



Canadian Stage
 Box Office:
 416-368-3110

NOW

- NEWS
 - LIFESTYLE
 - FOOD & DRINK
 - MUSIC
 - MOVIES
 - STAGE
- ART & BOOKS
 - EVENTS
 - CLASSIFIEDS

HOME / ART & BOOKS / ART / [BLACK LIVES MATTER: LATOYA RUBY FRAZIER TALKS ABOUT GORDON PARKS](#)

BLACK LIVES MATTER: LATOYA RUBY FRAZIER TALKS ABOUT GORDON PARKS

"My family happens to be a springboard for talking about bigger issues of class, health care and environmental racism," says the photographer

BY **FRAN SCHECHTER**
 MAY 25, 2016 5:41 PM

Like 7



LaToya Ruby Frazier's *Me And Mom's Boyfriend Mr. Art* is in *The Notion Of Family*.

LATOYA RUBY FRAZIER at the **Art Gallery of Ontario** (317 Dundas West), Friday (May 27), 6 pm. \$17, stu \$10. ago.net. See [listing](#).

The Notion Of Family,* LaToya Ruby Frazier's searing 2014 photo book, builds on the legacy of *A Harlem Family* by Gordon Parks, part of the **AGO's Outsiders show**. On the show's closing weekend, Frazier comes to the AGO to talk about Parks.

Parks's 1968 *Life* Magazine photo essay about the Fontenelles, a Black family living in poverty, told a shocking story rarely before seen in the media. Frazier's book, a history of her family and rust-belt hometown, Braddock, Pennsylvania, tells a more recent story of poverty and resistance, made more powerful by her passionate first-person perspective.

"My family happens to be a springboard for talking about bigger issues of class, health care and environmental racism," Frazier says on PBS's Art21 in 2012. "I have to tell my story because it hasn't been told. I'm a human being and my life has value. I refuse to be erased."

When she was a teenager, the artist (now in her mid-30s) started photographing herself and her family. "People think that people struggling economically don't add value to society," she says. "It became about making a family album of images, day to day, to defy what I see in the media. I was combatting stereotypes of someone like my mother and me, who are often depicted in the most dehumanizing way - as poor, worthless or on welfare."

Reacting against photographers who make images of the poor for an elite audience and who silence their subjects - as Dorothea Lange did Florence Owens Thompson, the subject of *Migrant Mother* - Frazier began collaborating with her own mother. Her family members often

confront the camera as they deal with illnesses related to their exposure to pollution from the steel mills.

Political context comes from shots of the depopulated town and aerial photos of industrial sites. Pointed text narrates Braddock's devolution over four generations from bustling working-class hub to devastated community after plant closures, white flight and the war on drugs.

Frazier's talent for bringing many levels of commentary to a single image is evident in a 2008 photo called Huxtables, Mom And Me, owned by Kenneth Montague of Wedge Curatorial Projects, which hangs in the Counterpoints show at the Art Museum at U of T. The local collector and friend of the artist says Frazier "represents the Black American voice, the woman's voice and a voice of power for neglected people, period, but certainly for poor people in America."

**Aperture is publishing a paperback edition of The Notion Of Family in October; until then, see it at the Toronto Reference Library.*

art@nowtoronto.com | [@franschechter](https://twitter.com/franschechter)

Tags [photography](#), [Art Gallery of Ontario](#)

Like 7

RELATED

- [AGO First Thursdays: Photography NOW](#)
- [Casa Susanna's cross dressers in AGO's 60s show amaze](#)
- [Matthew Teitelbaum says goodbye to the AGO](#)
- [Lake's deep ideas](#)
- [Maus that roars](#)

COMMENTS





NOW newsletters

Sign up to receive the latest from nowtoronto.com and to win incredible prizes!

- FRESH DISH
 CONTEST CLIQUE
 THIS WEEK IN NOW

Email Address*:

Subscribe

What's on

Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu

FRIDAY

MAY 27, 2016

Critics' Picks

BARBADOS ON THE WATER

May 27, 2016 - May 29, 2016

HARBOURFRONT CENTRE

Critics' Picks

MARIENBAD

May 27, 2016 8:00 PM

WINCHESTER STREET THEATRE

Critics' Picks

MUTUAL BENEFIT, FLORIST

May 27, 2016 8:00 PM

DRAKE HOTEL

[Search all events](#) →

Recent updates



THINGS THE TORONTO POLICE CARE LESS ABOUT THAN MARIJUANA DISPENSARIES

"We have a large number of competing priorities" →

| MAY 26, 2016 | [THINK FREE:](#)

BY JONATHAN GOLDSBIE
[THE NOW TORONTO BLOG](#)

TORONTO TIPSHEET: MARIENBAD, INSIDE OUT LGBT FILM FESTIVAL, MOBY AND MORE

| MAY 26, 2016 | [THINK FREE:](#)

[THE NOW TORONTO BLOG](#)

DANFORTH WEED DISPENSARY WORKER DESCRIBES TODAY'S POLICE CRACKDOWN


The manager of a Toronto medical marijuana shop recounts how 15 police officers "barged in" to confiscate cannabis →

| MAY 26, 2016 | [NEWS](#)

BY MICHELLE DA SILVA

NOW on Twitter

Tweets by @nowtoronto


 **NOW Magazine**
@nowtoronto

Six of the trickiest Toronto intersections for cyclists (and these have bike lanes)

bit.ly/1XVvAO0



42m

 **NOW Magazine**
@nowtoronto

#Sagittarius: It's a highly favourable time for you to bestow extra imaginative blessings.

bit.ly/1sBcjVK



[Embed](#)

[View on Twitter](#)





SECTIONS | [News](#) | [Life & Style](#) | [Food & Drink](#) | [Music](#) | [Movies](#) | [Stage](#) | [Art & Books](#) | [Listings](#) | [Classifieds](#)

| [Best Of](#)

COMPANY | [About](#) | [Contact](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Staff Masthead](#) | [Careers](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [F.A.Q.](#)

PROMOTIONS | [Contests](#) | [Contests F.A.Q.](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [NOW in the Media](#) | [NOW's Online Archive](#)

NOW Communications Inc.

Built with [Metro Publisher™](#)