that the media needs more stories like this, Alfiky replied, "I was only showing a slice of how Muslim-Americans lived in the Mid-West and the South".

Eid says, "I have actually had certain people tell me, 'I am so glad they sent you'," referring to some of her assignments for newspaper and agencies. "As a woman of color, a lot of times people that I photograph feel more relatable with me." Eid understands the one-dimensional coverage of the hijab. Wearing hijab is the biggest signifier in public of the Islamic faith, and it is also the most stereotyped. Through her work, Eid explores how the identities of Muslim women go beyond religion and the hijab. She recently worked on a visual story focusing on the Sunday routine of Noorain Khan, a Muslim-American woman, who is a program officer at Ford Foundation for the New York Times. The photographs focus on showing life beyond the hijab. The images explore Khan's relationship with her husband, her morning

ritual prayers, their Sunday brunch with friends, love for barre and the couple's favorite pasta joint.

Long-term documentary projects are built on access and trust. "Speaking the language provides a certain amount of underlying trust that you might not have otherwise. Automatically there is a notion that maybe you are one of us and that you will not take advantage," said Chou. Angotti-Jones, during her assignments with newspapers, has experienced how 'Black, Latino or women of color' were more willing to open up to her due to a higher level of perceived trust, because they identified with her. Expanding on relatability and trust, Angotti Jones says, "I met an 80-year-old Black woman today and when I introduced myself and said that I worked with the Times, she gave me a hug. From there she opened up to me and gave me a bunch of story ideas and told me the history of the community."

"As an insider, you are able to go deep into your community and bring forward stories that more authentic than anyone else can. This process can bring about internal reconciliation and healing," said Rivas.

Al-Badry reminds us that as an insider you are aware that although you have similar experiences and have something to relate to in a conversation, you are equally

mindful of your position. "It is important to meet people where they are at, to be humble and know it is not your space," said Al-Badry.

Conclusion

Alfiky, Rivas and Al-Badry talk about how there is a new paradigm shift with minorities starting to own media platforms and working on self-funded independent projects. "We can't be spectators anymore," said Rivas. "For too long they have been telling our stories. It is on us now, to tell our own," adds Al-Badry. Angotti-Jones further illustrates that "I believe as an industry, we can show that people of color are not monolithic, but truly show the depth of humanity."

The trio agree that they are on the forefront of writing their own people's history and will be questioned by the next generation photographers: "What did you do during your time, to make it easier for us?"

APPENDIX

Daniel Mung

Professional Project Proposal, May 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

I grew up in Northeastern India, home to more than 200 tribes with their own unique rituals and traditions. My hometown, Manipur, lies on the fringe of Myanmar, where the Zomi ethnic group resides. The Zomi people have lived in Northwestern Burma, Northeast India and Northeast Bangladesh and have been known as the Lushai, Chin and Kuki to outsiders. Due to the British policy of "Divide and Rule," the Zomi people were divided into three international boundaries, which segregated them further (Suan, 2011). Although divided by borders, the Zomi people share a common language called Zomi (Vumson, 1986).



source: <http://www.zogam.org/maps>

As a result of the armed conflict between ethnic groups and the junta regime in Burma, which lasted from 1962 to 2011, a large number of ethnic groups have fled from their war-torn country (BBC, 2017). Since 2000, more than 146,037 refugees from Burma have settled in the US through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Burmese American Community Institute, 2015). The Zomi people who were living in the Chin Hills of Burma had to flee their country as war refugees and the majority of them ended up in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees camps in Malaysia, Thailand and India. There they wait for relocation to first world countries such as the United States, Australia, United Kingdom and Japan (Pau, 2011).

Between 2000 to 2015, about 50,147 Zomi people have settled in the US (Burmese American Community Institute, 2015). The Zomi people are the second largest ethnic diaspora among the Burmese refugees. Since this mass exodus is fairly recent, it is crucial to visually document the Zomi diaspora in the United States in its entirety, beyond the usual one or two articles about assimilation. If this experience is not documented both visually and textually, third generation Zomi-Americans will lack references to their grandparents' story including their immigrant experience and the socio-economic situation they were living in.

