MODULE 5

M1 BA | M1 BB | M1 BC | M2 BA | M2 BB | M2 BC | M3 BA | M3 BB | M3 BC | M4 BA | M4 BB | M4 BC | M5 BA | **M5 BB** | M5 BC | M6 BA | M6 BB | M6 BC

ESSENTIAL
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COURSE
INTRODUCTION TO MODERN PHOTOJOURNALISM

MODULE 5
BOOK B
PERSONAL JOURNAL

COURSE MATERIALS

PERSONAL JOURNAL



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Your Voice, Your Vision, Your Path

Building a portfolio is not only about collecting your best images — it's about discovering who you are as a storyteller and what kind of impact you want to make. This journal is your space to slow down, look inward, and gain clarity on the values and motivations guiding your professional journey.

The questions ahead are not tests. They're starting points for a deeper understanding of how your personal identity connects to your work. Some prompts will be practical. Others will ask you to dream, revisit past choices, or even challenge your current definitions of success.

There's no right pace. Use this journal when you need focus, when you feel stuck, or when you're ready to grow with intention. A strong portfolio grows from a strong inner compass — and this journal is here to help you find yours.

Because your career isn't just what you do — it's how you choose to grow.

Your Personal Mission

DEFINE WHAT TRULY MOTIVATES YOU TO TELL VISUAL STORIES

Your mission as a photojournalist isn't just about what you photograph — it's about why you photograph. Understanding your personal motivations will help you make better decisions, align your work with your values, and maintain your direction even when the industry feels unpredictable.

Whether you're driven by truth, empathy, justice, or creative exploration, clarifying your mission can serve as a compass. It helps you identify the stories you want to tell, the people you want to work with, and the kind of legacy you want to build.

This personal clarity also builds confidence. When you know your why, it's easier to speak about your work, pitch ideas, and show up with purpose — even in challenging situations.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What do you want your work to say about what matters most to you?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Use these prompts to explore your personal motivation and purpose as a visual storyteller.

- **WHAT FIRST SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN PHOTOJOURNALISM?**
- **WHEN DO YOU FEEL MOST PROUD OF THE WORK YOU CREATE?**
- **WHAT KINDS OF STORIES ARE YOU NATURALLY DRAWN TO?**
- **WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO HELP, INFORM, OR REPRESENT THROUGH YOUR WORK?**
- **WHAT VALUES DO YOU WANT YOUR CAREER TO REFLECT?**
- **IF SOMEONE DESCRIBED YOUR BODY OF WORK IN TEN YEARS, WHAT WOULD YOU HOPE THEY SAY?**
- **WHAT KIND OF CHANGE DO YOU HOPE YOUR WORK CAN INSPIRE IN THE WORLD?**
- **WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO SACRIFICE — OR PROTECT — IN ORDER TO STAY TRUE TO YOUR MISSION?**

1

WHAT FIRST SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN PHOTOJOURNALISM?

Think back to the very beginning — the moment or story that first captured your attention. Was it a person, an image, an experience? Use this space to reflect on that initial spark and why it still matters to you today.

2

WHEN DO YOU FEEL MOST PROUD OF THE WORK YOU CREATE?

Think about the moments when your work has felt meaningful or deeply satisfying. Was it the process, the impact, or the reaction from others that gave you a sense of pride? Try to identify what fuels that feeling so you can recognize it in future projects.

3 WHAT KINDS OF STORIES ARE YOU NATURALLY DRAWN TO?

Do you gravitate toward stories about people, environments, activism, daily life, or overlooked details? Your instincts often reveal where your passion lies. Reflect on themes or moments that consistently capture your attention, and consider how these preferences shape your photojournalistic voice.

WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO HELP, INFORM, OR REPRESENT THROUGH YOUR WORK? 4

Every story you tell gives a voice to someone or something. Think about the individuals, communities, or causes that matter most to you. Who do you want to shed light on? Who do you feel responsible for representing with honesty and care?

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5

WHAT VALUES DO YOU WANT YOUR CAREER TO REFLECT?

Your work as a photojournalist is not only about what you show, but how you show it. Consider the principles that guide your choices — honesty, empathy, justice, curiosity, independence. What do you want people to feel or understand about your ethics and integrity through your work?



6

IF SOMEONE DESCRIBED YOUR BODY OF WORK IN TEN YEARS, WHAT WOULD YOU HOPE THEY SAY?

Imagine your career a decade from now. Think beyond technical skills — what kind of photographer and person do you want to be known as? What impact, consistency, or growth do you want others to notice in your visual storytelling journey?



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7 WHAT KIND OF CHANGE DO YOU HOPE YOUR WORK CAN INSPIRE IN THE WORLD?

