

**#28 April 2018 Cameraderie
Pete Souza (1954-)**



Peter J. Souza is an American photojournalist, the former Chief Official White House Photographer for President Ronald Reagan, and also for President Barack Obama (January 20, 2009–January 20, 2017), and a former director of the White House Photography Office. Souza shot 1.3 million images of President Obama in eight years. Now he has published a book of 325 of those images.

Here is the Wikipedia article on Souza:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete_Souza

With so many fine images to choose from, I am going to discuss a few that strike me for their tutorial value.

First term official photograph of Obama, January 2009, by Souza



Note that this color portrait clearly uses controlled lighting, with the President's right side receiving the main light, creating a slight Rembrandt triangle of light under his left eye. If there

is a fill light from the left, it is very slight, and I don't think there is any back light. There may have been another light on the flags. The brighter side of the President's face receives more space, and that is where the American flag and the Flag of the President are placed. The President wears an America flag pin in his left lapel. Note also, the slight angle of the President's shoulders, creating a diagonally receding line back to the flags. A formal portrait like this is always very carefully thought-out.

Second term official photograph of Obama, Dec. 6, 2012, by Souza



Here, the President is clearly in the Oval Office, standing before his desk, and posing very informally, with his arms crossed and showing his trademark grand smile—he is shown to be comfortable and integrated with the job. I cannot decode the lighting—it might just be a bounce flash directed at the ceiling—perhaps some of you can tell better than I. The President's shoulders still make a slight diagonal line in the direction of the American flag. He still wears the flag pin in his left lapel.

From the Internet, under Souza's name



From hundreds of images to choose from, I like this one because of its classic “giving a speech” pose. We can all take advantage of a backlight and a dramatic gesture when we shoot public

figures giving speeches. Souza has also left enough space in front of the President so there is “breathing room” on that side. Consider also how this image would look flipped left-for-right. Since we read left to right, *this* image says “stop and look,” but flipped it would say “keep going out the right side of the image,” and our eyes might wander out of the image.

From the Internet, under Souza’s name



Souza shot a lot of black and white images of Obama. Notice how they have more drama. In this one, several elements that I particularly like are present: shooting from behind a person walking away from you; and using a diagonally receding line, in this case an empty corridor. Does the empty corridor suggest that the President’s job is lonely and isolated and indicate his heavy load of responsibilities? Note the realism, in that Souza did not correct the leveling of the columns, wall, and ceiling—does this informality suggest that something is out of kilter?

From the Internet, under Souza’s name



I don't know who the child is, but being ready to shoot an informal moment, and get down on the floor to do it, is a must in some situations. Obama's feet "rest" upon the right side of the frame "for stability," and Souza has left a little "breathing space" at the head of the shot.