Through my education at the Missouri School of Journalism and my graduate assistantship with College Photographer of the Year and Pictures of the Year International, I gained a deeper understanding of the visual medium from my classes. Both competitions have helped me understand the perspectives of leading visual thinkers in the industry and have helped me examine photographs critically. The classes that instilled greater visual literacy in me are Photography in Society with Dr. Keith Greenwood, Intermediate Photography with Joe Johnson, Picture Story and the Photographic Essay with Jackie Bell and Graduate Photography with Joe Johnson.

After graduation, I would like to continue working in the non-profit sector being a catalyst to push how humanitarian organizations use visuals to tell stories. I believe my prior experiences and education in social work coupled my photojournalism degree would be a great asset in the non-profit communication sector. Due to my graduate assistantships and the vast network of photojournalists Missouri School of Journalism has provided, I would be able to facilitate more connections between journalist and non-profit organizations. On the side, I aspire to produce long-term stories from the under-reported Northeastern region of India. The only narrative in the media coming out of the Northeastern region is that of insurgency, violence and corruption. This project of photographing the Zomi diaspora will enable me to understand how to document a community at large.

2. PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COMPONENT

For my professional project, I will document the Burmese Zomi diaspora in Tulsa, Oklahoma from June to August 2018. It is estimated that about 6,000 Zomi people have resettled in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which is now known as “Zomi town” among the Burmese population. Tulsa has the highest concentration of Zomi people in the US (NBC, 2016). Many refugees intentionally arrived in this city after living in other places in the US. They moved so that they can live with members of their own ethnic group and so that they can help each other transition into the new country (Williams, 2012).

Being a Zomi myself from India, I am an insider who speaks the same dialect and has a keen interest in documenting the Burmese Zomi diaspora in the US visually. Their challenges in assimilating to the new culture and the on-going immigrant experience is singular and unique. When talking to the Zomi people, many refer to the US as the promised land. I am interested in exploring how Tulsa is reflective of that ideal and how the spaces the Zomi’s inhabit integrate different aspects of cultures. In Tulsa, there are a number of Zomi owned restaurants, salons and grocery stores and soon there will be a Zomi cultural center. This essay will reflect on the current situation of the Zomi community in Tulsa and could provide strategies or

suggestions to help the Zomi preserve culture and help them adapt to living in US. The Zomi experience will be explored in this professional project where I will research and document a long-term photographic essay.

Photographs can be used to examine a certain population. When done well it can create dialogue around about the people and have the ability to humanize them. Similar to how photography is key to understanding the experiences of the African diaspora (Willis 1996, 2000; Hall 1992, 1997; Bailey 1992, 2005), photography has given African diasporic communities the ability to document and preserve their history, culture and struggles. For the Zomi people, photographs can have the same powerfully positive impact and allow them to articulate their own complex relationships to cultural identity and national belonging.

In addition, I hope to help other journalists, photographers and members of the public to understand the lives of first-generation Zomi-Americans and their children. I hope this project will be the starting point to a larger project about the worldwide Zomi diaspora.

2.1 PROJECT PLANING

For my Picture Story and Photographic Essay class, I have made several visits to Tulsa, Oklahoma. I have followed a translator named Go Lawh Niang who works at the Pediatric Dental Group. I hope to document Niang and her family, their resilience, faith and their experience as recent immigrants to the US for my Picture Story and Photographic Essay class. On these trips, I have made contacts with many potential Zomi community members that could be part of my wider professional project.

For this project, I hope to photograph a comprehensive essay about the Zomi community living in river park, river chase, the park and red river apartment in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The significance of the apartment is that majority of the tenants are Zomi people and the apartment is generally the first place they would stay when arriving to Tulsa. I want to explore the cultural and human landscapes of the Zomi tenants in this apartment that is about two miles in size. I plan to produce a photographic essay of about 40-50 images to show how Zomi tenants of various gender, age, occupation and the number of years they have been residing in the apartments have been assimilating to the American culture whilst maintaining theirs. I hope to spend days photographing Zomi people in their apartments examining their entrepreneurial spirit, cultural artifacts, lifestyle and relationship within their own families. I would like to show the photographs that I make and get response from the Zomi people on how they on how they are represented.

