



Adlai E. Stevenson High School

VISITING ARTIST: LEAH DEN BOK

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Website: www.humanizingthehomeless.ca/

Instagram: @humanizing_the_homeless

Artist Bio

Leah is a 20-year-old photography student at Sheridan College in Oakville, ON. This fall she began her third year of a four-year Bachelor of Photography program. Since the age of 13 she has been mentored by Joel Sartore, a National Geographic photographer and Fellow. When Leah was only 14 Joel said of her, “[Leah] is well on her way to becoming not just a good photographer, but a great photographer. And I’m not kidding.”

For the past five years Leah has been traveling to cities throughout the world, such as Toronto, New York, Washington D.C., and Brisbane, photographing the homeless and recording their stories. At the end of 2019 Austin McCauley Publishers released her third book called *Nowhere to Call Home--Photographs and Stories of the Homeless, Volume Three*.

In the summer of 2017 CBC's 'The National' aired a documentary about Leah's photography and stories of people experiencing homelessness. Since then Leah's work has attracted worldwide attention. In the fall of 2017 the BBC ran a story about her, as have newspapers in the United States and the Netherlands. In 2018 the *Corriere della Sera*, Italy's largest daily, did a two-page spread about Leah. In an article in the Las Vegas' *Daily Chronicle*, Buford Davis wrote, “[Leah's] photographs are not great photographs for a teenager to have taken; they are great photographs and a teenager has taken them.” CBS News Sunday Morning with Jane Pauley recently aired a story about Leah.

Artist Statement

For the past six years—with the encouragement of my mentor, Joel Sartore, the National Geographic photographer and Fellow—I have been travelling to cities throughout the world, such as Toronto, Windsor, Hamilton, Brisbane, New York, and Washington, photographing and recording the stories of people experiencing homelessness. Through my homelessness project I am attempting to, both, humanize people experiencing homelessness and shine a spotlight on their plight.

When my mother, Sara, was three-years-old she was found, lost and alone, on the crowded streets of Kolkata by a police officer. He took her to Mother Teresa, who raised her until she was adopted, a couple years later, by a family in Ontario, Canada. My homelessness project was inspired, in part, by Mother Teresa's work with people experiencing homelessness in Kolkata, as well as my mother's story of being homeless.

Five years ago, when I was fifteen, Joel told me that, in his experience, all truly successful photographers key in on one genre or another, and encouraged me to focus on portraiture, believing that this was where my strength lay. At first, I began photographing senior citizens in nursing homes. However, as I needed to get written consent from the children of these seniors before I could photograph them, this soon became impractical. It was, then, that my dad introduced me to the photographs of people experiencing homelessness by Jeffries, and suggested that I begin photographing them as well.