

# Elements of Photography & Visual Storytelling

Nov 2014



# Our Photographic Journey

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- Foundations of visual storytelling
- What makes a good image and why
- When do we want to think about visuals?
- How to identify the visual options or opportunities for a story?
- What is the NPR Visuals team experimenting with?

# Wide – Scene Setter



# Portrait

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# Medium

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# Detail/Close-Up

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# Action

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# Five Foundations of Visual Storytelling

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1. Wide
2. Medium
3. Detail
4. Portrait
5. Action



# Visual Storytelling

## To Beat Odds, Poor Single Moms Need Wide Safety Net

by PAM FESSLER

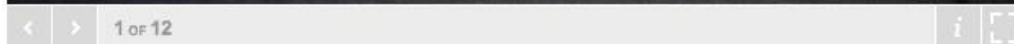


### Listen to the Story

*All Things Considered*

[6 min 38 sec]

- + Add to Playlist
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# Establishing Image



Jennifer Stepp, 29, lives in Reading, Pa., and is raising three children by herself. Like 14 million other single mothers in America, she lives below the poverty line.

*Kainaz Amaria/NPR*

# Sense of Place



Once a thriving railroad hub and factory town in southeast Pennsylvania, Reading has a poverty rate of 41.3 percent and is labeled America's poorest city with a population of 65,000 or more.

*Kalnaz Amaria/NPR*



# Medium



Stepp hugs her daughter, Shyanne, at the Second Street Learning Center, where she is a head assistant teacher earning less than \$9 an hour. The center provides 24-hour day care for Reading's working poor and is run by a nonprofit called the Opportunity House.

*Kainaz Amaria/NPR*

# Detail



Along with raising three kids, Stepp works full time and takes evening classes at a local community college to earn an associate degree in early childhood education. Opportunity House also helps pay the rent on her family's apartment.

*Kainaz Amaria/NPR*

# Action/Transition



Opportunity House also supports Stepp's education and sometimes will subsidize her schooling expenses if she is running short on cash. "Being a head assistant, I can't go any further without some kind of degree," she says.

*Kainaz Amaria/NPR*



# Action



Stepp says her goal is to obtain an associate degree and then a bachelor's degree. She hopes to open a day care center of her own someday.

*Kainaz Amaria/NPR*



# Portrait

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Stepp picks up her three children, (from left) Shyanne, 8; Isaiah, 10; and Makai, 1, at the 24-hour day care center after her classes are over around 9 p.m.

*Kainaz Amaria/NPR*

# Portrait/Action

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Shyanne (left) holds 1-year-old Makai, as Stepp checks to see if all of Shyanne's homework has been completed.

*Kainaz Amaria/NPR*

# Medium



Stepp speaks to Isalah before bedtime. "Sometimes I think I have done something wrong for them to turn their backs to me," she says of her failed relationships with her children's fathers. "But then there are other times that I'm in a good mood and think, 'Oh, well. Let them go. If they don't want to do it, I can do it. I can be the mother and father at the same time.' "

*Kainaz Amaria/NPR*

# Best Practices for Visual Editing

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1. Use a variety of image types to provide a sense of pacing (wide, medium, detail, portrait, action)
2. Each picture should have a purpose
3. Pictures shouldn't be redundant
4. Kill the puppies: Not every image is worth keeping
5. Know what story you want to tell, plan accordingly
6. The first image should draw your reader into the story.

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## Three Most Important Aspects Of An Image

- Content
- Composition
- Light











# Content

- Know your story
- Focus on what it is you want to say
- Position yourself reporters to get the image
- Make more than one or two images
- Make images when people are doing something active

news › npr news investigations

## National Data Confirm Cases Of Restraint And Seclusion In Public Schools

by [JOSEPH SHAPIRO](#)

June 19, 2014 5:00 AM ET



[Listen to the Story](#)  
Morning Edition

4 min 42 sec



[Playlist](#)  
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[Transcript](#)



Carson Luke, 13, was injured when he was restrained at a school in Virginia when he was 10 years old.

Sarah Tilotta/NPR



# Composition

- Who/What is your focus
- What is the best angle to communicate your vision
- Look at the entire frame what are you including and more importantly excluding

public health

## How The Taliban Is Thwarting The War On Polio

by JACKIE NORTHAM



Children in a Lahore slum after heavy rains. The slum has a large population of Pashtuns who came from Pakistan's lawless tribal regions; many carry the polio virus with them.

