

Under the Loupe

We explore options for creating prints when the cloud-based Lightroom app is the home base for your photo library

Photoshop Proving Ground

Crop overlays don't offer a lot of flexibility, so learn how to build your own golden spiral that can be transformed to your heart's content

Photoshop®

USER

Cover Image by Hafitha Issa | Cameras for Girls



NO FOOLIN'

Removing distractions in your images will have your viewers focused on the things that really matter

THE MAGAZINE FOR LIGHTROOM & PHOTOSHOP USERS

Photoshop USER

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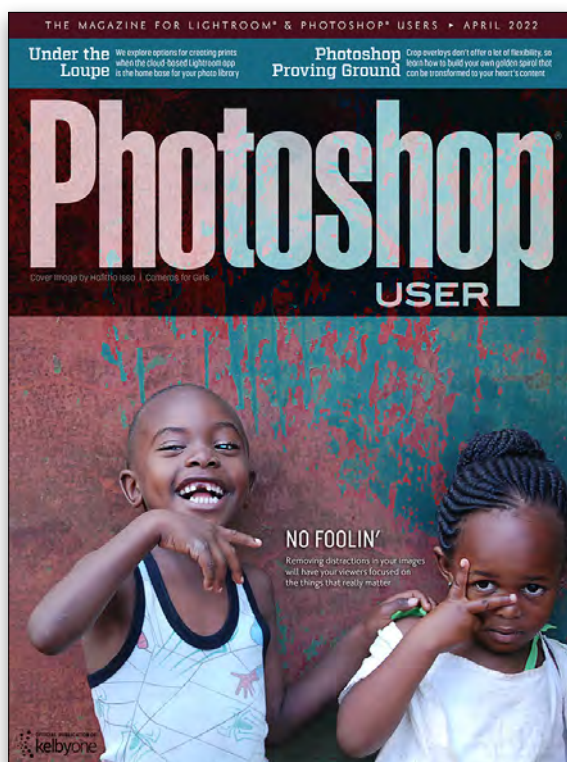
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Each issue we feature cover art by a **KelbyOne Member**

This issue's cover is by **Hafitha Issa**, a 26-year-old graduate of the Journalism and Communication program from Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. Hafitha is currently working as a freelance news anchor at Foundation for Africa, a news agency in Kampala. She reports on different issues with a bias on business and politics. Hafitha also attended **Cameras for Girls** in 2018, founded by Amina Mohamed. Amina's goal is not only to teach girl's how to use a camera but to also provide each student with their own camera so they can actually get paid as journalists. To learn more about Amina and Cameras for Girls, turn to **page 17**.

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WHO'S WHO IN THE KELBYONE COMMUNITY

AMINA MOHAMED   

Amina Mohamed is a Canadian-based photographer who started the Cameras for Girls program in Uganda in 2018. The program not only provides cameras to each student, but Amina also provides hands-on training, as well as partnering with companies such as KelbyOne to help with their continued education. The photo on the cover of this issue is by one of her students, Hafitha Issa. We interviewed Amina to learn more about her and the Cameras for Girls program.

First, we'd like to learn a little about your background. You and your family were exiled from Uganda when you were three years old and you moved to Canada. How did your career evolve as a photographer, and how did that lead you back to Uganda?

Yes, we came to Canada from Uganda in 1972 as refugees, and I was raised in a strict Muslim household, so the arts were not encouraged. However, my dad gave me a camera at the age of 10, and my love for the medium started, but I never thought I could make it a career. After graduating from college and taking fashion design, I found myself working in the Toronto film and TV industry, and from there, my love and passion for photography grew. In 2006, I moved from producing short films into documentaries, and I pitched a documentary about the Indians coming back to Uganda to reclaim their lost properties. It would be my first time back to Uganda in 2007 but certainly not the last, as I realized that Uganda was now where I belonged—at least in my heart!

After you reconnected with Uganda, why did you decide to start the Cameras for Girls program and what is the goal of the program? What skills do the girls learn in the program?

Society plays a huge role in how females fare in the developing world, and the churches preach that females should be home, having babies and/or taking care of the younger children in the house. Still, they never mention that females should be educated. When I went back to Uganda, I saw immense poverty, a difference in the wealth of the Indians and the Africans (which led to the expulsion of the Indians in 1972), and a difference in how males and females were treated. Males had opportunities whereas females did not. It was also clear to me that I had grown up in Canada with so many options, and sadly they did not have any, or very few, of the same opportunities, and I wanted to even the playing field in my way.

