The Report Committee for Natalie Marie Zelt
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:

Documenting Against Erasure: Deindustrialization and the Camera in the Work of LaToya Ruby Frazier

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor:

Cary Cordova

Cherise Smith

Documenting Against Erasure: Deindustrialization and the Camera in the Work of LaToya Ruby Frazier

by

Natalie Marie Zelt, B.A.

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2014

Acknowledgements

This report germinated from a conversation with my friend and mentor Anne Wilkes Tucker in the exhibition *LaToya Ruby Frazier: Witness* at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston and undoubtedly arose from all of our discussions about photography over the years. It came into fruition because of the patient guidance and support of my advisors, Dr. Cary Cordova and Dr. Cherise Smith. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the many readers of my many drafts, who fought my contempt for punctuation, particularly Caroline Pinktson, Josh Kopin, Ashlyn Davis, Julia Elizabeth Neal, Rebecca Giordano, Uchenna Itam, Jessica McDonald and Steve Hoelscher. My thanks are especially due to Ken Standley for his endurance and encouragement during the writing process.

Finally my sincerest gratitude goes to LaToya Ruby Frazier for continuing to make and share artwork that pushes the boundaries of photography and challenges our understanding of our history and our present.

Abstract

Documenting Against Erasure: Deindustrialization and the Camera in the Work of LaToya Ruby Frazier

Natalie Marie Zelt, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

Supervisor: Cary Cordova

Amid contemporary catastrophizing about industry and the practice of photography, American artist LaToya Ruby Frazier began her photographic series *Notion of Family* (2002 to present) as a means of documenting the effects of economic and environmental decline in Braddock, Pennsylvania. Located nine miles south of Pittsburgh and the site of Andrew Carnegie's first steel mill, the contemporary landscape of Braddock and the experience of its citizens mark a liminal place between the stark abandonment of completely deindustrialized sites and a continued battle with the environmental and social effects of surviving in industry's wake. By photographing herself, her mother, her grandmother, and cousins and documenting the vicissitudes of her lived experience, Frazier uses the camera to resist real and insidious attempts at the erasure from the landscape and history of Braddock and from photographic discourse. Her work is a complex form of autobiography generated to be both representative of herself and to speak to a larger narrative about the impact of deindustrialization on marginalized communities. She uses the historical tension between absence and presence

to make histories, realities and subjectivities present against the cultural and environmental forces striving to render them absent.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

In April 2010, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art hosted a two-day workshop and panel discussion called "Is Photography Over?" The participants, artists, scholars, curators, and photography historians, gathered to consider photography's existential crisis in the era of the internet and globalization. While many aspects of contemporary photography were debated, the tenuous vitality of the medium was a given. One of the participants, art historian Joel Snyder, elegiacally asserted that "photography as a medium with a past, and crucially, a present, and a future is over."[1] The impetus for such a symposium is indicative of a shifting discourse of photography and its relationship to twenty-first century society in the United States. Anxiety surrounding the salience of photography was fueled by both physical disappearance and conceptual changes. The closing of wet darkrooms in communities and universities across the United States and declining sales of film and film products that eventually contributed to Eastman Kodak Company filing for bankruptcy in 2012, all read as harbingers of the medium's mounting decrepitude. In 2009 critic Fred Richtin declared the end of the medium with the publication of *After Photography,* in which he identifies the present and future of photography as an era of "hyperphotography," or "post-photography," used to "delineate, document, and explore the post-human."[2] Rather than reading the shifting discourse as

---

[1] Joel Snyder, "Some Elegiac Stanzas," *Is Photography Over?,* San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, April 2010, www.sfmoma.org/about/research_projects/research_projects_photography_over.

[2] Fred Ritchin, *After Photography* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company: 2009), 183.

opening up space for a more nuanced and expanded use of the medium to address the complex contemporary conditions of human experience, such doomsayers disempowered photography as an irrelevant visual language.

For Snyder and his sympathizers the critical destabilization of photographic verisimilitude and a movement away from the tactile craft of photographic printmaking added to a growing list of symptoms contributing to the medium's fatal affliction. The alleged demise of the medium occurred in tandem with late twentieth century concerns for identity expression, the body, and the power dynamics of representation. Such a concurrence suggests parallels between Ritchin's and Synder's concerns and the postmodern ideology criticized by artist and philosopher Adrian Piper. In response to a litany of actions of de facto censorship of artwork by woman artists of color and frequent maligning of the African American artists work as derivative, Piper criticizes the postmodern "mourning for the past glories and achievements of all previous stages of Eurocentric art history."[3] I would also argue, along the same lines as Piper, that Ritchin's and Synder's positioning of photography as inert and irrelevant is a repressive and exclusionary gesture that preserves a Euroethnic canon for the medium and resists the incursion of identity-oriented innovation with the photography. Piper argues that upon perceiving the work of women artists of color as "competitors for truth and a threat to the cultural homogeneity of the Euroethnic tradition" or to the art-historical canon, postmodernism functioned to deny those works "their rightful status as innovations relative to that tradition through ad hoc disclaimers of the validity of concepts such as

[3] Adrian Piper, "The Triple Negation of Colored Women Artists." In *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 168.