Jackie Northam/NPR

# Rule of Thirds

- Divide an image into thirds, horizontally and vertically – where the lines intersect, place the subject of the photo



David Gilkey/ NPR





# Perspective

- Look at a scene from the perspective of the person in the story
- Use high and low angles to make your images more dynamic



Kainaz Amaria / NPR





# Leading Lines

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- Leading lines help focus where your viewers eye goes in the frame



Kainaz Amaria / NPR







# Framing

- Use every opportunity to look through things



David Gilkey / NPR





# Reflection\Layers

- Use reflections to give a sense of inside and outside







news ▶ npr news investigations

## Life After 'Life': Aging Inmates Struggle For Redemption

by [LAURA SULLIVAN](#)

June 04, 2014 3:24 PM ET



John Huckleberry sits in the back seat of a friend's car on the way back from visiting inmates at Sterling Correctional Facility. After 30 years in prison, Huckleberry — who was released in 2012 — helps aging inmates prepare for life outside prison.

*John W. Poole/NPR*

# Light



# Light

- Golden Hour – happens twice a day
- Window light for when you are indoors
- Try to make images outside as much as possible, unless it is high noon



David Gilkey/NPR



# Lighting – Hour of Day Matters

- Early morning and late afternoon are the best times to photograph
- Keep the sun behind you, or to the side for nice contrast



Kainaz Amaria / NPR



# Lighting – Side Light

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David Gilkey/NPR

# Caption Information

- Keep the 5 W's in mind
- Make sure to get the correct spelling of names and where they are from
- If you aren't sure what they are doing, or confused about a specific detail in the frame make sure to write that down

## Turning Trash To Cash To Help Nation's Poor

by PAM FESSLER



Audio for this story from *All Things Considered* will be available at approx. 7:00 p.m. ET

Transcript



Enlarge

Pam Fessler/NPR

A worker dismantles a mattress at a recycling facility in Oakland, Calif. The material will be used to make carpet products and proceeds will help support the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, a nonprofit that helps low-income families in Eugene, Ore.

# Three Things That Make a Better Portrait

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- Lighting (on face)
- Focus
- Background

# Lighting – Portraits

- Try not to silhouette a subject
- Keep the light at your back
- Reposition a subject for better lighting



Kainaz Amaria / NPR



# Background – Remove the Clutter

- Remove distracting objects
- Look around the frame, reposition the camera
- Get closer



Kainaz Amaria / NPR

# Focus – Subject Must be Crisp

- Focus the camera on the subject, then take the picture
- Take your time
- Work it!



# Lighting, Background, Focus





# Common Mistakes

- Objects protruding from the subject's body
- Excessive flash
- Too far away
- Awkward expression





# Storytelling Portraits

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Gabriella Demczuk/ NPR

# Storytelling Portraits

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Nathlynn Dellande's grandchildren, Chloe Dellande, 7, and Ashton Dellande Jr., 5, live in New Orleans East but attend Arthur Ashe Charter School in neighboring Gentilly.

# Storytelling Portraits



U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske sits under an image of New York's Ground Zero in his office in Washington. For him, it serves as a daily reminder of the security threats that have shaped his agency.



