



Visual Coverage

When you think of Appalachia, what comes to mind? If you're visualizing the soot-covered faces of coal miners or barefoot youth in tattered clothing, there's a reason. Images taken during the 1930s Farm Security Administration and the 1964 War on Poverty set the stage. Though our culture evolved, visual representations of our region didn't. Throughout the 2016 election, Appalachians saw the same overwhelmingly homogenous depictions of our region: mostly white, mostly rural, mostly poor. While this is a reality for many Appalachians, there is more than one story to be told in a region that encompasses 420 counties across 13 states. By providing much-needed context, however, we believe we can assist visual storytellers who may not be familiar with the region as they cover Appalachian culture and share Appalachian stories.

EDITORS: If you haven't checked out our [Appalachian Creatives for Hire database](#), we encourage you to do so. Not only are these talented folks readily available, they're also equipped with years — some with decades — of regional context to tackle the assignments your outlet is considering. Before sending in a staffer, consider scrolling through our list, where you can look at each contractor's portfolio website and contact them directly.

LET'S TALK VISUALS!

Every visual journalist's vision is different — that's what makes photojournalism enthralling! Understand that this guide is not created to discourage you from documenting any aspect of Appalachia. Documentation is critical! The purpose of this guide, as well as our original COVERING APPALACHIA guide, is to provide context to the images that you're covering.

CONTEXTUAL IMAGES and SCENE-SETTERS

When gathering contextual footage, it may be attractive to document scenes that vary — perhaps greatly — from your reality. Dilapidated houses (that may very well be beloved homes), cluttered yards, remnants of the declining coal culture (such as tipples, filled train cars or processing plants), sunken-in porches, confederate and Trump flags and run-down businesses often surface in stock image searches. Some stock photo agencies even have "Appalachian poverty" as a go-to category for media usage.

The issue isn't the documentation; it's often the way the visuals are shared as a *complete* portrait — and often the only portrait — of the area covered. As if all of Appalachia or all Appalachians look the same. While this specific frame may represent a portion of the region, it likely will not represent the region fully. Since Appalachia does not receive the same variety of coverage that other, more populous areas receive, it's important to note that your images may be the only

image someone outside the region sees in their daily news digest.

Be sure to think about your framing and the message your image conveys. An image of one disheveled property when all surrounding properties are manicured may not be representative of the community.

PORTRAITS

When looking for Appalachian sources to work with, consider seeking out the diversity that exists within the region! Though many depictions of Appalachian people look the same, that doesn't mean our people do. To ensure that you're gathering all voices in the Appalachian narrative, consider reaching out to one of our 14 Appalachian advisors in the [Appalachian Advisors Network](#). These advisors are native to the region and can tell you about the specific community's history and culture.

When you're photographing folks, try to recognize any implicit biases you may have. Which individuals are you gravitating toward? Is this a result of implicit bias? Do the images proliferate stereotypes?

Additionally: If a source seems hesitant about being photographed, they may be distrustful. Some rural folks don't like to call attention to themselves unnecessarily, and that's okay! In Appalachia, relationships are built on trust — genuine trust. If your connections are authentic, they (and everyone else, for that matter) will be more comfortable around you.