The majority of the Zomi community work in meat processing or the home appliance industry. Very few of them speak English fluently. Being able to conduct interviews in their native language, I have the ability to converse more deeply with them.

My goal for this project is to humanize a community that has close to no representation and to create a cultural documentation of the Zomi people. The final product would be in a photo-book format that at the completion of this project, can be given back to them. I hope to bring attention to the Zomi culture and the issues they face integrating into American culture.

a. PROJECT DATES AND WORK SCHEDULE

- May 15-31: Interview three photographers who have photographed refugees, who are not part of the refugee community via Skype. Begin field notes that will be sent weekly via a blog.
- June 1-10: Move to Tulsa, Oklahoma and reach out to previously contact Zomi community members. Make more contacts within the Zomi community.
- June 10 - August 31: Start interviewing contacts, photographing their lives and editing the work in progress.

- September 1-15: Finish photographing, editing and sequencing the photographs.
- September 15-30: Contact photojournalists for the research component, if required, and complete the professional and analysis component. Complete the project and send it to the committee chair.
- October 15-19: Return to defend the project.

b. PROPOSED BUDGET

Accommodation with food from June-November 2018: \$700 x 6=	\$4,200
Miscellaneous:	\$500
Total:	\$ 4,700

2.4 DESSEMINATION OF WORK

After interviewing photojournalists who are insiders and have worked with photographing their own community, I hope to write an article about how an insider would represent of refugees and the best practices followed by them in examining their own community. This article can be disseminated to the British Journal of Photography, Visual Communication Quarterly, News Photographer or Photo District Network.

Potential dissemination for this photo-essay would be:

- TIME Lightbox
- NYT Lens Blog
- Washington Post - In Sight blog

3. PROFESSIONAL ANALYSIS COMPONENT

Before coming to the Missouri School of Journalism, I considered photography as a medium that enables photojournalists to document facts and situations rather objectively. However, I have come to realize that photography is a very subjective way of telling stories. A photographer chooses his subject matter and consciously decides how he frames and composes his images. As a result, a photographer is presenting his own perspective of the subject.

People who photograph refugees and diasporas are not excluded from this subjectivity. I plan to interview three photojournalists, who are not part of the refugee community have photographed refugees and diasporas and ask them how they approach photographing the community. I wish to explore how the photographers handled their own biases and were able to navigate the complexities found in those communities.

Photographs both inform and shape the way in which viewers respond to refugees and communities. When readers lack personal experience, news information fills in the gaps of knowledge (Green 2009). In particular, visual images

are central to how we understand others and create meaning (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). How refugees and their communities are depicted contribute to how we understand them.

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

How do photojournalists, who are part of the refugee community, avoid perpetuating stereotypes when documenting their stories?

I hope to examine the complex nature of documenting a refugee community. Through in-depth interviews with three photojournalists, who have photographed refugees substantially, I aim to contribute to this topic.

a. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Because there is not enough literature about the Zomi diaspora in the media, I picked Syrian refugees and asylum seekers who have been visually represented in international media. Both Zomi and Syrian refugees are similar in terms of how they fled their countries and which Western countries they were settled in.

According to Hertog and McLeod (2001) photographs have meaning beyond the subjects represented. The myths and metaphors that are interpreted by the viewers give the photographs their power. Photographs also carry "excess meaning," which activates related ideas or thoughts that have an accepted shared meaning within a culture (p.50). Images are tools people use to frame certain subject matters. Because photographs are less intrusive than words, they require less effort to understand (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011).

There is evidence to suggest that when texts and visuals conflict, the visual narrative often wins (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). This may be because visuals are seen as better representations of reality and they have the ability to evoke strong emotional reactions. Because of how much faster a photograph is processed in the brain compared to text, images seen in newspapers, websites, or screens often give the first impression of the story. When readers remember the story, they recall the visual impression rather than the article accompanying the image (Rogers and Thorson, 2000).

