



Dona Marlowe Photographer

Dona Marlowe was born in Drexel, a small town in the foothills of North Carolina. Her father, Benny Orders, was a photographer, Fire Chief, and community leader. Volunteering and participating in community service events were commonplace throughout Marlowe's childhood.

After graduating from Appalachian State with a degree in Communication Arts, Marlowe moved to Raleigh. She worked for the Division of Child Development as a Policy Consultant for Subsidized Day Care. It was there that she started to grasp the realities of poverty.

In 1999, Marlowe moved to Fayetteville with her former husband, one-year-old son, and a second baby boy on the way. She gravitated to opportunities to help people improve their lives and decided to pursue a career in massage therapy. Since 2004, Marlowe has helped alleviate suffering caused by chronic pain and provided the benefits of massage for health and wellness.

Marlowe gave chair massages on multiple occasions to clients at Connections of Cumberland County ("CCC"), a community resource center that serves women and children who are either unhoused or at risk for homelessness. Marlowe's goal was to touch each of her clients with kindness, compassion, and respect. She was deeply impacted by her work with CCC's clients and found a passion for improving the lives of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Marlowe accepted a position on the CCC Board of Directors in 2019.

Another lifelong passion of Marlowe's is photography. Marlowe is fascinated by how a photograph has the ability to stop us in our tracks and transform our perspective. Her father gave her a used Pentax 35mm and taught her the basics when she was a teenager. Marlowe made the transition to digital photography along with the rest of us to document the lives of her sons and her family memories.

Marlowe's passions intersected in December 2019, when she decided to bring the homeless community of Fayetteville, North Carolina into our view via photography. Marlowe was inspired and challenged by the photography canon, "Take something they see every day and show it to them in a way they have never seen." Marlowe was guided by her experiences working with the unhoused community as a massage therapist and later as a CCC board member.

Marlowe sees "I AM SOMEBODY - Faces of Homelessness" as the first of many projects on her journey as a photo activist, someone who uses images and photography to fight for those who are unseen, unheard, forgotten, or powerless. Her hope is to embolden others to take up the torch – or in this case, the Canon or Nikon – and start their own social awareness projects.

To bring this ambitious body of work to fruition, Marlowe spent the last two years learning the advanced settings of her camera, developing technical and creative photography techniques, and mastering post-processing. During this time, she received hundreds of hours of classroom instruction, online training, and one-on-one coaching. Marlowe's work has already received critical acclaim: her portrait of William, featured in this exhibit, was selected for the 2021 Annual Juried Exhibition by the Artist Collective in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Before succumbing to Alzheimer's disease, Marlowe's father's last words to her were, "Helping people is the best thing you can ever do." Thanks, Dad, for the camera and the life lessons. This project is dedicated to Benny Orders.

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