



May Cat is a facilitator. "I listen, chew information and lay it out," she says in her "Portland in Color" profile. Cat says a challenge of living in Portland is "the invalidation of racism from people who don't live with racism every day."

Portland in Color

Finding it tough to break into the city's largely white creative scene, photographer Celeste Noche is using her blog to draw attention to local artists of color



PHOTOS BY CELESTE NOCHE

Lydia Grijalva is a social and community artist. "I'm inspired by my community," Grijalva says in "Portland in Color." "Like, it's ridiculous. How dare everyone I know be so talented and beautiful." Grijalva co-founded the Alberta Free Hutch, a donation kiosk in Portland's Alberta neighborhood that recently closed so Grijalva and her partner could focus on other methods of resistance. Read Street Roots' profile of the Alberta Free Hutch at news.streetroots.org/albertahutch.

BY EMILLY PRADO
STAFF WRITER

Portland is really white. It's so commonly heard that it almost doubles as an unofficial motto for the city. And while 76 percent of residents are white, photographer Celeste Noche seeks to dispel the myth that communities of color don't exist. Her new photo documentary, "Portland in Color," refocuses the lens on the stories and experiences of creatives of color living in the City of Roses.

"Portland in Color" is hosted on Noche's professional blog. Her knack for natural portraiture shines as she travels around the city to photograph and interview her subjects. Often set in the interviewee's workplace – whether a ceramics studio or a bedroom – the photos evoke a sense of familiarity, spirit and joy.

Although Noche has called Portland home for three years and has been working as a full-time freelance photographer for roughly the same time, the transition into Portland's creative community wasn't as seamless as she had hoped it would be.

"When I moved to Portland, I thought it was a smaller community than San Francisco. It was creative, and I'd move here and make a lot of friends in photography," she said. "Even (after) three years, I still struggle to connect to the photography and arts community in Portland. It really feels like a place where opportunities – especially with bigger companies or specific projects – are gate-kept by industry people who often are white. They end up hiring their friends – and I don't blame them because I'd hire my friends too – but it also just contributes to the lack of representation and the lack of more perspectives in media."

To air her frustrations with the state of creative industries, she began posting on social media.

"When I started becoming vocal, I never had a moment to think, 'Will this affect my career in any way?'" she said. "I just jumped into it because I was so impassioned that I couldn't say anything. And then that's really why I continued to be vocal. I think that silence is a way of allowing oppression to continue."

One of the most common response to Noche's critiques of the homogeneity in the

READ THE BLOG

To read Celeste Noche's "Portland in Color" profiles and for information about donating to the project, visit celestenoche.com/blog.

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