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# **Stronger Shines the Light Inside**

**This proposal presents a unique opportunity for The New Portlander Policy Commission and Wieden+Kennedy to partner with an influential artist to create an exhibition celebrating Portland's diverse immigrant communities.**

**Stronger Shines the Light Inside is a highly acclaimed and widely published multi-media initiative created by Angie Smith that illuminates stories of refugee resettlement in the US through portraiture and interviews.** The project has been featured in The New York Times Magazine, The New Republic, National Geographic, and WIRED. Under President Obama's administration, the White House recognized *Stronger Shines the Light Inside* as one of the five most impactful initiatives to integrate refugees and immigrants in the United States. Smith has been the recipient of multiple grants to document refugee resettlement in Boise and Salt Lake City. In 2016, Smith created a large scale, public exhibition of photographs and interviews that was installed on the streets of downtown Boise. She was invited to give artist talks at Wesleyan University, The College of Western Idaho, and Treefort Music Festival. Additional photographs from *Stronger Shines the Light Inside* have been exhibited at the White House and the Aperture Foundation in New York City.

**Website:** [www.strongershinesthelightinside.com](http://www.strongershinesthelightinside.com)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/strongershinesthelightinside](https://facebook.com/strongershinesthelightinside)

**Twitter:** @StrongerShines

**Instagram:** @strongershinesthelightinside



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## INTRODUCTION

**Established in 1851, The City of Portland is positioned geographically at the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, and the Pacific Ocean. For centuries, it's been a hub of robust activity, a crossroads in the movement of people, products, and ideas.**

Political, economic and environmental insecurity throughout Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Mexico, Latin America, and number of island nations has resulted in waves of international migration and resettlement. This has dramatically increased Portland's ethnic diversity and improved Portland's cosmopolitan profile over the last 40 years.

Today, 20% of Portland households and 25% of Beaverton households speak multiple languages. Nearly half of Metro area school students come from ethnic minority homes.

Since the Trump Administration has taken office, the national mood has shifted. A March 2017 ProPublica study reported that Oregon struggles with the highest level of reported hate crimes per capita in the US. The current administration has demonstrated the tremendous impact that words can make on a society. Whether they come from the President, from a billboard, a television commercial, or a grieving friend, words hold the power to spread love or hate.

*Stronger Shines the Light Inside* was created to amplify the marginalized voices of immigrants, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and to highlight the many contributions they make to our communities. Through photography and interviews, this partnered community exhibition will provide an outlet for immigrants to share their stories, promoting more understanding, respect and equality in Portland.

## RESIDENCY OBJECTIVES

Create new photographs and conduct interviews about immigrants in Portland, Oregon.

In collaboration with W+K, conceptualize an exhibition to install in the lobby of W+K.

Host a reception in the W+K exhibition space to celebrate the completion of the residency and to raise awareness about the project and build community engagement.

**Timeline: May 1-June 7 2018**



# RESIDENCY OBJECTIVES: DETAIL

01.

## **Production of still photographs and interviews of refugees in Portland:**

*With the support of The New Portlander Policy Commission, Smith will spend approximately two-three weeks of the residency duration photographing and interviewing individuals and families that were resettled in the Portland Metro area. Smith will create striking, intimate and authentic imagery that highlights the rich cultural contributions of immigrants and the organizations that advocate for them in Portland, Oregon.*

- Smith will work with The New Portlander Policy Commission to identify organizations, families and individuals to photograph in the Portland Metro Area.

02.

## **Gallery exhibition inside of Wieden+Kennedy:**

*Smith will collaborate with Wieden and Kennedy to conceptualize and install a gallery installation for the W+K headquarters that includes Stronger Shines the Light Inside content created in Boise, Salt Lake City and the new content created in Portland, during the residency. Smith will spend approximately two weeks of the residency on the post production and installation of this exhibition.*

## **Potential exhibition components:**

- Photographs to be printed and installed.
- Photographs, short films, poetry and interview excerpts to be projected or installed onto gallery walls.