"truth" and "innovation."[4] So rather than evaluate the innovative qualities of the work of women artists of color, postmodern critics regarded innovation itself as invalid. Similarly, rather than reading the ways that contemporary photographers functionally dismantle photographic discourse and history as tools of creative expression, contemporary photographic critics, such as Snyder and Ritchin, declare its end.

In opposition to heralding photography's demise, American artist LaToya Ruby Frazier's use of photography argues for the medium's continued relevance. Her photographs visualize her experience and the realities of her family and the low-income African American community in her hometown of Braddock, Pennsylvania, located nine miles south of Pittsburgh.[5] Amid contemporary catastrophizing in and around the industry and practice of photography, Frazier began the series *Notion of Family* (2002 to present) as a means of documenting the effects of economic and environmental decline in Braddock by photographing herself, her mother, her grandmother, and cousins. All life-long residents of Braddock, Frazier and her family struggled with problems of poverty as the steel industry declined in the Pittsburgh area. Though the steel mill that sparked an economic boom in Braddock in the first half of the twentieth century survived the blight of closings during the 1970s and 1980s, Braddock was irrefutably impacted by the decline of industrial production nationally during this era of deindustrialization. The landscape of Braddock and the experience of its citizens mark a liminal place between the

[4] Piper, 161.
[5] The town of Braddock is also referred to as the Borough of Braddock and is located on the Monongahela River in Allegheny County.

stark abandonment of completely deindustrialized sites and a continued battle with the environmental and social effects of surviving in industry's wake.

A citizen of Braddock, Frazier's artwork revolves around her hometown, its socio-economic conditions and its physical, emotional, and psychological impact on her identity and its expression. In contrast to other photographers who work in a documentary tradition, Frazier only photographs in Braddock. Her work is a complex form of autobiography generated to be both representative of herself and to speak to a larger narrative about the impact of deindustrialization on marginalized communities. She began *Notion of Family* to engage with history in the present and to confront loss and representational absence:

> "It became very clear to me from a young age … through looking at the conditions that my mother, my grandmother and I were living in one block away from Andrew Carnegie's first steel mill, the Edgar Thompson works, that we were born into a harsh reality of poverty and environmental degradation. And through witnessing the loss of my family. We all have terminal illnesses, through each generation we've kind of quietly died off without any assistance or programming from the local or state government. Witnessing the loss of my family and the economic downturn after the spread of global economy kind of encouraged me and inspired me to begin to photograph us. If I don't tell my story or make photographs of us, no one will."[6]

The series is as much about the contemporary capacity of the camera to confront the vicissitudes of an artist's experience and community as it is about the tension between public and private narratives and a relationship to place.

---

[6]LaToya Ruby Frazier, interview by James Krivo, *The Uncritic Review: Exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum, LaToya Ruby Frazier: A Haunted Capital*, WBAI, April 21, 2013, http://www.wbai.org/articles.php?article=1115.

The power of Frazier's artwork and its recognition in artistic and cultural spheres stands at odds with photography's purported irrelevance or enervation. Made from carefully crafted film negatives, photographs from *Notion of Family* have been featured in more than 30 group exhibitions and 13 solo and two-person shows in museums and galleries across the country, including the Brooklyn Museum, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, the Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago and in the Whitney Museum of American Art 2012 Biennial. Support from prestigious awards such as the American Academy in Berlin Prize in 2013 and the 2014 Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship has allowed her to continue to document her community, family and personal experience and have helped make more visible the issues she confronts with her artwork. Yet Frazier's critical interventions in cultural history as well as art historic and photographic discourse have yet to be examined in any depth. My project is the one of first to constellate Frazier in both spheres. Presenting a series of contextual vignettes, this report confronts the cultural and photographic environments that surround Frazier work.

By using the camera to picture herself and her community, Frazier resists real and insidious attempts at the erasure of her experience, her place in history, and even her body from the landscape of Braddock. Frazier views her experience in Braddock as part of a lineage traced by her mother and grandmother's experience of the town during very different moments in its history. The past does not stop at each generation; instead, Frazier positions her experience as continually building upon that of her mother and grandmother:

> Grandma Ruby witnessed Braddock's prosperous days of Department stores, theaters and restaurants. Mom witnessed the steel mills close and white flight to suburban developments. I witnessed the War on Drugs decimate my family and community. Between our three generations we not only witnessed, we experienced and internalized the end of industrialization and rise of deindustrialization.[7]

For Frazier, members of her family provide visual as well as embodied evidence of the particular impact of national sociocultural, economic and environmental changes in history. Though the Edgar Thompson Works survived the era of anxiety and plant shut downs, it did so at a dramatically abbreviated capacity and Braddock suffered severe economic decline and dramatic outmigration away from the Pittsburgh region. The town, which had boasted a population of over 16,000 in 1950, would dwindle to 2,159 by 2000.[8] Frazier's family, who had been in Braddock for three generations, was one that stayed; each generation experienced distinct but entangled phases of the community's history.