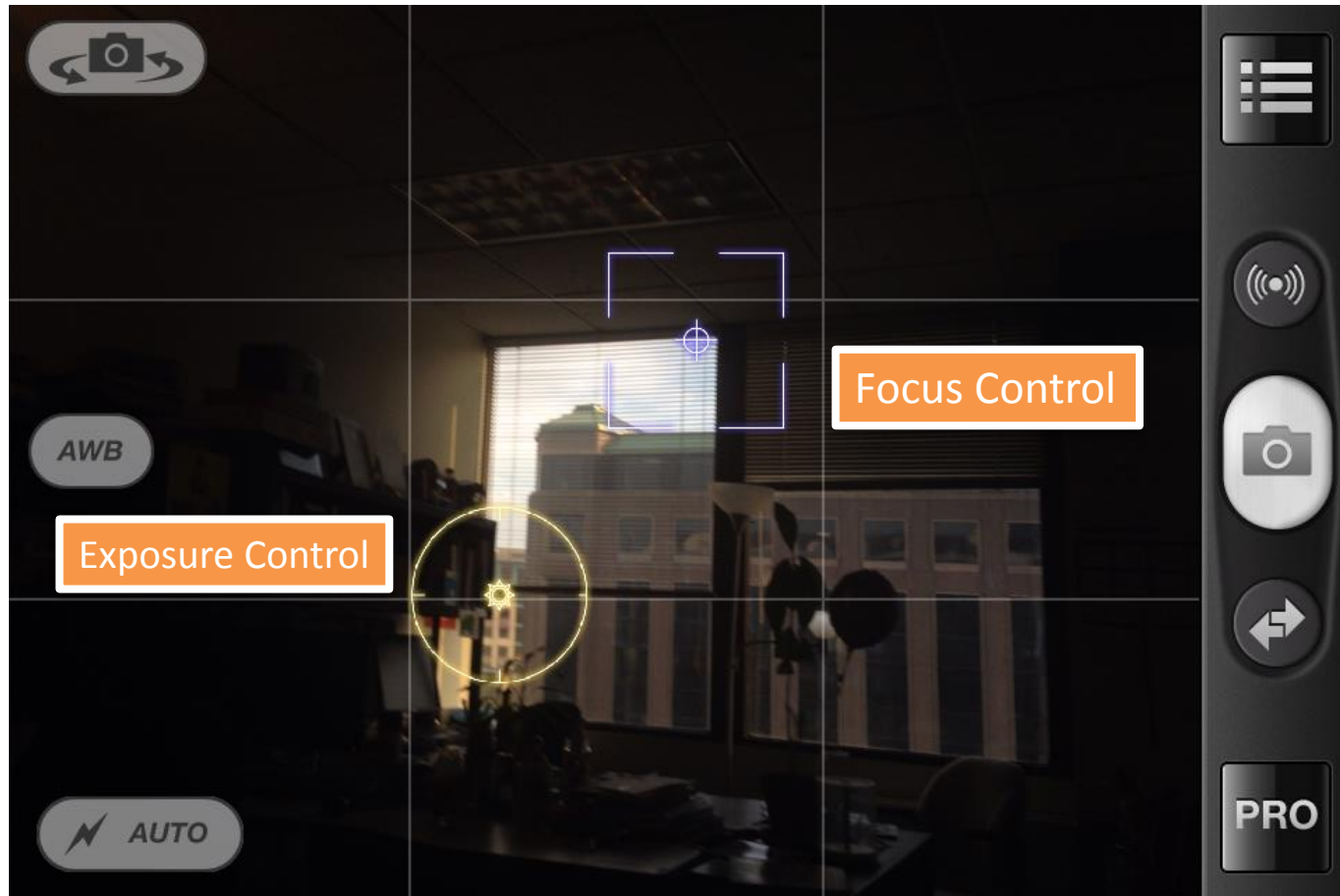
# How To Set Up Your Camera App



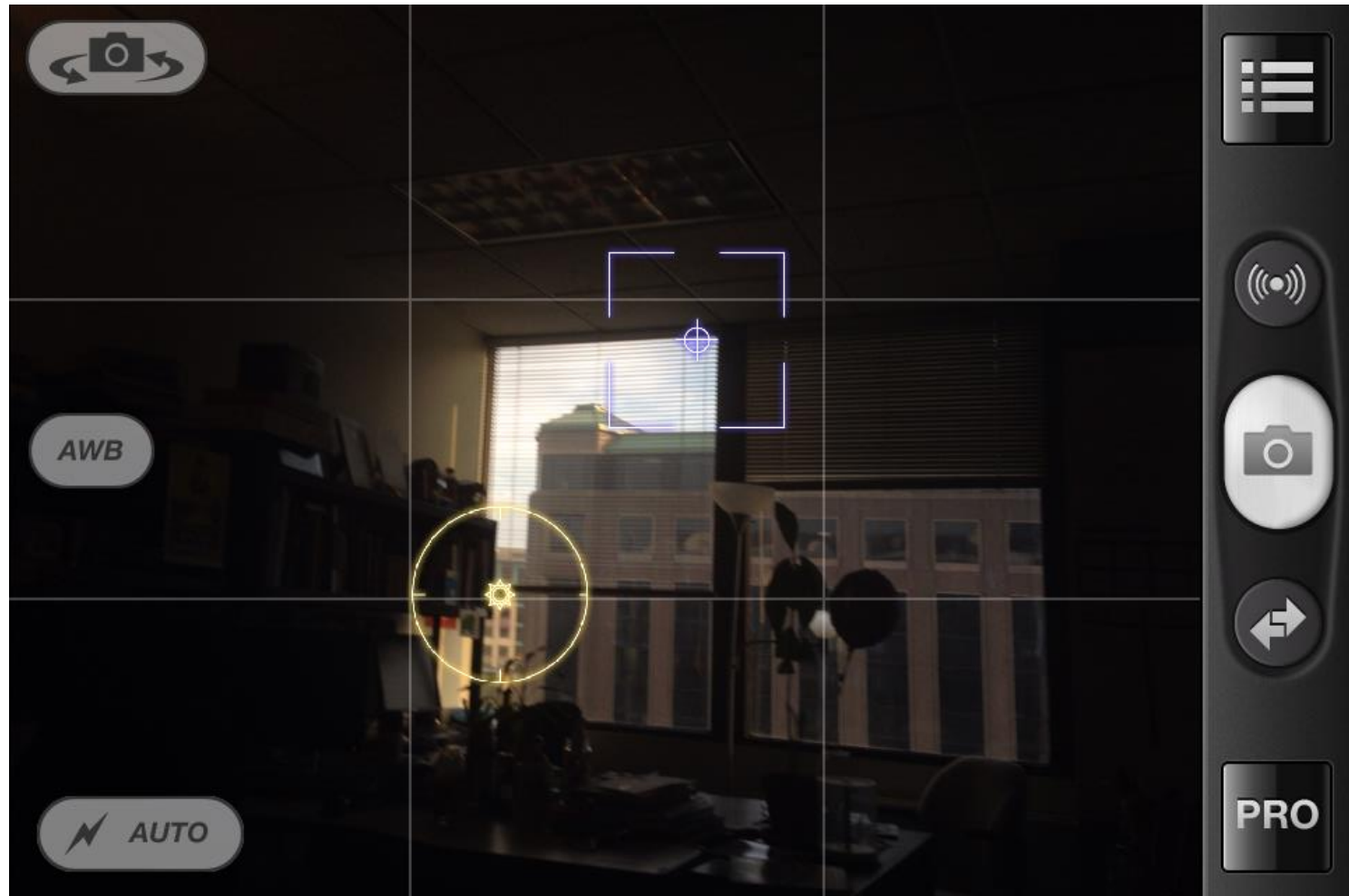
- Turn Location Services ON
- Turn Expert Mode ON
- Slide to Stable
- JPEG Comp HIGH
- Rapid Fire ON
- Full Trigger OFF
- Photo Zoom OFF
- Date Stamp OFF
- Auto Save ON
- Copyright (Name/WVXU)
- System-Sounds OFF
- Quick Flick Album ON