03.

## **Opening and/or closing reception at W+K to build community engagement:**

*Smith, Wieden and Kennedy, and the New Portlander Policy Commission will host an exhibition reception to showcase the work created during the month-long residency. The mission of the event will be to showcase the work created during the residency and encourage community engagement, support and integration of immigrants and refugees. This event will also serve as an opportunity to invite city officials, lawmakers, sponsors and donors while promoting awareness for local refugee agencies and organizations.*

## **Potential reception components:**

- Showcase the work created during the artist-in-residency.
- Invite local refugee organizations to be present and provide information about their services.
- Invite all New Portlanders to participate and meet others in the community.
- Provide opportunities for Portland residents to sign up to volunteer with or mentor refugees.

## TIMELINE

<b>February 30</b>	Start fundraising with City of Portland
<b>March 30</b>	Finish fundraising
<b>April 1–30</b>	Smith receives funds
<b>May 5</b>	Smith starts shooting
<b>May 30</b>	Smith starts installing exhibition
<b>June 7</b>	Exhibition opening

## BUDGET

<b>Artist Hourly Rate</b>	\$7,500
<i>(\$50/hour, estimated hours: 150)</i>	
<b>Production</b>	\$4,000
<i>(\$50/hour, estimated hours: 80)</i>	
<b>Airfare</b>	\$400
<b>Transportation</b>	\$1,500
<i>(Rental Car, Fuel, etc.)</i>	
<b>Food</b>	\$1,000
<b>Lodging</b>	\$1,500
<b>Retouching</b>	\$1,000
<b>Transcription of Interviews</b>	\$1,000
<b>Editing of Interviews</b>	\$850
<b>Photo Equipment/ Lighting Rentals</b>	\$3,000
<b>Intern/Assistant</b>	\$2,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$24,250</b>





## Khamisa

I grew up there [Sudan] till the age of ten and then came to Kenya to seek for refuge in the year 1996. It wasn't easy. The only thing that I remember is that we had been staying for a very long time—like days—without eating. The only thing that we had to eat was desert fruits and those ones grow mostly in the bush. Life on the camp is very hard. **If you're someone who doesn't have hope and you don't believe that there is God then definitely you can't stay.**

For my future, to tell you the truth, before even I came here I used to believe in doing things by my own, without help. Like standing on my own feet. And that's why I had been trying at least to work two jobs. I have seen myself like I am blessed, at least I'm still young, I'm strong, I can work...there are a lot of people coming in, they don't get enough help. **I thank God I have everything, I have eyes, I have hands,** I just thought it's better for me to work, even if it is two jobs. A lot of people need food stamps—I just feel I want to do everything on my own.

**My kids are the ones who keep me going.** If I can see them laughing every day, I don't think of anything else, I just feel happy, I feel thankful. Both he and my daughter have passed through a hard life. I've seen a hard life through them.



## Memo

I born in Baghdad, Iraq. When I told my family I was gay, I first told my two brothers and my mom. I said 'I just want to tell you, I'm feeling bisexual. I'm interested in men and women.' My older brother, he just go crazy. He went to his room, grabbed his gun and wanted to shoot me. My mom just pushed me away and stand against him and told me, 'Just get out.' I'm only sixteen years old, I didn't know where to go. So I just left. I went to Syria. I stayed there for almost two and a half years.

I came here in May 2012. Then a whole new problems started here. Language, culture, no one, no friends. After three months, I just gave up on my life, I tried to kill myself, but it didn't work. **Sometimes I smile when I talk about it or I laugh, but inside it's killing me.**

I'm tired of losing people. **I have been losing people my entire life.** Losing my friends, losing my best friend, losing a lot of people to stupid ISIS. I'm like no, I will live my life however I want it. And people will accept it or not. Not just accept me as being gay or straight, but accept me as who I am. Once I open that, now I am not afraid to say to anyone, I am gay.