Yet the struggles of Braddock's African American residents during Frazier's childhood in the 1980s and 1990s were rendered invisible often by omission. Local and national media extolled the still operable mill in Braddock but eschewed the surrounding community. While municipal services were in decline and Braddock residents struggled with the impacts of poverty, the Federal government funneled money towards the documentation of the mills and the construction of museums that told the history of

---

[7] LaToya Ruby Frazier, "Statement," *LaToya Ruby Frazier*, accessed June 20, 2014, http://www.latoyarubyfrazier.com/statement.

[8] Bureau of the Census, *United States Census 1960*, 16, Table 5, "Population of Incorporated Place of 10,000 or more from earliest census to 1960," accessed June 20, 2014, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/17216604v1p40ch02.pdf; Bureau of the Census, "United States Census 2000: Braddock Borough, Pennsylvania," *American Fact Finder*, accessed June 20, 2014, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml.

industry, favoring the preservation of a mutable past to the needs of the present.[9] White-ethnic and working-class mythologies that celebrated strength and devotion to industry through figures like Joe Magarac, the mythic man of steel whose symbolism was coopted by the United States Steel Corporation, obscured the material consequences of steel production and its decline.[10]

Like photography, Braddock has been positioned as inoperable, abandoned, and immaterial since the 1980s. The Edgar Thompson Steel Works, which sits between the town of Braddock and the Monongahela River just south of Pittsburgh, was the first founded by steel mogul Andrew Carnegie in 1872.[11] It was the first mill in the United States to implement a cost-effective and revolutionary means of mass producing steel, known as the Bessemer process. As a result, the Edgar Thompson Works and the community that surrounded it became a symbol of pride for Carnegie and later the United States Steel Corporation.[12] By 1982, the year Frazier was born, Braddock and other steel mill towns were enduring a series of profound economic hardships. Low cost industrial imports from Japan, Europe, Korea, Brazil, and Latin America flooded the market and

---

[9] Russell E. Eshleman Jr and Inquirer Staff Writer, "Museum Of Steel Preserving The Heritage Of An Industry Upon Which A Region Was Built," *Philly.com*, accessed March 15, 2014, http://articles.philly.com/1988-08-26/news/26255894_1_steel-industry-mill-sites-steel-mills.

[10] Stephen Burnett and Jennifer Gilley, "Deconstructing and Reconstructing Pittsburgh's Man of Steel: Reading Joe Magarac against the Context of the 20th-Century Steel Industry," *The Journal of American Folklore* 111, no. 442 (October 1, 1998): 392-408, doi:10.2307/541047

[11] Robert M. Grom, *Braddock, Allegheny County* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), Kindle edition, location 273.

[12] Braddock History Committee and George Harris Lamb, *The Unwritten History of Braddock's Field (Pennsylvania)* (Pittsburgh: Nicholson Printing Co., 1917), 96. http://archive.org/details/unwrittenhistory00brad

overtook U.S. production.[13] The number of steel industry employees in the United States had fallen by 210,300 since 1973.[14] The reduction of manufacturing work and the rise of the service and tech industries led to increased unemployment and epic strain on public services. According to historian Jefferson Cowie, as major industrial centers like Pittsburgh hemorrhaged employment, they "began to look like industrial mausoleums." [15] Massive job loss affected all residents of the Pittsburgh region, but its impact was disproportionately severe for African Americans who had long been subjected to discriminatory hiring, promotion, assignment and wage policies in the mills and who had in 1974 won federal support for a consent decree demanding that nine of the industry's biggest companies take affirmative action in hiring and promotion.[16] Plant closings curtailed such successes of civil and labor rights movements made during the 1960s and contributed to a 16.7% jobless rate for African Americans in Allegheny County – as of 1990, the fourth highest rate in the country.[17] According to Cowie, devastating employment conditions caused available housing to be "reduced to warehouses for unemployed African Americans who had once taken the train from the Deep South to the freedom of a northern industrial job during the Great Migrations of the two world

---

[13] Congressional Budget Office, "The U.S. Steel Industry: Current Conditions and Historical Background," in *The Effects of Import Quotas on the Steel Industry: Report to United States Congress* (Washington DC: Congressional Budget Office, July 1984), 12.

[14] Ibid, 20, Table 7, "Steel Industry Employment" from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[15] Jefferson R. Cowie, *Stayin' Alive : The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 235.

[16] Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "Milestones: 1974," *EEOC 35th Anniversary*, 2000, http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/history/35th/milestones/1974.html.

[17] Ranked among the 50 largest US counties in Jim McKay, "Blacks lost jobs and a generation with manufacturing's demise." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 15, 1994.

wars."[18] Frazier's grandfather came to Braddock as part of the Great Migration to work in industrial urban centers, and he worked in the steel industry for most of his life. He, along with Frazier's Grandma Ruby, provides a symbolic point of connection to history for Frazier and a means of grounding her ancestry in place and industry.[19]

As Frazier, her family and other residents of Braddock absorbed the socioeconomic blows of globalized capitalism, they were also continually subjected to exorbitantly high levels of toxins produced by the mill that lingered in the river valley. A 2010 report of Risk-Screening Environmental Indicators, a model that the Environmental Protection Agency uses to highlight toxic chemical releases that would pose greater risk over a lifetime of exposure, shows that even at its abbreviated scale of production, the Edgar Thompson Works releases harmful chemicals at a rate that is 2,067 times the national mean into the air over Braddock.[20] Frazier, her mother and many of her family members suffer from chronic illnesses likely related to elevated levels of toxicity. Yet Frazier defiantly states, "We remain steadfast although our bodies are deteriorating along with our land."[21] This chemical assault on Braddock residents marks another gesture towards making bodies absent, disabling them.