# How To Make An Image



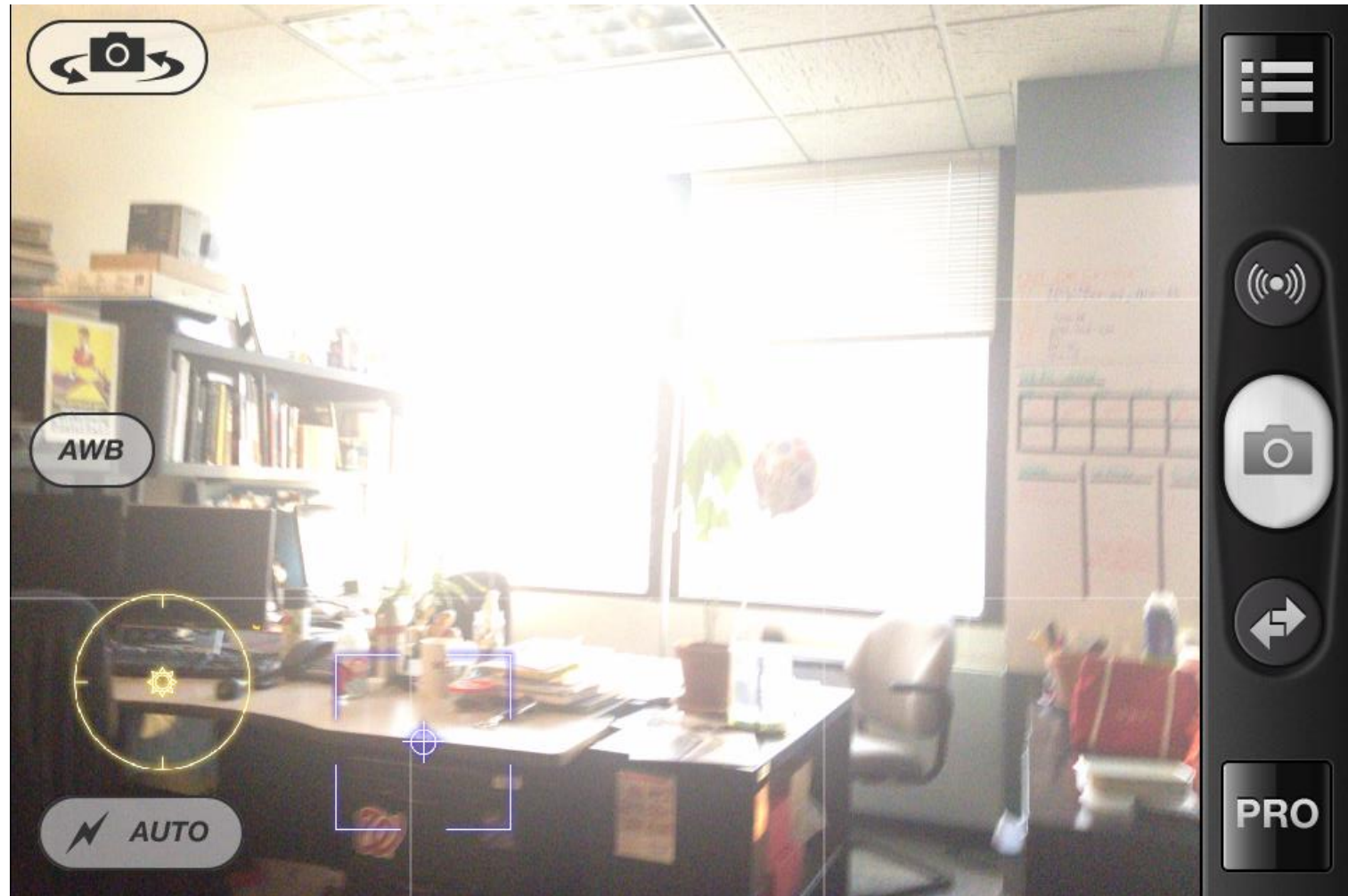
# Difference In Exposures



\*exposing for window (where the circle is) will make the office underexposed



# Difference In Exposures



\*exposing for office (where the circle is) will make the window overexposed

# Difference In Focus

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\*focus is on building in background

# Difference In Exposures

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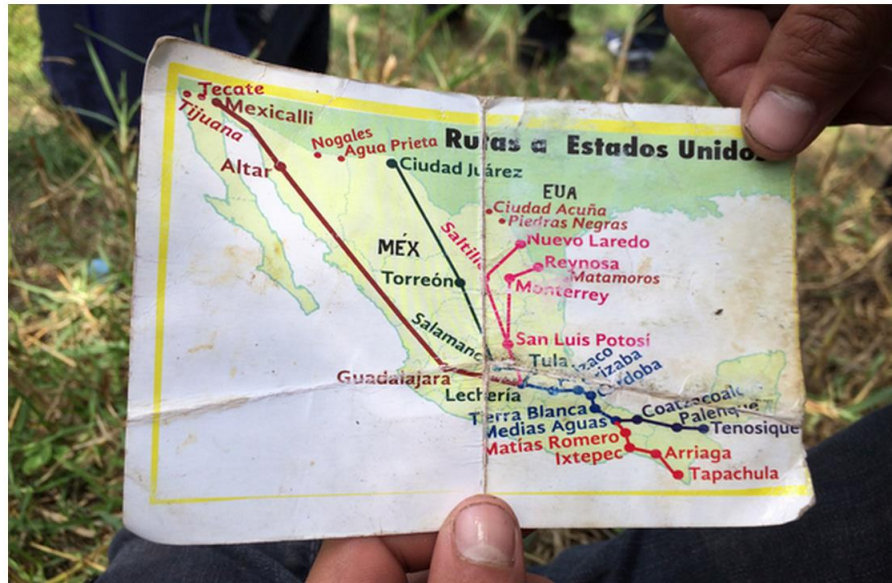
# Visuals Are Shareable And Social



kainazamaria ✓  
@kainazamaria

A map of freight train routes given to an unaccompanied minor headed towards US-Mexico border. [n.pr/1s5FcYj](https://n.pr/1s5FcYj)