VISUAL FRAMING THEORY

Framing is the way in which information is presented to its audiences. Framing involves how a communication source presents and defines an issue. Coleman (2010) defines visual framing as “the selection of one view, scene or angle when making the image, cropping, editing or selecting it” (p. 237). In this definition framing is not only the creation of the photograph, but also the selection of by the photographer and his editor. The act of choosing one visual over another is an act of framing (Rodrigue & Dimitrova, 2011).

According to Entman (1993), the two key aspects of framing are selection and salience. Entman explains that framing “involves the process of selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52). In essence, framing theory is based on the notion that an increase in salience can increase the probability of the readers to perceive the information, to discern and process the meaning, and to store it in memory (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, p. 55). In a similar sense, framing can have an ability to define the terms of a debate without the audience realizing it is taking place (Reese, Gandy and Grant, 2003, p. 97). Another aspect Entman touches on is journalistic objectivity. According to Entman, journalists often

become subject to the media manipulators that impose their dominant frames, which is due to a lack of a common understanding of framing.

In Van Gorp's study about how the Belgium press covers refugees, he recognized a number of framing themes. For example, when refugees are depicted in a more positive light, the subjects are framed as "vulnerable and innocent victims who are outside their country of nationality or habitual residence because of a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion" (p. 489). These frames typically consist of "families with children and pictures that represent distress, fear and misery" (p. 491). Contrarily, when refugees are depicted in a more negative light, the subjects are framed as "the unknown other or the dangerous stranger who is a threat to one's own cultural and economic achievements" (p. 489), and the photos usually show "a batch of asylum-seekers, especially single men" (p. 491).

The way in which Syrian refugees are visually represented reflect the subjects as well as the values of the photographer and editor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, consumers of news have begun to rely more heavily on visual information, since it is perceived to be more authentic and truthful than text (Huss, 2013). This is partly because of the democratization of vision, where everyday people now own devices such as digital cameras and smart phones. For many people, they believe that in order for their experience to be considered legitimate, they need to document it (Stanczak, 2007). Photographs play a key role in collective imagination. When photographs circulate in the media today, they are often the main channel in which people relate to the subjects' lives (Nasrollahi, 2016).

Previous research describes the role of media in crafting national perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers. The media has a choice on whether to focus on negative rather than positive stories, which have generated adverse reactions from the host societies. Due to the lack of academic research in the visual portrayal of the Zomi refugee community and diaspora, this paper will focus on international research regarding visual representation of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers. Dehumanization, moral panic, religious belief, victim effect and gender are the attributes that will be examined in this paper.

1. Dehumanization

Dehumanization is an inhumane form of intolerance of 'the other.' In a study by

Esses & Medianu (2013), they found a number of refugee tropes in Western media. For example, refugees were depicted as “enemies at the gate,” as liars attempting to take advantage of their social welfare society, as people who spread infectious diseases or as terrorists trying to gain entry into Western nations. Such imagery portrays refugees as unidentified masses.

Western media also has a preference in portraying refugees in boats. Although there are numerous other ways in which refugees arrive in Western countries, boat photos are the most attention-grabbing image grounded in exoticism and ‘the other.’ The refugees in these photos are crammed together in a style that many Westerners would never think possible and therefore ‘not Western’ and ‘the other.’ These boat photos are often viewed as threats to the security of Western countries (Bleiker et al., 2013).

When refugees are portrayed as identifiable individuals, the photos have a potential to send mixed messages. In a survey, about 28 percent of images were of identifiable refugees (Bleiker et al., 2013). However, when identifiable refugees were photographed next to barbed wire fences or officers, the photo would promote less compassion from the viewer because the refugees would be “linked to invasion and illegality” (p. 408).

The dehumanization of refugees visually creates the association between the refugees and threats. Photographs of refugees en masse on cramped boats and photographs of refugees next to barbed wire fences or officers depict an invasion of Western countries. Westerners, whose only access to these refugees is through these types of photos, may see justification in the exclusion and mistreatment of them.

2. Moral Panic

Cohen (2002) uses the term moral panic to depict the way the media operates as an agent of moral outrage. Even if the media is not aware of its own engagement, it is able to generate fear, anxiety and panic by amplifying deviance and politicizing refugees.