Frazier's use of photography expresses a faith in photography as an activist medium and a commitment to a socially-motivated form of documentary. In many ways,

---

[18] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 235.
[19]LaToya Ruby Frazier, "2012 Biennial: LaToya Ruby Frazier," Whitney Museum of Art, video, 1:53. 2010. http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/2012Biennial/LaToyaRubyFrazier
[20] Environmental Protection Agency, "TRI Search," *Data & Tools*, accessed March 27, 2014, http://oaspub.epa.gov/enviro/rsei.html?facid=15104SSDGRBRADD.
[21] LaToya Ruby Frazier, interview by Greg Lindquist, "Haunted: Q&A with LaToya Ruby Frazier," Art in America, March 19, 2013, http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/haunted-qa-with-latoya-ruby-frazier/.

her practice is analogous to a mode of photography associated with mid-twentieth century documentary, generally referred to as "social documentary" that is often mourned by photographic traditionalists in the United States. Trained in the wet darkroom, Frazier continued to develop the series *Notion of Family* while earning her Bachelors in Fine Arts at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and her Masters in Fine Arts at Syracuse University which she completed in 2007. Using medium format and 35mm film cameras, Frazier focused on the traditional craft of photography as much as the theories and cultural meaning of photography. She photographed her experience in many genres, through portraiture, self-portraiture, street photography, and still-life, all to communicate the social conditions of Braddock. Traditional social documentary is predicated on the photograph's capacity to objectively depict social conditions and realities as proof. Evidence supersedes the influence of the photographer's subjectivity and the photograph remains factual despite artistic interpretation.[22] The objective truth of such documentary was fundamentally destabilized by the postmodern concerns that deconstructed the photograph as a representational apparatus capable of supporting essentialism and the policing of certain bodies.[23] Frazier uses the historical tension between absence and presence to make histories, realities and subjectivities present against the cultural and

[22] For a useful survey of the development and changing perceptions and meaning of social documentary in the United States see chapters nine and twelve in Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, 4th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2014). My definition of "traditional social documentary" is from chapter 13 of Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography Form 1839 to the Present*, 5th edition, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999).

[23] For more on this see: Richard Bolton, *The Contest of Meaning* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1989); Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis, *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (New York: International Center of Photography in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 2003); Craig Owens and Scott Stewart Bryson, *Beyond Recognition Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

environmental forces striving to render them absent. Her strategic adoption of the visual language and craft of mid-twentieth century social documentary is neither a nostalgic anachronism nor the simple result of her intense formal training in the wet darkroom. Rather, it is a rejection of the enervation of the medium in favor of a political realism that negotiates the tension between documentary discourse and the politics of identity to create a more dynamic and self-conscious form of documentary photography.

Frazier's work warrants careful consideration; it uses an allegedly expired medium to represent a purportedly enervated community as a gesture of resistance—an active assertion of vitality—proving that neither photography nor Braddock is over or absent. The meaning and potential impact of her work spans photographic, cultural and historic fields. Her use of the camera and her engagement with the legacy and aesthetics of social documentary and critiques of the historic and contemporary sociocultural landscape of Braddock can all be explored through the dynamics of absence and presence. Where and how does Frazier assert her presence in the post-industrial landscape of Braddock? How does her identification as a photographer, as a citizen of Braddock and as an African American woman from a low income community affect the meaning of her presence in front of and behind the camera? How does her intersectional position make her work different from traditional social documentary forms?

My project examines these questions and the contours of Frazier's contested presence in the landscape and history of Braddock and as an artist and a photographic subject from two directions. A close reading of Frazier's 2010 video *Self-Portrait (United States Steel)* (figure 2) in Chapter One, against representations of the real and

mythologized landscape of Braddock will explore the visible and invisible means by which low-income African Americans in Braddock have encountered intended physical and historic erasure. Chapter Two will focus on Frazier's interventions in the photographic environment. With an emphasis on photography's lingering associations with objectivity and anxieties surrounding photographic agency, I will situate Frazier's photographic work amid contemporary and historic photographic documentary discourse with a distinct focus on the politics of identity expression and its relationship to photographic subjectivity in documentary forms. Though each part varies in methodological approach, the variety of avenues for understanding Frazier's work indicate that neither photography nor Braddock should be relegated to an inconsequential past. Instead Frazier's work shows that the past can be used as a tool for resistance in the present and as a means for rendering lingering injustices visible.

