

Career Profile

Lynn Johnson

Freelance Photographer



Lynn Johnson is an award-winning freelance photographer whose clients range from *Sports Illustrated* to *National Geographic*. Guided by equal amounts of compassion and outrage, Johnson has chosen to explore the far reaches of the human

condition around the world through her photography. Rather than competing to be a sports photographer, Johnson has chosen to specialize in capturing the personalities of the people involved in the sports world, examining the intimate sides of their public and private lives. In her photographs, Johnson focuses on what she calls “the real people.”

How did you become a photographer?

When I was in the ninth grade, I saw the work of Dorothea Lange and the Farm Security Administration photographers, and was immediately taken by what felt like the Truth. I’ve been interested in photography ever since.



Fig. 1–49. Lynn Johnson, *Children vaccinated against river blindness in a school, Ewoku, Ghana.*

What kind of assignments do you get from *Sports Illustrated*?

I photograph people for who they are, as opposed to what they do. So, for instance, I might follow a coach around for a week or two, show why she’s so passionate, why she has a winning team, what motivates her, what drives her, what are the relationships in her life. That’s the kind of assignment I get.

What’s the most important aspect of being a photographer?

It’s developing trust between the person on the other side of the camera and myself. Getting them to trust my intention to tell their story with integrity and honesty.

What advice do you have for students wanting to become photographers?

Be aware of the wider world, but not necessarily study photography as your primary course of study. Study sociology, anthropology, history, writing, economics. Learn how to think, how to reason, how to research. It’s not enough just to take pictures today; you need to have other kinds of skills. You need to be curious. That’s the key.

Discuss It What entrepreneurial skills do you think are required to be a freelance photographer? What personal qualities does a freelance photographer need to have?

Link

Learn more about Lynn Johnson’s life as a photographer and see more of her work at:

National Geographic:
<http://photography.nationalgeographic.com/photography/photographers/photographer-lynn-johnson/>

Lynn’s site:
www.lynnjohnsonphoto.com



Fig. 1–50. Lynn Johnson, *Aimee Mullins, a Paralympic athlete, does the long jump. Sacramento, California.*