In a study by Banks (2011), he analyzes nine major English national newspapers to explore how three distinct 'visual scenarios' contribute to the narrative of refugees as dangerous and deviant. These visual scenarios are patterns Banks detected. In the first visual scenario, there are large groups of principally male refugees who often wait in queues or loiter outside. These refugees are often faceless and not identifiable. While the people being photographed stand in such an ambiguous nature that a designation of deviance is impossible, it is this unknown that allows for the construction of a narrative of deviance. In the second visual scenario, there are

close-ups of refugees with their faces or bodies blurred, hidden or obscured. These images with faceless or visually amputated limbs appear to show in an abstract nature telltale signs of asylum seekers' deviant nature. In the third visual scenario, there are asylum seekers being apprehended for criminal offences, which are often used to affirm the true nature of such groups and individuals. These mug shots verify stereotypes, prejudices and anxieties. When depicted, the photos act as if they are making visible the very essence of that individual. Thus, through these three scenarios, the narrative of refugees as dangerous and deviant is perpetuated.

Bleiker, Campbell, Hutchison and Nicholson (2013) investigates images from Australian newspaper that contained refugees. They examined how refugees had been framed in front pages in the past decade. Their research found that asylum seekers are visually portrayed in a very particular and highly political and dehumanizing fashion. Most photographs were of refugee boats and almost half of the images did not contain an identifiable individual if there was an individual to identify at all. This representation is not likely to instill compassion and empathy in viewers. Photographs of individual refugees with clearly recognizable facial features made up only two percent of all images. The arrival of refugees is visually framed not as a humanitarian crisis, but as a threat to Australia's sovereignty and security.

3. Religious beliefs

Rane, Ewart and Martinkus (2014) notes that the majority of refugees in the world are Muslim. Although many of the refugees are fleeing war and political repression, the Western media often represents them unsympathetically and as a potential threat rather than as a humanitarian disaster.

Rather than representing refugee as people fleeing violence, they are characterized as masses moving across borders. Rane et al. argue that, "the Western media's preoccupation with the extremes in the Muslim world precludes any awareness of mainstream Muslim life and lends legitimacy to extremist Muslims as the representatives of Islam. Those who rely on the mass media for their understanding of Islam and Muslims are unlikely to gain a view of the complete picture, or even the main picture. The statement and actions of a minority of Muslims are deemed newsworthy and dominate the understanding of Islam" (p. 33). The principal image of people from the Middle East contains violence, oppression and intolerance with Western values.

In Said's (1995) book *Orientalism*, he discusses the ways in which the West sees the Orient and Islam. While the Orient and Islam were static in time and place, the West was culturally and intellectually superior. While the Orient was presented as

underdeveloped, broken and intolerant, Western countries were portrayed as developed, humane, rational and superior.

In Boréus's (2006) 'Discursive discrimination: A typology,' she argues that there are distinctions between people in societies and that there will always be an ongoing process of 'othering.' She argues that when a group of people see themselves as belonging to an imagined community, they form a distance to those who do not see themselves as part of their group. The foundation of 'othering' is the pointing out of the differences between 'us' and 'them' and the giving 'the others' of attributes and qualities that are not valuable or desired.

Orientalism and othering are evident in photographs of Syrian refugees. Photographs of Muslim women wearing hijabs and men praying often have negative connotations attached to them because they are seen as 'non-Western' and therefore 'other.' The othering of Muslim refugees has negatively influenced the media narrative bestowed upon them.

4. Victim effect

Dauphinée (2007) states that "images of the body in pain are the prime medium through which we come to know war, torture and other pain-producing

activities" (p.139). Although, a viewer may never fully understand the pain that is experienced by a victim, visual representations can make the pain of war a collective and social concern (Bleiker et al., 2013).

