

Opinion Pieces

1. Khadija Smith

Summoning the very core of her humanity through every lighthearted and grave picture in her presentation, Natalie Keyssar painted the complete and beautifully raw portrait of the Venezuelan people. Between tears of rage from a youthful protester's eye, to the way a rainbow graced the hillside horizon, she brought life to the statistics and relativity to a whitewashed narrative.

She told a story, through a photograph. She wove a tale with the emotions of the viewer and subject alike, each vibrant strand intertwined in the other yet so different from the next. You see, the work that Natalie does, photojournalism, is the process of capturing life in a moment; the process of bringing the rich essentials of our shared experiences, emotions, struggles, onto the page, onto the screen. The say a picture is worth a thousand words, it truly is.

2. Nigel Reynolds

Ms. Natalie Keyssar has turned her hobby into a full time, important, and informative job, and she loves it with a passion. Ms. Keyssar was an art and photography major in a college in Brooklyn. Now, she is an award-winning photo journalist, and works on photographing and sharing the information from the economic and political uncertainty in Venezuela. Her work in Venezuela is informative, detailed, immersive, and well-thought out. Her photos that she takes are no less than vibrant, vivid, and they make you feel as if you are right there with the Venezuelan people. She captured many views and perspectives of the political and economic conflict in Venezuela, from the cops and riot officers, and the citizens of the country, who deal with this conflict on a daily basis. Ms. Keyssar did the majority of her work in Caracas, a diverse city in Venezuela. Caracas is one of the most dangerous cities in Venezuela, and Ms. Keyssar has the guts to dive right into the heart of the chaos to photograph the voices and views of the Venezuelan people. Ms. Keyssar has taken her high school hobby, and turned it into her full time job, and she loves it. Here's the real question, what is your hobby, and how would you make it a job?

3. Erica Reynolds

By listen and observing Natalie Keyssar's presentation, I understood her point of view on Venezuela and her passion for meaningful photographs. I understood where her head was when she was capturing the photos in Venezuela. Natalie is a friendly individual who loves photography and journalism. She is talkative, friendly, caring, and understanding. I learned from Natalie's presentation that she was willing to go to a country (Venezuela) with serious economic issues and a lot of fighting just to pursue her job. I enjoyed her presentation

because she showed some of her work, and she was engaging to her audience. Photo-journalism is a great way to share a story by mixing writing and photography. Natalie's work (her photos/ articles) is bright, inspiring, meaningful, and creative. I can relate to Ms. Natalie because I also love photography, and her way of sharing stories through photography is very inspiring to me. Natalie's work in connection to my community is very cultural and colorful, just like her photos. What caught my attention about Natalie's "voice" is that you can definitely tell that she is passionate about photo-journalism and sharing the everyday life in Venezuela.

4. Kai Clemons

As people, we only hope to inspire others. We are constantly inspired by the world so it is only right we allow others to be inspired by us. But let's give a shoutout. Shoutout to those who actually inspire without hesitation. Shoutout to those who are brave enough to let others share a piece of their mind and soul. Honestly, that takes guts. Renowned photojournalist, Natalie Keyssar, is a prime example of a brave soul who inspires others daily. Keyssar, an award-winning photojournalist, takes risk in her work every day. She focuses on the social moments in the slums of the beautiful country, known as Venezuela. Her main focus is on the youth engagement for various social changes that occur in Venezuela. Those social movements have resulted in an abundant amount of highly dangerous protest and riots. That photojournalist I mention, she had front row seats to it. Eye-opening, captivating, and engaging, Keyssar is a story-teller. However, the stories she shares and tells do not always acquire a happy ending. Her stories are sadly reality for the people of Venezuela.

Keyssar illustrates a compelling presentation on her journey through Venezuela and succeeds so greatly in captivating the audience with her exquisite photographs. Her photographs paint a picture so enticing, it is impossible to look away and not be taken from them. Keyssar decided to use her camera as a weapon to initiate change for others. Her photographs force the audience to step outside of themselves in order to walk in others shoes. She makes it utterly clear that just because something isn't happening to us directly, doesn't mean we ought to ignore it.

In some eyes, Keyssar can be considered a hero. She risks her life to give people a voice where they may not always be in a position to be heard. As mentioned earlier, that takes guts. Her work continues to inspire others, myself included. She chose her weapon in this war we call society, her work only forces you to ask, "what will be mine?"

