

From the lens of a camera: Scenes of Covid-19 in Baltimore

By Ursula V. Battle

Throughout the city and all over the world, we have seen the many images of COVID-19. They include people wearing masks, people standing six feet apart, and seeing signs on business doors that read 'Closed' or 'Only 2 customers allowed at a time.' James Trudeau, a research technician, and phlebotomist at Johns Hopkins University has captured such moments in time with his NIKON D800 camera.

"I started taking photos, because what was happening around the pandemic was a big piece in not only our country's history, but Baltimore's history," said Trudeau. "At Hopkins, I am in the heart of the city. Right now, there's emptiness along Monument Street where the hospital is located. The emptiness is what originally caught my eye. Seeing individuals with masks and standing apart is what started me on this journey."

Trudeau's project is called Scenes of Covid-19 in Baltimore. His images have made it onto the big screen—billboard screens that is. Shanklin Media is displaying his images on their digital advertising outdoor billboards near Penn Station.

"I initially reached out to Shanklin Media never thinking they would respond back," recalled Trudeau. "To see my images up there is breathtaking."

Trudeau, 31, a professional photographer says his passion for photography began when his father gave him his first Nikon 35 mm camera when he was a child. In 2014, he began his professional photography business. He photographs weddings, corporate events, fashion shoots, maternity sessions, lifestyle/newborn/family sessions and real estate. He won first place in the 2016 Maryland State Fair in the landscape section of photography. He is a resident of Baltimore County and has a wife and two daughters.

"Being a father and healthcare worker in this pandemic, I am trying to capture this part of our history," said Trudeau who is working as a data collector on a COVID-19 research study. "Most of this history is depressing. Hopefully, people will look at these photos and see this is



Shanklin Media is displaying James Trudeau's images about COVID-19 on their digital advertising outdoor billboards near Penn Station in Baltimore City.

Courtesy Photo/James Trudeau

where we were during this time-period. Someone told me the photos look apocalyptic. Unfortunately, I never thought there would be a time when you couldn't go to a bar or hug your best friend."

Trudeau says he arrives home from work each day and undresses at the front door.

"My daughters are being home-schooled. I try to capture all the views of this pandemic. I caught a photo of my scrubs on the washing machine with the sanitizer. My biggest fear is bringing something home to my family."

The Massachusetts native has lived in

Baltimore for 15 years. He talked about what "grabs his eye," and ultimately prompts him to "grab his camera."

"I have my camera everywhere I go," he said. "The subject person, an environment and what they are doing will get my attention. One day, I circled around a block to talk to a man. He was an older gentleman at a street corner sitting on a bicycle. He was wearing a nice leather jacket, hat, and a mask. When I approached him, I told him what I was doing, and asked if I could take a photo for my project. He said, 'sure, why not,'

"I asked the man how COVID-19 was



James Trudeau, a research technician, and phlebotomist at Johns Hopkins University, is the photographer behind Scenes of Covid-19 in Baltimore.

Courtesy Photo/James Trudeau

impacting him. He said he had to ride his bicycle to get to the convenience store, and to pick up his prescriptions."

He reflected on another encounter with a man named 'Rudy.'

"He wore a mask, sitting in his wheelchair on the corner of Monument and North Patterson Park. After getting his consent to photograph him, I asked how the Coronavirus epidemic has affected his everyday life. '[I'm] tired of watching the same thing on TV, not able to watch sports or do anything but sit around and wait for this to end,' he replied. Rudy has been out of work for the last 20 years of his life and expressed that he has now had time to sit and reflect on his life."

Trudeau is optimistic that the social distancing, masks and other "signs of the times" will one day be a thing of the past. Until then, he will continue to capture the images of COVID-19 through the lens of his camera.

"I have taken about 50 or so photographs. I will continue to take photos. The pandemic isn't over yet. As unfortunate as it is at the moment with social distancing and the masks, until this pandemic stops, being a healthcare worker on the front lines and seeing these patients not getting visitors or seeing their families, people need to listen and abide by the rules. There will be a time we can hug one another and be social again."