



# Growth: A Photo Narrative

## Kat Reynolds

lauren Ash / March 20, 2015



*Katherine Simone Reynolds*

Kat joined us for a BlackGirlInOm yoga session when she was in Chicago a few weeks back. She's as cool and sweet as she is talented and we were lucky to have her join us! Zakkyyah and I absolutely adore the narrative that has Kat told through her photos. I wanted to ask her more about her ideas and her process. (Also, isn't the woman in this shoot, Manvitha Mallela, stunning?) Here's our conversation about her work and a bit about self-care and her personal philosophy on challenge, as well.

**LA:** What was your vision? What did you take from the idea of growth? And, how did that translate to what you ultimately captured?

**KR:** To me, growth means green, green means rebirth. and of course, flowers. I think it was January or February [when I shot these photos]...it was during a time where it was very difficult to find flowers. I went to the dollar store and found a bouquet of fake flowers. Really just accentuating what it means to actually grow from nothing to what it is now. And to be embraced by nature. That's what I really wanted to work with.

There's a shot of [the model] in a mulch pile that's actually behind my house. It looks like a mountain of earth. That's really what I wanted from that shot. Ultimate new possibility and untapped potential. That kind of thing, you know.

**LA: I get that. And is she a friend of yours?**

KR: I actually ended up meeting her [at work]. I was like “you’re beautiful, here’s my card.” I shot her a few times before and she was pretty comfortable with me and my ridiculousness. I know I can kind of be ridiculous, especially coming from a dance world, directing and stuff, I can be very hands-on. I want you to jump for things. (laughs) So, I met her and thought she was beautiful and from there we built a relationship. She’s not a model. I don’t usually shoot people who are considered models. I don’t shoot people like that. I like to shoot naturally beautifully people ... people who have an inexperience that gives them an air that I really like .... a vulnerability that I like.



Katherine Simóne Reynolds

**LA: What you just said about vulnerability is why I asked why you knew her. It seems as if there’s a vulnerability as well as an intimacy with your shots, too. I think that’s a mark of comfortability of the subject in the shot, but also of you as the photographer to make someone comfortable with you to express so much even when they’re not looking at the camera.**

KR: Yes, I feel like a lot of people think that photography is just you with a camera. Actually there’s been many a time where people are like “you made me feel so comfortable with myself and I haven’t been feeling that way in a really long time.” So, it’s therapy for some people. You taking good pictures of someone and showing them good pictures of themselves.

People need to know that they’re beautiful. Because it’s more than just on paper--it’s within. I know that sounds super hippy-dippy, but it’s a real thing especially for women, I feel. You have all these standards of beauty. You look in a magazine, you look on Instagram, and Tumblr, and you have all these standards of beauty that it’s hard for you to sometimes look in the mirror and say you can relate. So when someone else can look at you and take a good picture of you, then it means a lot more than taking self-portraits of yourself. Because you know how good you can look. You know your angles, but when someone else does it for you it means so much more.

...I like to work with different angles. I know I wouldn’t want someone to look at my work and think “everyone looks the same.” It’s really easy to do go-to poses. Mind you, working with someone that’s not a model, that can be an issue. Because they don’t [always] know what angles they look good in. It can be challenging, but it creates a possibility.

**LA: I love that. A possibility. That’s basically what a challenge is if you choose to look at it through a different paradigm.**

KR: That’s exactly how I go about my day. Going to the gym, for example. I am an extremely active person ... I make it into a thing that’s not a challenge, but a possibility just to get through my day. If I don’t do that step, I won’t be able to take other steps because I won’t be mentally there. Taking challenges and turning them into possibilities. If I think of me not doing something than it bothers me more than just not doing it. I’ll sometimes make myself think about myself not doing something. And then I just do it.



Katherine Simóne Reynolds



**Katherine Simóne Reynolds** is a 23-year-old freelance photographer specializing in portrait and architectural photography. She acquired a new found passion in photography during her study abroad in Vienna, Austria while attaining her B.A. in Dance from Webster University. Katherine captures many social issues within the Saint Louis community; her first show, *The Divide*, was a visual interpretation of the socioeconomic separation concerning the intersection of Delmar and Kingshighway, from an architectural standpoint. Through photography, Katherine has made it her goal to give unnoticed beauty a purpose.