Think about the deeper impact your photojournalism could have. Are you hoping to raise awareness, challenge injustice, spark conversation, or preserve memory? Consider the kind of emotional, social, or cultural shift your images might contribute to — even in small ways.



8 WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO SACRIFICE — OR PROTECT — IN ORDER TO STAY TRUE TO YOUR MISSION?

Every career path requires decisions about what you'll pursue — and what you'll say no to. Think about the compromises you're prepared to make, and the core values or boundaries you want to guard. This helps you stay aligned with your purpose even when things get challenging.



Bringing It All Together

Reflecting on your purpose and direction

You've just explored some of the most important questions guiding your journey as a photojournalist. These reflections aren't just for today — they're meant to grow with you. Revisit them when you face a difficult decision, when you're unsure of your next step, or when you need to reconnect with your purpose.

Take a moment now to read over your answers. What themes do you notice? What surprises you? What feels non-negotiable?

Use this clarity to guide your next moves — whether you're choosing a project, reaching out to an editor, or shaping your portfolio. Your mission doesn't need to be loud. It just needs to be honest.



Your mission is not a statement. It's how you choose to show up — every time you tell a story.

FINAL PROMPT

Write one sentence that captures the essence of your personal mission as a photojournalist right now.

Mapping Your Career Values

How your values shape the way you work as a visual journalist

The path you take as a photojournalist is shaped not just by your goals, but by your values — the deeper principles that influence how you make decisions, tell stories, and interact with people. Values are often invisible, but they're always present. They appear in what you choose to photograph, how you engage with your subjects, and how you handle moments of pressure.

By identifying your core values early on, you give yourself a compass. It can guide you through difficult choices, help you stay grounded in your mission, and attract editors and collaborators who share your approach. Your values are also what help you say "no" when needed — protecting your integrity and your energy.

There's no one right set of values — only the ones that reflect your personal truth. Some photojournalists value impact, others precision, others collaboration. The goal is to define yours clearly, so they can serve you with purpose as your career evolves.

Knowing what you stand for gives your work more than just direction — it gives it meaning.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What do you want your work to stand for — even when no one is watching?

YOUR CORE VALUES AT WORK

Use the prompts below to explore what truly matters to you in your career — not just what you want to achieve, but how you want to achieve it.

- **WHAT PROFESSIONAL VALUES DO YOU ADMIRE IN OTHER PHOTOJOURNALISTS?**
- **WHEN DO YOU FEEL MOST ALIGNED WITH YOUR OWN SENSE OF INTEGRITY?**
- **WHAT BEHAVIORS FROM EDITORS OR CLIENTS DO YOU CONSIDER UNACCEPTABLE?**
- **HOW DO YOU RESPOND WHEN A SITUATION CHALLENGES YOUR ETHICS OR VALUES?**
- **WHAT DO YOU PRIORITIZE MORE: ACCURACY, SPEED, IMPACT, OR CONNECTION — AND WHY?**
- **WHAT VALUE WOULD YOU NEVER COMPROMISE, EVEN FOR A GREAT OPPORTUNITY?**
- **HOW DO YOUR PERSONAL VALUES SHAPE THE WAY YOU APPROACH A STORY?**
- **WHAT KIND OF WORKING RELATIONSHIPS BRING OUT YOUR BEST SELF?**

Your Core **Values at Work**

What professional values do you admire in other photojournalists?

Think about the traits you find inspiring in others — such as honesty, empathy, courage, consistency, or humility. Who do you look up to, and what makes their approach stand out to you?

ANSWER

1

When do you feel most aligned with your own sense of integrity?

Describe moments when you acted in full alignment with your beliefs — even if it wasn't the easiest path. Maybe you declined to take a certain image, respected someone's privacy, or made an unpopular but honest choice.

ANSWER

2

Your Core **Values at Work**

What behaviors from editors or clients do you consider unacceptable?

Set clear personal boundaries by naming the actions you wouldn't tolerate — such as pressure to manipulate images, lack of respect, or unclear communication. Knowing your limits helps you protect your professionalism.

ANSWER

3

How do you respond when a situation challenges your ethics or values?

Reflect on how you handle internal conflicts. Do you pause and think? Do you seek advice or mentorship? Do you know when to say no? These reflections build confidence for future decisions.

ANSWER

4

Your Core **Values at Work**

What do you prioritize more: accuracy, speed, impact, or connection — and why?

Choose the value you naturally lead with when working on a story. Explain why it matters to you, and how it influences your approach to storytelling, editing, or publishing.

ANSWER

5

What value would you never compromise, even for a great opportunity?