Bleiker, Campbell and Hutchison (2014) also argue that images of an individual person in pain can develop emotional responses that humanize crises and generate genuine cultures of hospitality. Notably, the lack of such images will also cause viewers to be more emotionally detached to the struggles and sufferings of the victims. Small and Loewenstein (2003) mention the 'identifiable victim effect,' which is where "people react differently toward identifiable victims than to statistical victims who have not yet been identified" (p. 3). When viewers see individuals in pain as people with a name, a face and a background, they are more likely to empathize with them. People are more likely to offer greater help and support for a specific identifiable victim than a large, anonymous group with the same needs (Small & Loewenstein, 2003).

Bleiker et al. (2013) introduced an experiment where participants were shown images of either a single sick child or eight sick children in a group. The participants were then asked to donate money for treatment. The total amount of money required was the same for both treatments, however, donation for the individual child were larger than donations to the group. Single victims humanize crises.

5. Gender

Johnson (2011) argues that the image of the refugee has been reframed in the last few decades. While a refugee used to be presented as a heroic and politically-conscious individual, a refugee is now an unidentified and voiceless victim. While refugees used to flee their country as a result of ideology, they are now fleeing their country because of war.

Bleiker et al. (2014) mentions that the image of a mother and child is one “that goes to the heart of all humanity” (p. 194). However, women are often typecast as emotionally unstable, vulnerable and helpless. While women and children do make up the largest populations of refugees with 49 percent of the population under the UNHCR mandate being women 18 years or older and 44 percent being children under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2008), the image of women and children being used are often shallow. This group embodies a special kind of powerlessness in the Western imagination (Rajaram, 2002).

Women and children are the most prevalent in photographs of individual refugees. While men are portrayed as ‘spontaneously’ arriving at the European borders, wanting and searching for more, women are depicted as nonthreatening

and more innocent (Johnson, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

For my professional analysis component of my projects, I hope to examine how photojournalist have framed refugees using interviews. Wellman (2001) suggests that the interview method should be used when specific data has to be collected in a limited amount of time and where an overview of people's thoughts has to be researched. An interview can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. It can be used in a whole variety of situations and fields for understanding individual or group perspectives on specific issues (Fontana and Frey, 1994). For my project, a structured interview is not the best choice because it would limit the amount and quality of the information I would gather. Hence, I have decided to go with a semi-structured interview.

I hope to interview three US-based photojournalists who have covered refugees in semi-structured interviews. The interviews would be conducted through Skype with the photojournalists. Each interview will last between 30 and 60 minutes and will be recorded (with permission) to enable a more thorough review of the interview during the analysis section of this paper. I will be interviewing at least three photographers who have worked extensively on documenting refugees and

diaspora. The sample size of three is not representative, but that is not the goal. Rather, I want to gather useful information from a small set of experienced photographers. I will use a set of questions as a framework for the interviews, but I want to keep the interview simple and conversational.

An "interview guide" or schedule of general topics will be prepared. Wellman (2001) describes an "interview guide" as a list of topics and aspects of these topics that have a bearing on the given theme and that the interviewer should raise during the course of the interview. This interview guide will ensure good use of limited interview time, will make interviewing more systematic and comprehensive and will help to keep my interactions focused. I will start by asking the respondents to list the various refugee issues that they have covered and from there I will ask open ended questions regarding the reasons they decided to cover those issues and their experiences covering those issues. I will guide the conversation to my main question regarding how photographers avoid perpetuating stereotypes when documenting a community that they are not a part of.

I hope to use open-ended questions so that the photojournalist could have the freedom to respond at a more thought-provoking level and express his or her views fully. Though follow-up questions I hope to allow the conversation to flow so that the

views of the photojournalist are articulated best. Since I will be using a semi-structured interview, I would be able to respond to new information as it is revealed. My aim is not to confirm my own view, but to explore my main question with the photojournalists. I hope to elucidate the participants' ideas without imposing my own view and bias and thus, achieving better results.

I hope, in having the semi-structured interviews, the photojournalist and I can have a more conversational, two-way dialogue.

LIMITATIONS

The main limitations for this project are the financial resources required and the overlooking of particularity. In terms of finances, as an international student who cannot work outside of school, I will have no funds for four months during the execution of my project. In terms of overlooking particularities, as an insider, I have the possibility of overlooking moments that are particular to the Zomi people.

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