↩ Reply 🗑 Delete ★ Favorite ⋮ More



RETWEETS  
68

FAVORITES  
26



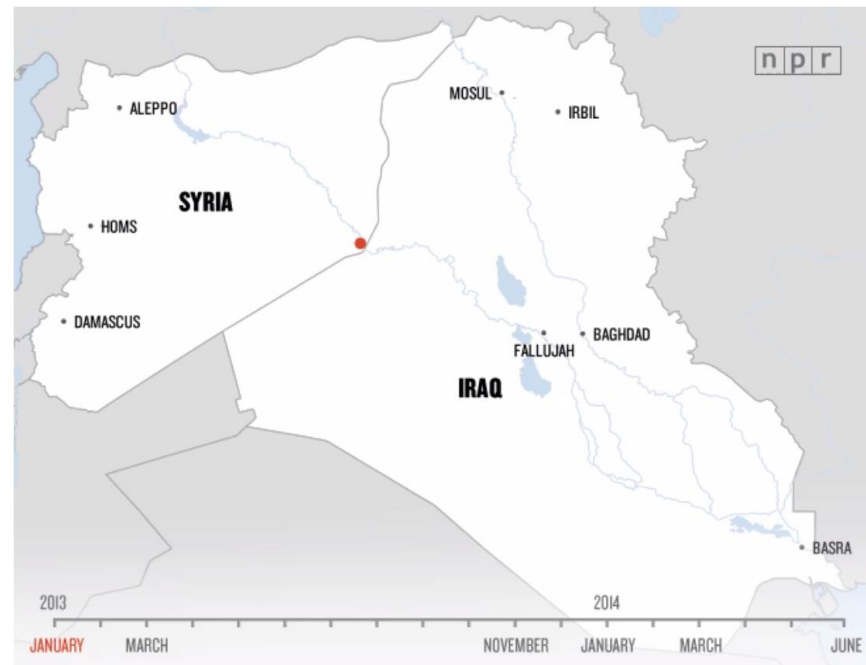
# Visuals Are Shareable And Social



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@kainazamaria

GIF Map of the dramatic rise of ISIS in Iraq  
And Syria — via [@nprviz](#) [@nprnews](#)

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RETWEETS  
4

FAVORITES  
2



# Practical Ways To Approach Visual Storytelling

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- Think of the visuals from the beginning of your reporting
  - Can we go when people are doing something?
  - Can we set aside enough time to make an image?
  - What is the emotion essence of the story?
- What are our resources?
  - Can our reporters make their own images?
  - Can we hire a freelancer?
  - Can we hire a visual intern?
  - Can we partner with local newspapers?



# NPR Visuals – Who Are We?

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# What Are We Experimenting With?