Chapter 1:

Contested Presence: LaToya Ruby Frazier and the Landscape of Braddock

In addition to photographs, artist LaToya Ruby Frazier experiments with moving images, or in her words "breathing photographs," to assert her presence in the sociocultural history of Braddock.[24] Just as with still photographs, Frazier's video work confronts the legacy of industry that has waged a form of physical and psychological war on residents of the borough.[25] Environmental degradation, systemic racism, and social abandonment compounded with white industrial nostalgia and working class mythologies are just some of the intangible forces that have had a material impact on Frazier and other African American residents of Braddock. In her artwork, Frazier uses her camera and her body to contest such forces and declare "I'm a human being and my life has value and I refuse to be erased."[26] In an effort to provide some historical background for Frazier's work, this chapter will explore the legacy of the body in Braddock, as well as representations perpetuated by white industrial nostalgia and socially sanctioned attempts to erase low-income African Americans from the physical and cultural landscape of Braddock.

The legacy of the body and representational gestures of erasure in Braddock are evident in both mythic and documentary forms. The figure of Joe Magarac (figure 1), the

---

[24] LaToya Ruby Frazier and PCK Media, "LaToya Ruby Frazier: Politics & Poetics," *State of the Arts*, NJTV, video 8:10, April 1, 2012, http://vimeo.com/39481979.

[25] The Borough of Braddock and the city of Pittsburgh are both in Allegheny County. Pennsylvania designates a self-governing municipal entity that is usually smaller than a city as a "Borough."

[26] LaToya Ruby Frazier, "LaToya Ruby Frazier Makes Moving Pictures," *New York Close Up,* Art21, video, 6:56. February 10, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7-sB3juDJU&feature=kp.

Paul Bunyan of the steel industry, represents one form of cultural embodiment that Frazier's work contests. A statue of Magarac was recently installed directly in front of Braddock's Edgar Thompson Steel Works, physically and symbolically juxtaposing Magarac's body against the plant in a manner that is analogous to Frazier's video *Self-Portrait (United States Steel)* (2010). Frazier's emphasis on breathing as an expression of vitality and bodily presence in *Self-Portrait (United States Steel)*, positions Frazier's work as a rejection of representations that posit Braddock as a dead space and its African American community as absent or invisible. After comparing the political and cultural implications of the statue of Magarac and *Self-Portrait (United States Steel)*, this chapter will highlight the absences and gestures of erasure in two documentaries of Braddock made during Frazier's childhood. Consideration of Tony Buba's 1988 film *Lightning Over Braddock: A Rustbowl Fantasy* and John McWilliams's 1989 Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) photographic survey lends historic context to the types of omissions Frazier works against. Buba's and McWilliams's documentaries provide divergent counterpoints to Frazier's work and further evidence for the tension between the body and place in Braddock's cultural history. I take my cue from Jacques Rancière who wrote, "Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time."[27] An examination of the social and economic structures as well as visual legacies that fuel the historic narrative surrounding Frazier's work and life via

[27] Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics*. Trans. by Gavriel Rockill (London: Continuu. 2009), 13.

Buba's and McWilliams's visual texts, contribute to a better understanding of her art as powerful act of identity expression that is historically conscious and politically potent.

The Body and Industry: Mythic Embodiment in Braddock

A few blocks away from Frazier's home in Braddock a statue of Joe Magarac stands like sentinel at the gates of the Edgar Thompson Steel Works, United States Steel Corporation's oldest operating steel mill in the United States. Measuring more than ten feet in height, the statue depicts a muscular, broad-chested man with pale silvery metallic skin. His hair falls long over his ears, flopping to one side in a wave across his forehead. He is dressed in the navy blue and orange uniform colors of U.S. Steel. His sleeves are rolled up and shirt is unbuttoned to his sternum exposing his brawny chest that brandishes a silver medallion bearing "USS," the corporate emblem of United States Steel. Magarac's figure is frozen in the act of bending a massive steel rail, a superhuman display of strength that he masters with ease. Beneath his bushy eyebrows, the "steeler" gazes forward, his pursed lips form a terse, but affable grin, reflecting how little effort is needed to distort the steel. The statue, which was installed outside of the plant within the last three years, may have originally been part of an amusement park ride located across the river from

Figure 1: Joe Magarac Statue in front of Edgar Thomson Plant, 2014 (photo by Donna Zelt)

Braddock.[28] The statue's bravado is supplemented by the mammoth mill and clamor of industry in the background. The hyperbolic scale of both Margarac and the mill distorts the viewer's sense of scale perceptually reducing the human-scale world of houses and sidewalks a few yards away by proximity.

Magarac is a mythic steelworker whose narrative allegedly stems from east-central European steel communities of Pittsburgh at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries but was coopted as a corporate construction in the 1940s and became a point of white industrial nostalgia after the steel mills began to close. [29] There are many versions of Magarac's story, but each essentially outlines a man who stood about seven feet tall and was physically composed of steel with blonde hair, blue eyes and whose skin was pale and at times gleamed in the furnace light. He was born in an iron ore mine, the origin point of steel, and worked in an unnamed mill town in Western Pennsylvania. His arms were the size of smoke stacks and he could make steel rail by combing his hands through molten ore. He was so dedicated to the industry that, after winning a contest of strength, he refused the prize of marrying the beautiful Mary Mestrovic in favor of devoting his life to working in his beloved steel mill twenty-four hours a day. His devotion eventually resulted in fatal overproduction and the closing of his mill. Devastated by the closure, Magarac committed the ultimate sacrifice by melting himself down in the furnace, to allow his body to become the molten steel with which a new mill

[28] Vicki Vargo, Executive Director, Braddock Carnegie Library, e-mail message to author, January 19, 2014.
[29] Burnett and Gilley, 393.

might be constructed, willingly giving his life for industry. [30] He represents both an idealized and fully corporatized body, whose only weakness was an irrepressible commitment to industry.

