

Occupation Series
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Artist Statement

I am second generation Chinese immigrant from Malaysia and also a Permanent Resident in the United States. Malaysia is diverse country—similar to the United States in that it is home to many different races and ethnicities. The demographics of Malaysia are represented by the Malay, Chinese, Indian, and native groups.

I was ethnically colorblind until I learned that I am Chinese and there are Malay and Indian peoples living together in the same area. My grandparents are from China; they were brought to Malaysia to work hard labor back in the 1920s. They are considered first generation Chinese in Malaysia. I was a Resident Alien in the United States until 2020. A Resident Alien is a foreign national living on an official basis in a country of which they are not a citizen. My H1-B visa (work visa for skilled professionals) allows me to work and live in the United States.

At the age of sixteen I left my hometown of Karak, Malaysia because there was little future for me there. I came to the United States at the age of 21 to earn my physics degree. This is my ninth year in the United States and I am still adapting to life in America. I am a portrait photographer who documents immigrants and refugees in the United States and in Malaysia. My intention is to honor immigrants and refugees—to present them as they want to be seen, but not necessarily as we typically see them.

The Occupation Series serves as a path to help me achieve a sense of belonging. Through this project, I am able to gain a better understanding of my hometown. It also gives me a clearer picture about how immigrants and refugees fit into their new homeland, and how I can find my own role in my new homeland.