Write down the one core value that you hold above all — such as truth, respect, transparency, or fairness. This will serve as your internal compass when faced with difficult choices.

ANSWER

6

Your Core **Values at Work**

How do your personal values shape the way you approach a story?

Describe how your beliefs influence your workflow — from choosing your subjects to how you interact with people and what you emphasize in your visual narrative.

ANSWER

7

What kind of working relationships bring out your best self?

Consider when you feel most motivated and supported. Do you thrive with open dialogue, clear expectations, mutual respect, or creative freedom? Clarifying this will help you seek the right collaborators.

ANSWER

8

Your **Press Future**

IMAGINE THE PROFESSIONAL YOU WANT TO BECOME — AND GIVE IT A NAME TODAY

Before you move forward, take a moment to dream. This space is for shaping the photojournalist you're becoming — your goals, your press identity, and the kind of stories you want to be known for. Treat it as your personal mission badge for the future.

My Press Name in 5 Years Will Be…
(Example: "Global Perspectives Collective" or "Stories by [Your Name]")

My Dream Story to Cover One Day Is…
(Think big — war zone coverage, climate stories, Olympic Games, refugee portraits, political change…)

I Will Be Known For…
(What will editors, colleagues, or readers say about your work in 5–10 years?)

The Values I Want My Work to Reflect Are…
(List 3–5 personal values: honesty, empathy, justice, access, resilience…)

My Signature Style or Approach Will Include…
(What makes you different? What methods, visuals, or behaviors define your work?)

Finish the page with your personal motto, quote, or one-sentence vision statement

A Letter **to Your Future Self**

A quiet reminder you'll be glad to return to. This letter is a personal reflection meant just for you. No one else needs to read it. Write as if you're sending a message to yourself one year, five years, or even ten years from now. Who do you hope to become — as a photojournalist and as a person? What would you want to remember if things get difficult? What matters most to you today? There's no rush. This is your space for honesty, intention, and self-connection.

Tip: *You might begin with: "Dear future me…" or "If you're reading this, I hope you haven't forgotten that…" Write from the heart. You can save it, print it, seal it in an envelope, or take a photo and return to it whenever you need to.*



One-Page **Manifesto**

Your principles. Your why. Your quiet strength. This is your personal declaration. It doesn't have to be long — even 5 to 10 sentences can carry meaning. But each sentence should come from a place of clarity and conviction. Your manifesto is a reminder of who you are as a visual storyteller, why you do this work, and what promises you make to yourself and your audience. It's a grounding statement for when direction feels unclear. Use this page to write with courage and authenticity.

You might begin with phrases like:

I believe visual stories have the power to…
I commit to never…
My goal is to document the world with…
What matters most in my work is…
I want my photography to serve…



Not just notes
— anchors for your mission.

BONUS MATERIAL Skills & Qualities Inventory

IDENTIFY WHAT DRIVES YOUR STRENGTH AS A VISUAL STORYTELLER

Every photojournalist develops a unique combination of hard skills and personal qualities. Some are learned through experience, others shaped by personality and life. This simple but revealing inventory helps you take stock of what you already bring to the table — and what's worth strengthening next.

Instructions: *Mark each item that reflects your current strength with an ☑ (or color it in). Circle any items that you want to improve. You can revisit this page later to track your growth.*

TECHNICAL & PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

(check the ones you currently feel confident about)

- ☐ *Operating manual camera settings*
- ☐ *Using natural light effectively*
- ☐ *Post-processing and editing*
- ☐ *Writing captions or short texts*
- ☐ *Pitching a story idea*
- ☐ *Interviewing subjects*
- ☐ *Archiving and backing up work*
- ☐ *Publishing in a digital format*
- ☐ *Working under tight deadlines*
- ☐ *Navigating ethical dilemmas*
- ☐ *Applying for accreditation or access*
- ☐ *Creating a consistent photo essay*

PERSONAL STRENGTHS & TRAITS

(check those you recognize in yourself)

- ☐ *Curiosity about people and the world*
- ☐ *Emotional resilience*
- ☐ *Patience in observation*
- ☐ *Listening without judgment*
- ☐ *Confidence in public spaces*
- ☐ *Responsibility and follow-through*
- ☐ *Ability to work alone*
- ☐ *Creativity in problem-solving*
- ☐ *Sense of visual storytelling*
- ☐ *Openness to feedback*
- ☐ *Cultural sensitivity*
- ☐ *Passion for meaningful stories*

BONUS MATERIAL Reflections from Your Inventory

A MOMENT TO EVALUATE WHAT MAKES YOU STRONG —AND WHAT STILL NEEDS BUILDING.