Understandings of place and industry were fundamentally integrated with representations of the body in Pittsburgh by the beginning of the twentieth-century. Historian Edward Slavishak argues that Pittsburgh and the surrounding region, including Braddock, was figured as an industrialized corpus, embodied by an idealized version of the male industrial worker that is exemplified by Joe Magarac. This vision of the steel city held Carnegie's mills, of which Braddock hosted the prized first, at its core. [31] Magarac in this sense embodies both industry and the communities of mill towns across the Monongahela Valley. Magarac is positioned in front of the Edgar Thompson Steelworks as an icon and defender of an exclusory industrial nostalgia.

The statue of Magarac guards a history of the mill and of Braddock that Frazier contests when picturing her figure in the industrial space that is her home The statue and the myth it perpetuates exists as an idealized vision of the corpus of industry and place that is white, hearty, and male. This mythologized history of industry emphasizes physicality but ignores the real and complicated historic present of the body, race, and labor in Pittsburgh, Braddock and other mill towns. Margarac is the ideal worker, with no emotional or physical relationships or corporeal needs. He shows no signs of physical

[30] Ibid., 394.; Clifford J. Reutter, "The Puzzle of a Pittsburgh Steeler: Joe Magarac's Ethnic Identity," 33, 1980, *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 63 (January 1980), 31-36.
[31] Edward Slavishak, *Bodies of Work: Civic Display and Labor in Industrial Pittsburgh*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 2-3, 9, 269.

wear, psychological strain or pollutant exposure and his only downfall is hyper-efficiency. His body is composed of the desirable product of industry. Women are prizes to be won, not laborers. Devotion to industry to the point of death is a proving ground of whiteness, rather than a space of exploitation where African Americans were segregated to the dirtiest and most hazardous jobs in the industry. And most significantly workers disappear from the industrial landscape when corporations no longer find them useful. This dangerous nostalgia is fixed on the visible legacy of industry as represented by the Edgar Thompson Plant at the expense of the present conditions of the community that surrounds it. It perpetuates an expectation that the disappearance of industry mandates the disappearance of the community and the bodies of workers. The mill in Braddock survived deindustrialization only to celebrate myth. But the community that supported industry, of which Frazier is part, did not entirely disappear into the furnace.

Frazier Confronts the Mill

Like the statue of Magarac, *Self-Portrait (United States Steel)*, juxtaposes the body with the Edgar Thompson Steel Works. In the frame on the left, the "self-portrait" portion of the diptych, the camera is tightly focused on the Frazier who is nude from the waist up. Positioned in three-quarter profile the artist/subject faces both the viewer and the frame to the right. The severe diagonal angle of the overhead lighting casts a shadow over most of Frazier's face. The lighting highlights her movement and the texture of her brown skin as she inhales and exhales deeply. Her gaze and position remain fixed for the duration of the video, but her frame is elastic, rising and falling in conjunction with the tides of her exaggerated breath. As she inhales her back straightens, her shoulders rise,

her chest fills with air and she assumes a bold stature: spine rigid, gaze fixed, chin raised, shoulders strong, light gleaming off her chest, standing like a sentry facing the mill.

Figure 2: LaToya Ruby Frazier, Still from *Self Portrait (United States Steel),* 2010, digital video color, sound, 3:28, *The Notion of Family* © LaToya Ruby Frazier 2014

Then, with a forceful but belabored exhale, her frame hunches forward, where she remains momentarily stooped, gaze still fixed. After a series of shallow breaths Frazier inhales deeply and her spine uncurls and assumes an erect posture again.

Unlike the statue of Magarac that guards the mill's gates, Frazier's figure is flexible. Rather than emphasizing inhuman qualities of strength and industrial virility, through the rise and fall of her chest and the subtle movements essential to life, her form and her breath is a physical confrontation with industrial nostalgia. Her breathing is an essential act of vitality that contests the incessant forms of physical, social and cultural affronts enacted on the African American community in the wake of industry. The pattern of breathing Frazier performs is based on the breathing her doctor asks for when

diagnosing her symptoms of Lupus, the autoimmune disease that affects Frazier's lungs.[32] Here she presents the viewer with the corporeal reality of her black female body and asserts a powerful presence through her cycles of breath and the movement of her figure. The frame that Frazier partially faces on the right is fixed on the Edgar Thompson Works. Frazier's video reflects the mill's fraught position at the geographic, economic, and historic nucleus of Braddock; the rooftops and chimneys of snow-covered houses occupy the foreground and the trees of the hillside beyond the mill, across the river mark the horizon. The houses even seem to face the mill, offering only three windows in the direction of the camera. A white water tower, stamped with the blue logo "USS" for United States Steel appears as if sprouted from one of the house's front yards.