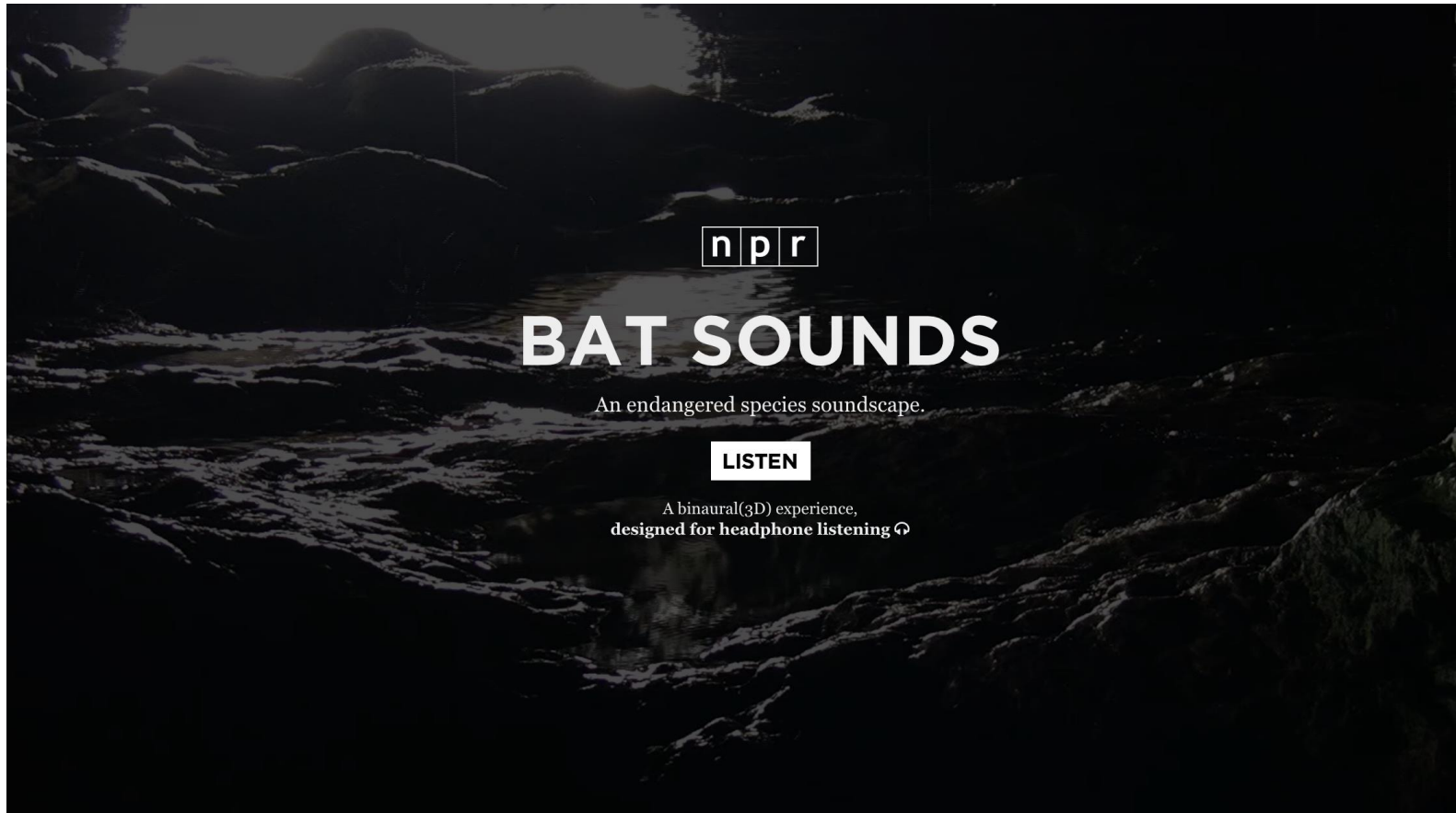
- Making things of the Web



# What Are We Experimenting With?

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- How to create immersive experiences?

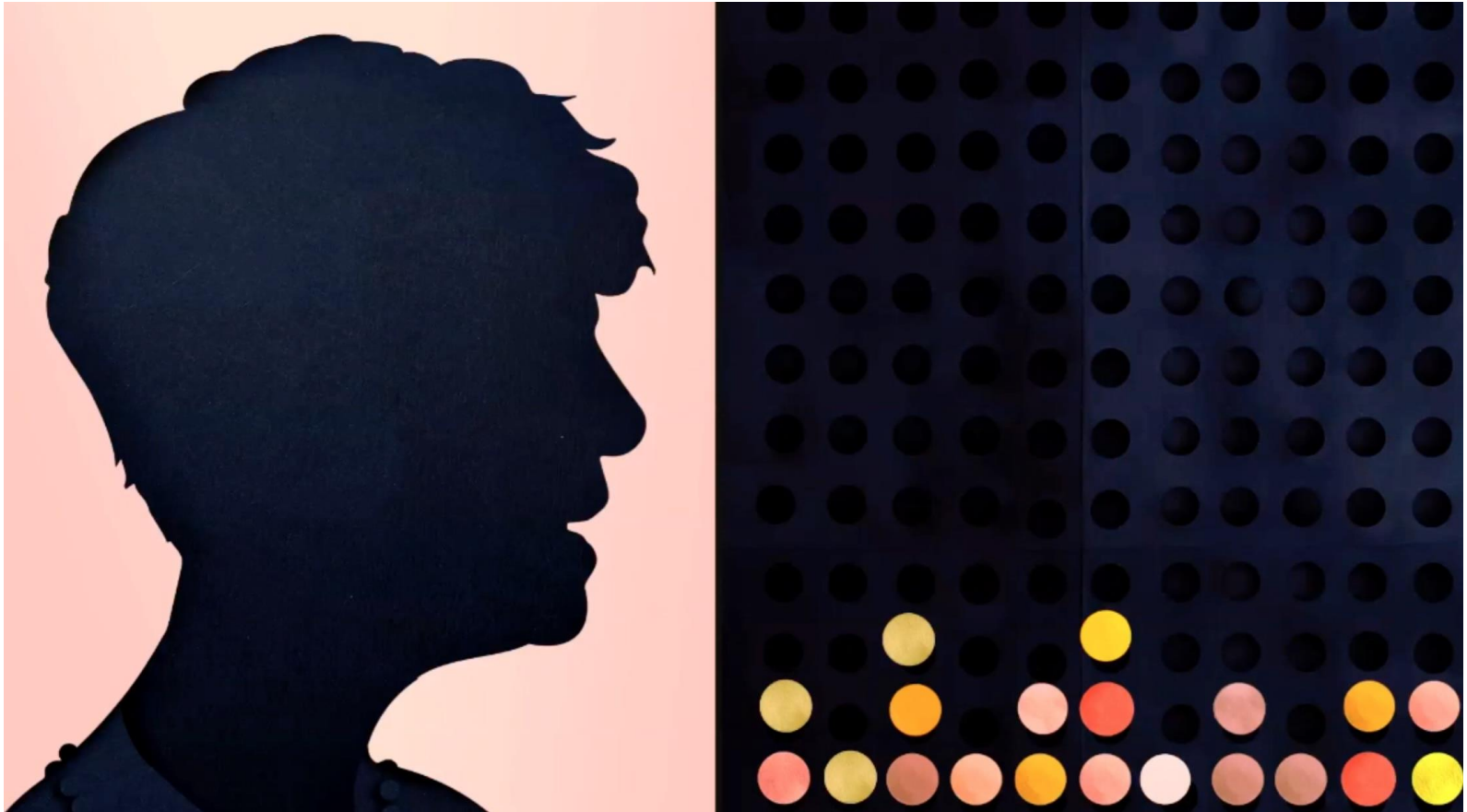




# What Are We Experimenting With?

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- How do we use animation?