Now that you've marked your skills and traits, reflect briefly on what this reveals about you at this stage of your journey. What are you proud of? Where do you want to grow? These insights are not only useful for self-development but also help shape your goals, portfolio strategy, and project choices.

Which skills or traits surprised you when taking this inventory?

How do your personal strengths shape the way you photograph?

What's one area you want to improve in the next 3 months?

What resources or people could help you grow in your target areas?

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BONUS MATERIAL Weekly Growth Tracker

A CREATIVE SELF-CHECK TOOL
— TRACK SMALL WINS, NOTICE PATTERNS, AND STAY MOTIVATED

Each week brings new creative highs and challenges. Use this chart to monitor how you feel, what you're accomplishing, and where you might need support. Check the boxes for each day that applies — be honest, not perfect. Over time, these small reflections help reveal what fuels your creativity and what holds it back. At the top of each page, write the exact week range (e.g., Aug 12–18) to keep a clear timeline. Print multiple copies if you want to track your progress over several weeks.

WEEK OF	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
I FELT CREATIVELY INSPIRED	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I COMPLETED AT LEAST ONE PHOTO PROJECT	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I TRIED SOMETHING NEW (TECHNIQUE, SUBJECT, ETC.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I CONNECTED WITH SOMEONE THROUGH MY WORK	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I FELT STUCK OR UNMOTIVATED	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I IMPROVED MY WORKFLOW	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I FELT PROUD OF SOMETHING I MADE	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I ASKED FOR OR RECEIVED FEEDBACK	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I HAD TROUBLE BALANCING CREATIVITY WITH OTHER TASKS	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I TOOK A MEANINGFUL CREATIVE BREAK	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

COLOR YOUR MOOD
USE A COLOR TO REFLECT HOW YOU FELT THAT DAY:

- **Green** – Energized & motivated
- **Blue** – Calm & focused
- **Yellow** – Neutral or routine
- **Pink** – Frustrated or tired
- **Red** – Blocked or discouraged

PRINT AND REPEAT WEEKLY
FOR BEST RESULTS

BONUS MATERIAL Daily Insight Tracker

TWO POWERFUL PROMPTS TO DEVELOP DAILY AWARENESS AND GROWTH IN YOUR CREATIVE JOURNEY

Each day brings new lessons and new moments that push us. Use this space to track your insights and challenges, one day at a time. Over the course of the week, you'll start to see where you grow most, what repeats, and what changes. By making a habit of reflection — even in a few words — you train yourself to become more mindful, intentional, and resilient in your work as a visual storyteller.

WEEK OF

	WHAT DID I NOTICE TODAY THAT FELT WORTH PHOTOGRAPHING?	WHAT CHALLENGED ME — AND HOW DID I RESPOND?
☐ MON		
☐ TUE		
☐ WED		
☐ THU		
☐ FRI		
☐ SAT		
☐ SUN		

You don't have to grow fast.
You just have to keep growing.

BONUS MATERIAL What Truly Drives Me?

DISCOVER YOUR "WHY"

Don't start with "What should I photograph?" Start with "Why do I want to photograph it?" This page will help you uncover what really drives your lens — beyond assignments, trends, or expectations. Discovering your internal motivation will give you direction and meaning throughout your career.

HIDDEN ENGINE
WHAT MOVES ME?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What social, emotional, or cultural topics do I naturally gravitate toward?



What kinds of situations stir strong emotions in me — anger, empathy, admiration?



Have I ever felt a deep urge to document something, even without a client or assignment?



NATURAL STRENGTH
WHAT AM I GOOD AT?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What personal qualities make me a better observer or listener?



Do I thrive in quiet, contemplative environments, or high-energy events?



When do others say my photos "capture something deeper"?





BONUS MATERIAL Who Do I Want to Speak For?

YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY AS A BRIDGE — NOT JUST A MIRROR

Your photos can reflect the world — but they can also change it. As a documentary photographer, you have the opportunity to give voice to people and stories that often go unheard. This section helps you think about whose stories you feel called to share, and how your camera can become a tool for empathy and connection.

WHERE DO I WANT TO FOCUS MY ATTENTION?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Are there individuals, groups, or issues that I feel are often overlooked or misrepresented?

Do I want my work to raise awareness, spark change, or simply reveal?

Can I define a deeper purpose — a social compass — in my photography?

NsdasH Wasdsa?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

If someone asked me "Why do you photograph?" — what would I say from the heart?

How would I want someone to feel after seeing my work?

What kind of impact — small or large — do I hope my photos will have on the world or a single person?

NOTES

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NOTES

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Cover Photo by
SETH DOYLE / UNSPLASH



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