The mill operates on its own pattern of "breathing." Today it produces steel via the "cleaner" Basic Oxygen Process (BOP); a multi-phased process by which a combination of liquid hot metal and steel scrap are transferred to a vessel into which pure oxygen (rather than simply unregulated air) is blown at supersonic velocities to chemically transform the contents into molten steel and its byproduct, slag.[33] The process necessitates that the mill, like Frazier, breathes. In Frazier's video, the steam and smoke—indelible to a manner of production defined by extreme heat and oxygen-oriented cooling—is visible in the wintery air. The cloud speaks to the major environmental issues associated with the process of production, mainly the impossibility

[32] Dean Daderko, ""Upside Down, Left to Right," in *LaToya Ruby Frazier: Witness* (Contemporary Art Museum Houston, 2013), 21.
[33]John Stubbles, "The Basic Oxygen Steelmaking (BOS) Process," *Steel Works: The Online Resource for Steel*, American Iron and Steel Institute, 2014, https://www.steel.org/en/Making%20Steel/How%20Its%20Made/Processes/Processes%20Info/The%20Basic%20Oxygen%20Steelmaking%20Process.aspx.

of capturing or containing all harmful emissions, airborne contaminants and off-gases during each phase of the Basic Oxygen Steelmaking process. [34] The pregnant vapor looms over the mill and town as it has for more than a century, each lean smokestack and squat cooling tower contributes to the never ceasing cloud that covers the upper half of the frame. The cloud, the town, and industry are in perpetual contact.

The dividing line between the two images allows the viewer to establish imaginative connections between the interior image on the left and the exterior image on the right. Formal resonances imply additional connections between Frazier and the mill; the neck of the water tower and its bulbous top mirror Frazier's erect posture and provide contrast during her moments of enfolding, and the mill's roofline cuts across the center of the right frame and directs the eye to Frazier's heart as if pointing to the nexus of her circulatory system. But it is the unseen substances in the air, the intermingling of the steelmaking byproducts and Frazier's determined breath that reveals the insidious invasion of industrial toxins into Frazier's person. The sound and gases of steelmaking permeate the exterior representation of Braddock, as well as Frazier's intimate setting and ultimately the air that enters her lungs. This presents a toxic elemental association between Frazier and the mill and it positions Braddock, the mill, and industry as physically a part of Frazier's person. She is (partially) formed by steel but unlike Magarac's steel corpus, her heart processes the undesirable byproduct of industry. In the final fifty seconds of the video the standoff comes to its climax when the mill disappears. Frazier remains. Her gaze is fixed. Her breath endures. Though her body unwittingly

[34]Ibid.

bears the byproducts of industry which have quite possibly resulted in her chronic illness, the final long seconds of the video portray the artist as prevailing in the impasse. Her steady gaze charges the end of the video with a potency that incites the viewer to consider the ways that Frazier, as an artist and as a subject, is witness to and affected by industry and Braddock's subsequent "survival" of the era of deindustrialization. In *Self-Portrait (United States Steel)*, Frazier presents herself as figure formed by place who, with each exhale, resists the destructive atmosphere of industry and represents herself as an African American woman from Braddock who stands in opposition to the assault of industry and its legacy on her person. By offering a counter representation of the body against the Edgar Thompson Plant, Frazier resists white-ethnic nostalgia and myth that attempts to obscure her experience and the legacy of an industry whose toxicity threatens her existence. Her confrontation of the Magarac myth and the mill in this video as well as her assertion of presence contest documentary depictions of Braddock during her childhood such as Tony Buba's *Lightning Over Braddock*.

White Ethnic Fantasy in Tony Buba's Braddock

Two documentaries made during Frazier's childhood contextualizes the cultural environment that helped to form her concerns as an artist and activist. From 1984 to 1988, documentary filmmaker Tony Buba, shot the hybrid documentary *Lightning Over Braddock: A Rust Belt Fantasy*, juxtaposing his chronicling of Braddock's struggles and workers' protests of mills closing with his efforts to make a movie about a Braddock street hustler named Sal Carollo or "Sweet Sal." By the time Buba began his work for *Lightning Over Braddock* he had already made 14 films about the town and its

inhabitants which helped him win funding from the Guggenheim foundation and the acclaim of director Werner Herzog for making films that capture the essence of humanity.[35] As a resident of Braddock, Buba uses the film to address the changes occurring in the town and his role as a citizen and a social documentarian whose success is directly dependent upon the misfortunes of the subjects he films.

The film emphasizes an anxiety over a loss of working class culture in Braddock that is distinctly that of a white ethnic working class. Sweet Sal's speech is punctuated by Italian idioms like "capisce" and references to Italian American cultural icons in his repeated exclamations of "I could have been the next Italian Stallion" simultaneously referencing Sylvester Stallone in *Rocky* and Marlon Brando's famous lamentation "I could have been a contender" in *On the Waterfront*. The steelworkers and former steelworkers Buba interviews are all white, many brandishing pins or references to their Irish or Italian heritage. The mayor of Braddock is interviewed at what appears to be a massive St. Patrick's Day parade. Other major characters include Steve Pellegrino, a laid-off steel worker who attempts to use his accordion to rally protests over mills closing. Buba's identification with that working class culture is clear throughout the film in which he is referred to as "working class artist" and especially in moments when his thick Pittsburgh accent sets him apart from the non-regional diction of members of the local press.

