

MAYA KOGULAN

photojournalist of the year portfolio

umaiyalkogulan@gmail.com

MY STATEMENT

I first picked up a camera in the 7th grade. The concept of capturing a single moment in time was intriguing, exciting, and a little scary. I awkwardly fumbled over camera settings and naively shot hundreds of blurry underexposed photos. Although I wasn't great, I found an outlet for my voice as both an artist and a storyteller. My camera served as a bridge to connect with my peers, school, and community.

A few years later, I joined my school's newspaper, *The Emery*. With a prior interest in photography, I naturally gravitated towards photojournalism. Of course, like most things in life, it was not what I expected. I wasn't assigned to the sidelines of football games and pep rallies. Instead, I was placed on stories about Chinese restaurants, female mechanics, and coronavirus.

It's not the average high school photojournalism experience. Nevertheless, I have pushed myself to consistently bring creative and insightful photography to each of my assignments. Even through COVID-19, I have adapted to still safely provide graphics for several in-print and online stories. For example, when the online editor didn't have a photo for a standardized testing story, I found every prep book in my house and had a photoshoot on my dining room table.

Ultimately, through my experience at *The Emery*, I have learned how to harness the power of a photograph. An environmental portrait can serve as an autobiography into someone's life. A photostory can simplify a 10-hour event into 5 photos. A sports action photo can encompass a season.

As a photographer, I am dedicated to using the power of a photograph to tell authentic stories. I will lay on the ground, climb ladders, and sit alone in the rehearsal audience for hours to get the right shot.

I am now serving as co-Editor-in-Chief of my publication. I use the lessons I have learned from photojournalism such as adaptability, responsibility, compassion to lead our staff. As an EIC, one of my main goals is to build and integrate the basic photography skills into our newspaper curriculum. I hope to introduce a photography specialization within our staff to provide opportunities for aspiring photojournalists.



GOING TO WONDERLAND

CAPTION:

Applying makeup before the show, junior Takima Banks applies her foundation to transform into Alice, the show's star.

DESCRIPTION:

Typically before I shoot a school play, I hang around in the makeup room. The heightened chaos before a show results in a lot of interesting candids. In this particular photo, I was able to capture the star, Takima, in her makeup routine. The soft lighting from the makeup lights and shallow depth of field from my large aperture convey her calm mood.



SPLASH

CAPTION:

An array of energetic children in Centennial Park play in the Fountain of Rings, one of Atlanta's most notable attractions.

DESCRIPTION:

This photo combines two of my favorite things - high shutter speed water photos and street photography. After noticing this scene, I sat down near the edge of the foundation to shoot kids' immediate reaction to when the foundation turned on. Additionally, the high shutter speed captured all of the individual droplets, which conveyed a high energy mood.



MADE IN AMERICA

CAPTION:

The dirt between Holly Howell's nails might be viewed as unprofessional. However, to her and colleagues, it is a sign of strength, skill, and dedication. Over the past eight years, Howell has ensured endless discrimination to become respected in the field. "When I was working in the middle of East Side Detroit, I have had customers when they do find out that I am a girl, they don't want me working on their car," Howell said. "Instead of trying to fight them using my words, I defend myself through my work. I like proving to them that I can do something as quickly and as fast as any of the guys."

DESCRIPTION:

For our special car issue of *The Emery*, I wrote a feature and shot a photo story on the only female mechanic in our town. From the beginning of our interview, I noticed her hands. From simply looking at them, I got a sense of her strong dedication and grit. She was kind enough to allow me to take a picture of them after she gave me a tour of the garage. Although it doesn't show her face, the photo perfectly summarized her passion.



PICKUP GAME

CAPTION:

College of Creative Studies summer program students play a quick pick up basketball game in between their art lessons. The downtown basketball court is filled with many competitive games.

DESCRIPTION:

When I saw a pickup game breakout on a trip between my peers, I knew it provides many photo opportunities. Similar to my approach to street photography, I put my camera on high shutter speed and careful watch for good shoots through the game. This photo captures the suspenseful nature of basketball. The viewer is left wondering what happens after the picture - does he make the shot or get blocked by his friend?



REWIRED

CAPTION:

Junior Benjamin Pollitz is demonstrating his newfound soldering techniques to his family at the 2020 Art Night exhibition.

DESCRIPTION:

I have shot at several of my school's art events throughout the year including Art Night. I happened to stumble across into the soldering demonstration jewelry studio. Unlike the other rooms, the jewelry demonstration is quiet and the student was very concentrated. I knew I wanted my photos to convey that same feeling. The challenge of this photo is that I couldn't get close to the student due to the hazardous equipment. I used a zoom lens to capture a detail shot of his precise work.