The goal of Cameras for Girls is job creation. There are many unique programs out there where an organization

will go into a marginalized community and teach photography to kids or adults; in my research, very few offer skills-based training that moves the needle forward for these communities, other than learning a new skill. However, without having a camera, they cannot keep learning. But it gives these organizations amazing stories to tell on social media. I did not want that to be me. So we set out to build a fully immersive program and provide a camera for each girl to keep so they could get meaningful employment, climb out of poverty, and support themselves and their families.

Over the three days together, the students learn how to operate the dials and functions of the camera. Sadly, even in the university program with 600 students, there are only 100 cameras to be shared, which means they hardly get enough practice to prepare for a job. They learn the exposure triangle, composition, how to tell stories photographically speaking and more. We also do daily photo walks in the slums, where we work with daily reviews to see how they're improving day after day, which boosts their confidence.

What challenges have you encountered making Camera for Girls a reality?

When I first came up with the idea, I hoped to go into the northern part of Uganda, where Joseph Kony had ruled the area, turning children into child soldiers. I wanted to provide an outlet for girls seeking to recover from this tragedy. However, when I started to do my research and speak to the schools and NGOs on the ground, I was told it would not be feasible, for a few reasons.

For one, there was hardly any electricity, and they lacked Internet access. Girls attended school infrequently because their parents didn't believe in providing their daughters' education, or lacked the fees. If a girl got her menses, she wouldn't come to school because she lacked the necessary resources. If I were to provide a camera, it would be sold for food.

My friend Venex in Uganda, an environmental journalist at the time, suggested I teach photography to girls who



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were endeavoring to become journalists. To get a job in journalism, they were required to have a camera and know how to use it. We fill that gap with the camera and the training.

Up until we received charity status last year, it was challenging to build viable partnerships in Uganda, but after that happened, we were able to sign contracts with Makerere University and Uganda Christian University to recruit students directly instead of doing our recruitment campaign, which as you can imagine was challenging by itself being in Canada.

Are there other photographers or educators involved in the program?

In Uganda, I have partnered with Kenny Mulinde, a filmmaker with **Youth Arts Movement**, and **Daniel Moxie**, a photographer who has been volunteering for us from day one. Kenny provides a one-week filmmaking camp for interested students, and we pay for that opportunity so they can get exposure to videography and photography.

In South Africa, I partnered with **Khwela Womxn**, who helped us with the logistics to operate the photo walk for 10 students, while I did the online training. As we grow this program outside Uganda, I'll be recruiting other photographers who wish to help us with the training, as I cannot be everywhere, but the program can. We hope that some of our graduating students will become trainers and mentors to those who follow.

How did you overcome the challenges of COVID to keep Cameras for Girls going? When will you be able to return to teaching the girls in person?

When COVID hit, we were a week away from booking our tickets for the third in-person training. When that came to a halt, I went to work building a platform with 40 videos, ranging from beginner to advanced skills.

We didn't want to lose momentum, so this allowed the girls who were already enrolled and also future students to learn at their convenience, keeping in mind the time difference and, in some cases, the challenge to get online. The platform houses photography videos from basic to advanced skills, interviews that I've conducted with journalists and photojournalists worldwide, and PDF documents that are downloadable for quick-and-handly guides on everything from camera basics to lighting.

It also houses business skills training, such as building a resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile;

business plan samples; contracts; etc., for those who wish to start their own business. The idea is to provide a comprehensive training platform where none exists for them through school or work experience.

We are so thrilled to finally be returning to Uganda in June of this year to resume the third in-person training and are well on our way in our recruitment.

How many students has the program trained since its inception, and how has it impacted their lives?

We have taught 32 girls in Uganda and 10 girls online in South Africa. In addition to the three-day, in-person workshop held in the country (or online in the case of South Africa), I also do a full year-long curriculum that encompasses the already mentioned portal. We follow that with biweekly zoom meetings to review their photos and talk about their challenges and monthly assignments.

Half of our students in Uganda now have full-time work and, had it not been for COVID, I'm positive our numbers would be higher. We continue to work with those who need it to help them improve their cover letters, resumes, and LinkedIn profiles to obtain work.