# What Are We Experimenting With?

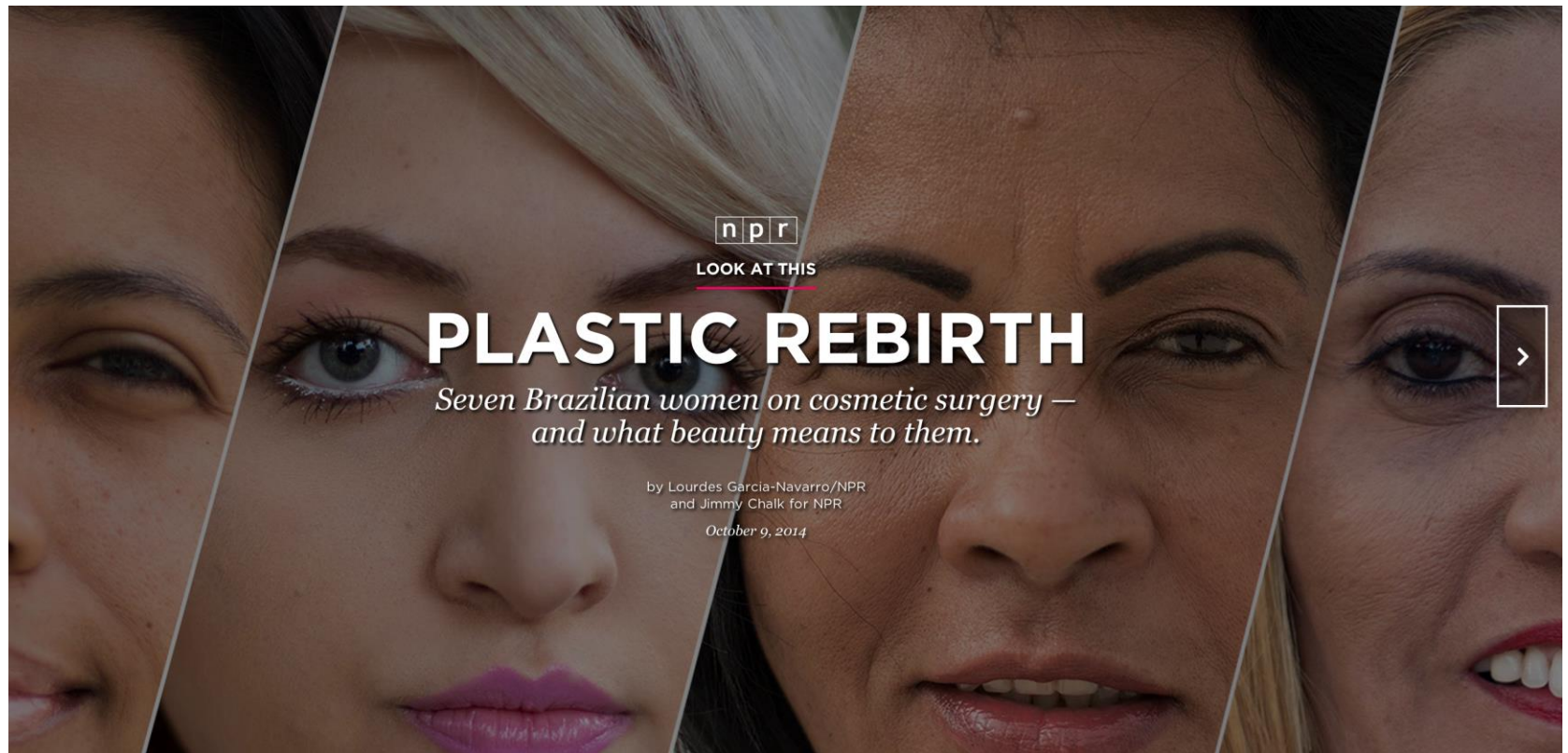
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- Animated GIFS – whoa!



# What Are We Experimenting With?

- Look At This – A rabbit hole of visual curiosities





# Photography is about relationships!

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Kainaz Amaria/NPR