5. Aliah Showkatein

I had never heard of Natalie Keyssar before today, nor did I have any interest in photojournalism. Pursuing photojournalism as a career is still, perhaps, not on my list of potential jobs, but Ms. Keyssar has opened my eyes to the incredible world of expressing yourself through photographs.

Traveling to other countries is a blessing, and being able to get to know people you had never met and getting to know their stories is even better – Ms. Keyssar demonstrated how she can capture the essence of how others live their lives through her camera lens. The photographs that Ms. Keyssar shared with us were incredibly bright and lively, even in the face of violence, hatred extreme need. She demonstrated an incredible talent that I think awed everyone in her presence. Ms. Keyssar connected with everyone in the room, making all of us feel welcome by smiling at what we had to say, as we smiled back at her stunning talent.

In her photographs, Ms. Keyssar was able to capture the true, raw emotion of her subjects, whether or not she had even gotten a chance to speak with them. In others, you could see the desperation and fear on the faces of protestors deep in the cities of Venezuela, and in others, the pure beauty and loneliness of hidden valleys in between the rolling green hills of the countryside.

There were photographs of young teenagers partying the day away surrounded by neon lights and roaring music. There were photographs of women too young to bear the burdens they had upon their shoulders, filled with worry about the fate of their husbands, brothers, and fathers, locked up in a cell somewhere. There were photographs of police furious enough to release tear gas and fire guns, while frightened men, women, and children either ran in fear, or stood their ground. There were photographs of faces hidden by masks that were meant to protect them, photographs of the old, having seen better days, and photographs of women screaming and fighting each other for a single loaf of bread that might allow their families to live a few days longer.

Natalie Keyssar stunned everyone in the room with the stories that accompanied her photographs and her obvious dedication and love for her work. I thank her for showing me, in such a short amount of time, that it takes a lot of heart work to follow your dreams and that it is still possible to make a difference in the world and work towards leaving it a better place than it was when we entered it.

6. Kwayera Clemons

There is saying that “When we grow fearness we do the things we fear” Mrs. Keyssar is a fearless photojournalist who helped me and her viewers to have a better understanding of the Venezuelan culture. She informed me about the the despairing battles that the Venezuelans face each and everyday. Although she talked about the negatives, there were also many positives that I learned about the Venezuelans. I think it is very depressing hearing about the economy in Venezuela, but it is an important issue that needs to be

addressed. She was very passionate about her work, which made me feel very passionate about what she was talking about. She helped me and her viewers to have a different perspective on the impacts that photography does when addressing the social issues on Latin America. In my community I don't really have an appreciation for the art we have in front of us. We shouldn't take things for granted, but instead we should value the things we have in life. Mrs. Keyssar is a very well spoken, tenacious, woman who really cares about change. She really cares for the youth and she knows we want to be heard. She is devoted to spreading awareness through photojournalism. To me, that is so very profound. I'm so glad I had the opportunity to have heard about her experiences and the impacts she makes through photojournalism. Her photos made me feel as if I could feel every little emotion these Venezuelans were experiencing. As almost if I were in the moment and I could feel their empathy. I hope one day I can be as passionate as Mrs. Keyssar is. I pray that I will be devoted to making change as she is.

7. Drew Boddie

Photographs still time to allow the visuals of beauty to be seen regardless of the chaos surrounding. Natalie Keyssar does an amazing job of encapsulating this sentiment. She is the quintessential Lois Lane for the real world. Her bright and sunny personality is a sunny day personified. I admire her diligence and I think I could learn from her passion for her work. The most enjoyable part of the presentation was her approach of putting all the all her students on a single plane where she captivated us with her outspoken way of talking about the people she has met or places she has seen. My experience with cameras has been limited to taking wide shots of cans littering a public park or waking at the crack of dawn to take pictures of fresh snow right as the sun hits it. I never thought too much of these pictures but Natalie made me want to reconnect with that art and see it as junk but as neon orange or red metal shells scattered amongst a jungle of grass blades or the first beams to ever touch a virgin snow. Photography is as important as ever because it stills time to allow the visuals of beauty to be seen regardless of the chaos surrounding.