Can you tell us more about the biweekly photo reviews, and what your students learn through that process?

The idea is for my students to send their photos for review on a biweekly or monthly process. Sadly, after January 2021, the Internet in Uganda was sequestered due to political upheaval in the country so they send photos when they can.

Both groups of girls in Uganda have graduated, and thus they're not required to send me photos for review, but I highly encourage them to keep learning to improve their work opportunities. The girls in South Africa are frequently sending photos for consideration. I do a recorded review for them that they can watch at their leisure over and over. I comment on exposure, compensation, etc. and provide feedback on the photos related to the assignment given. I did this training in November last year, and two of the girls have already landed full-time jobs with an agency.

KelbyOne has partnered with Cameras for Girls to help with their photography education beyond the hands-on training that you provide. How has KelbyOne helped your students in their continued education?

A considerable part of our training is learning how to take photos, correctly caption the images (for a journalism





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setting), and edit them so they're ready to be printed along with the articles they pitch to their editors. When I started this, I reached out to KelbyOne, as I had been learning and improving my own photography skills on the KelbyOne platform years before I started this initiative, and I could see how the training might benefit or supersede the work we were providing. I reached out to Jean Kendra on your team and explained what we were trying to accomplish, and she jumped in wholeheartedly. She offered two licenses so the girls could learn how to edit.

We have two computers in Uganda, one on each end of the city, that the girls can access twice per month. The KelbyOne licenses help them improve their skills and, for those who are interested, expand their learning beyond what we provide.

You started Triple F Photo Tours to help fund Cameras for Girls. Can you tell us about your tour company and how it helps Cameras for Girls?

Yes, I also run a photo tourism company called Triple F Photo Tours. We offer non-touristy photo tours to various destinations. We help our travelers improve their photography on every excursion. We also do a lot of culturally immersive activities, as it's my firm belief that, when you travel, you should get to know the people and the country. It's the best way to break down borders and stereotypes of people outside our home countries.

When our guests travel with us to Uganda, they also get to sit in on the three-day workshop we do with Cameras for Girls. They get to see the impact of their travel dollars at work while meeting these young women and getting a view of their world and the hardships they suffer.

For all the other tours we offer, 10% of revenues go toward Cameras for Girls. As we grow the company and expand our offerings, we'll bring a separate source of funds to Cameras for Girls aside from the regular fundraising activities we do.

Besides your Triple F Photo Tours, how else do you raise money for the program and acquire cameras for your students?

When I started the initiative, I started a GoFundMe campaign, which helped us raise funds to purchase cameras for our second training. For our first training,

I put out a call on Facebook, and people sent me small point-and-shoots, which was fine because I had no idea if this was going to be successful or not. Then last March, we received media exposure through the *Toronto Star* and *CTV National News*, and we were sent all types of cameras from across the country, and donations toward our GoFundMe campaign, which has helped me get ready for this year's training.

Now that we're a charity, we fundraise via our donor database, running year-end campaigns, Giving Tuesday campaigns, and our upcoming Change Your Lens, Change Her Story Campaign, which will run the month of April. We hope to raise \$10,000 to do a live, three-day workshop in South Africa later this year.

You've mentioned charity status a couple of times now, which Cameras for Girls received back in September of 2021. What other benefits does charity status provide?

Charity status means that we can now offer tax receipts, where we couldn't before. It also gives our charity legitimacy, as I now have a board that I'm accountable to, and allows us to seek previously unavailable funds because we lacked charity status.

How can people continue to follow your story, or even better, how can they become involved by donating cameras, money, or their time?

We're so grateful to our supporters who have helped us grow our brand and reach. For monetary donations in Canada, we use CanadaHelps.org; for US donations we use PayPal.com.

As for camera donations, we'll take any camera—used or new, film, digital, etc. We're lucky because we have a local store that helps us sell what we can't use, and purchase what we use for our training: the Canon G1 X. We chose this camera because it's robust for training in photography and video and small enough to keep on your person without being stolen. Please reach out to me at amina@camerasforgirls.org if you'd like to donate.

You can follow us on CamerasForGirls.com, [Facebook](https://Facebook.com), [Instagram](https://Instagram.com), and [LinkedIn](https://LinkedIn.com).

And finally, for anyone interested in teaching, please reach out to me at amina@camerasforgirls.org and we can chat further. ■