## Baraka

When I first got to Boise, I was like, 'This is a beautiful city.' The snow, the sun was just setting, it was March so it was close to spring. There were trees with no leaves. One thing I really find weird is the fact that I wasn't shocked that I was here. It felt like, 'Man, this is the place I have always wanted to be.' I was like 'This feels like home, it feels good.'

**I think a refugee is not just a person fleeing disaster. I think a refugee is a person that strives to liberate a whole generation.** Because the reason why there is America is because a group of people went from Europe to here because they wanted a better life, and look what we have now. So a refugee is not just a person who takes space and eats your food and takes your money. I think a refugee is a person who strives to make a better way for their generation. It's not just a one-sided perspective. When you see one person getting out of another country to come into yours, it's not just one person, it's a lineage of people. And when you reject that one person, you are rejecting his whole generation. **Sometimes it's very hard to see what you will gain because what you will gain is definitely not money. It's something more beautiful and abstract and less tangible.**



## Sonia

A lot of times I pray to ask God to take it away from my heart, or give me the strength to leave the past behind and live in the present. It's working, I can tell it's changing my life. Being in Boise from beginning until now, and I open this little shop, everyday I have things from Africa. **I like to touch things from home.** We were in Togo, a city called Kpalime. I feel that I'm back there.

I want people to know about refugees, as we are human being. We should be treated equally with everyone else. When a refugee needs help from someone, please do help them. Encourage them, give them work, try to help them anyhow. If you see somebody, be like, 'Oh hi, what's your name? Where you come from? Oh my gosh, I love your outfit!' If you see someone very different, the way they dress, the way they are talking, ask something about that. That's the way the person knows, 'This person wants to know something about me.' That's how you start it, the first step. Start talking with them about the little things. Then they will know who you are and they will want to open up to you. Then you can step in and help them. Start somewhere with communication. It's all about the communication.

*Stronger Shines the Light Inside* was featured in over a dozen national and local media outlets:

**The New York Times Magazine:**

[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/09/11/magazine/refugee-students-boise.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/09/11/magazine/refugee-students-boise.html?_r=0)

**The New Republic:**

<https://newrepublic.com/article/136775/destination-boise>

**The White House Blog:**

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2016/06/30/bright-spots-welcoming-and-integration>

**National Geographic:**

<http://proof.nationalgeographic.com/2016/05/09/angie-smith-boise-idaho-refugees/>

**WIRED:**

<http://www.wired.com/2016/06/angie-smith-stronger-shines-the-light-inside/>

**Idaho Public Television:**

<http://video.idahoptv.org/video/2365841597/>

**Business Insider:**

<http://www.businessinsider.com/portraits-of-refugees-in-america-2016-5>

**Roads and Kingdoms:**

<http://roadsandkingdoms.com/2016/life-of-peace-in-boise-qa-with-angie-smith/>

**Bustle:**

<https://www2.bustle.com/articles/155667-these-incredible-photos-of-refugees-in-idaho-shine-a-light-on-their-unique-experience>

**The Idaho Statesman:**

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/entertainment/arts-culture/arts-blog/article100959937.html>

**Booooooom:**

<http://www.booooooom.com/2016/04/20/kickstarter-of-the-day-stronger-shines-the-light-inside/>

**Boise Weekly:**

<http://www.boiseweekly.com/boise/here-we-have-idaho/Content?oid=3676119>

**A Photo Editor:**

<http://aphotoeditor.com/2016/04/19/the-daily-edit-angie-smith-stronger-shines-the-light-inside/>

**Boise State Public Radio:**

<http://boisestatepublicradio.org/post/photography-project-shines-light-and-within-boise-s-refugee-population#stream/0>

**Refugees Deeply:**

<https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2016/06/13/resettled-in-the-heart-of-america-part-1?platform=hootsuite>

**Humble Arts Foundation:**

<http://hafny.org/blog/2016/4/shedding-light-on-refugee-experiences-in-the-united-states>

**KBOI:**

<http://kboi2.com/news/local/refugee-inspired-art-project-for-downtown-boise>

# FOR ALL QUESTIONS

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