

**The Wembley to Soweto Foundation with
The Premier League and Professional Footballers' Association:
COMMUNITIES IN FOCUS
Southern & Northern Cohorts
September – December 2017**



The Wembley to Soweto team have always believed that on-the-job training is the best way to learn photographic skills: that these skills can be taught to *any* young person who has a passion for learning, regardless of their means and background and, by teaching this way, we are able to nurture young people's self-belief, confidence and ambition to do whatever it is they want to do in life.

I genuinely feel that we have achieved both the photographic and life-skills goals with all of our students who have participated in our partnership with The Premier League and PFA.

Southern Cohort



Although our six Southern Cohort Students – Hakeem Ranger, Natasha Thompson, Mitchell Broomfield, Roshan Griffith-Allen, Charlie Law and Sonny Vaye – all came onto the course with varying degrees of photographic experience, their enthusiasm, energy and desire to learn was universal. Even though I threw a lot of technical How-To info at them in the first few days, they took it all in and continued to show their enthusiasm by pushing me to explain things in more detail.



We covered a huge range of challenging projects: portraits of strangers on the street; abstract photography; a portrait of the local neighbourhood; documenting the build up to the Arsenal-Brighton match; Ridley Road Market; a shoot as if for an American tourism magazine, documenting the must-see sights of central London; and Colombia Road flower market. I'd be a liar if I said every student shot brilliant photos on each assignment. But what I can say is that they pushed themselves on each shoot and I could see their growth as photographers as the course progressed. I was most impressed by how they started working as a team on the tourism magazine shoot, helping each other to complete the assignment. For example, students good at architectural photography swapped ideas with those good at street photography and those good at detail shots shared ideas with those good at portraits. It is a real testament to their growth as committed photographers that their personal projects documenting their own communities show the technical and creative skill that they've developed over a relatively short period of time.

And lastly, by the end of the course, I could feel a palpable change in all the students' demeanour and attitude. At the beginning of the course, they were on the whole quite shy and most of them not really able to speak up for themselves. But by the end of the course they were confidently expressing opinions about their own work, as well as the work of other photographers we introduced them to, and most impressively, discussing with passion, enthusiasm and conviction a wide range of social issues.



Northern Cohort



Our eight Northern Cohort Students -- Georgina Sansome, Daryl Collinson, Oliver Franco, Kayleigh Jade Shiers, Dylan Laing, Robert Crozier, Chris Aldred and Grey Kallahan – similarly came onto the course with varied levels of photographic skills. And like their fellow Southern Cohort students, their hunger to learn, enthusiasm and commitment was inspirational to David, Susan and myself.

Rather than endless classroom time talking techno-detail, we threw them in at the deep in with a wide variety of projects: the National Cycling Centre Veoldorome, photographing cyclists racing around the track; a highly abstract shoot of the colour blue; the Man City-Arsenal teams warming up, plus shots of all the pre-match activity outside the stadium; a tourism brochure assignment of the Football Museum; Manchester's Christmas Markets; and an unexpected but hugely successful shoot in the *Projekts MCR* skateboarding park.



Two shoots especially impressed us with the students' determination, resolve and perseverance. The first was of the shoot of cyclists practicing in the Velodrome of the National Cycling Centre. Photographing this sort of fast action sport is challenging for even an experienced photographer, let alone students on the *second* day on their course. But they were unfailingly enthusiastic, pushed me hard for advice and suggestions and came out with a surprisingly strong set of images.

The second shoot that resonated for us was the Christmas Markets shoot. The photographs themselves, to be perfectly honest, were not their strongest, but what impressed us was how they stuck with it and persevered with the shoot in spite of bitter cold and rain. In fact, after the rainy Saturday shoot, the students *themselves* suggested that we return to the markets on Sunday to properly finish the assignment.



What I have seen of their own personal community project shoots is hugely encouraging, and I'm totally confident that in our final weekend session, they each will have produced a strong body of work that will enable them to become the go-to photographer for each club's community outreach programs.

Like their Southern counterparts, all eight students have grown before our eyes from being slightly hesitant and shy, to students who are hugely more confident about their photography, and perhaps more importantly, about themselves.