[35] Buba recounts in Tony Buba, *Lightning over Braddock*, (New York: Zeitgeist Films, 1988), VHS.

The film is an early example of a documentary form that positions Braddock and its residents as absent or gone. References to the death and disappearance of Braddock pervade the film. It opens and closes with Jimmy Roy, a failed businessman singing about Braddock to the accompaniment of Pellegrino's accordion. The song questions the condition of the town singing "Braddock, city of magic, Braddock city of life, where have you gone?" The film includes several segments taken from local TV news in which the anchors refer to Braddock as a dying town. Much of the emphasis of the film is on what is lost or invisible rather than what is present. While the film portrays a widespread disquiet and general condition of deindustrialization, there is a tension between a repeated narrative of loss and Buba's attempts to make a film that calls people to action. The film is never quite as political as Buba hopes; instead it feels like more of a vivid lamentation. Buba grieves over the closing of his old hangout, Islay's Deli, and includes many shots of abandoned storefronts along Braddock Avenue. He mentions the closing of Braddock High School because of financial distress. And throughout the film the "multinationals" are to blame. As depicted, the crisis of unemployment positions industry as social cure-all and veils any criticism of pollution, working conditions, or living conditions for vulnerable populations in the mill towns.

In an interview for an article in the *New York Times* while shooting *Lighting Over Braddock*, Buba explained his motivation for documenting his home: "This whole type of culture is going to disappear," said Buba. "The ethnicity, the mills - I just want to make

sure it's captured."[36] The anxiety and sympathy for the struggle of the workers in his film is clear. Sweet Sal obsesses over getting recognition and money from director Werner Herzog to continue his acting career. Labor organizers attempt to save a single furnace from being shut down and are eventually refused. The union employees of U.S. Steel's massive Youngstown, Ohio plant attempt to buy out the corporation rather than let the mill close and are denied. Buba narrates the film with statistics including unemployment, poverty and infant mortality over much of the footage, some of which addresses the African-American community directly. Yet none of the people interviewed or the case studies considered by the film raise the crisis of racialized economic disparity in the town or surrounding region. In one scene, Jesse Jackson makes a stump speech on a stop in Braddock in which he references a need for black and white workers to come together and face a common enemy in outsourcing of jobs by multinational corporations. This is the only African American voice in the film and the only reference to any source of racialized disparity among those affected by industry. Aside from this reference, steelworkers and former steelworkers are represented as distinctly white, in effect rendering African Americans absent from the industrial legacy. Ten years after making *Lightening Over Braddock*, Buba released *Struggles in Steel: The Fight for Equal Opportunity* a documentary focused on telling the stories of African American steelworkers and highlighting their struggles with racial inequality and prejudice in the steel industry and in the Pittsburgh region. In this way, Buba's documentaries act as a kind of barometer for the documentary climate in Braddock. Whether or not Buba's

[36] "Artists Record the Death of the Mill's Way of Life," *The New York Times*, July 1, 1985, http://www.nytimes.com/1985/07/01/us/artists-record-the-death-of-the-mill-s-way-of-life.html.

silencing of the African American community in *Lightening Over Braddock* was intentional, Buba's later film makes it clear that his omission was reflective of broader attempts at exclusion occurring across the cultural landscape.

The inclusion of Jackson in *Lightening Over Braddock* and his associations with the civil rights movements amid an inordinately white narrative of Braddock partially positions Buba's work in a resurgence of ethnic identity that historian Matthew Frye Jacobson has termed "Ellis Island whiteness."[37] This pattern of cultural and identity expression in the 1970s and 1980s developed in response to the Civil Rights movement and shifted public discourse to a normative whiteness associated with an immigrant past rather than a multicultural present, effectively usurping the language of ethnic consciousness to bolster notions of white supremacy.[38] This form of ethnic identity combined with Braddock's African-American residents' location in the background of *Lightening Over Braddock*, walking along the sidewalks and in public group shots, effectively position them as the new margins against which Buba's differently-marginalized main characters are defined. The "Rust Belt Fantasy" Buba pictures in 1986 is mostly a history of white workers; a tacit omission that contributes to an overall absence of African Americans in representations of industry and Braddock and becomes the foundation to which Frazier responds. *Lightning Over Braddock* illustrates this at a local level. The archive produced as a result of the National Park Service's commission

[37] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 7.
[38] Ibid., 1–10.

of James McWilliams provides a lens that touches upon the ways that the certain Braddock citizens were rendered absent from city, state, and national perspectives.

Absent Bodies and Industrial Heritage: Braddock in the 1980s

In the summer of 1989 John D. McWilliams produced another form of documentary that effectively rendered African American bodies in Braddock absent. McWilliams travelled to Braddock on behalf of the National Park Service's Historic American Engineering Record (HAER). The HAER had partnered with the Steel Industry Heritage Task Force, a citizen coalition of historians, community leaders and former steelworkers, on a multi-year project to document six major steel mills that had once been run by U.S. Steel, four of which had been closed within the last decade. The Edgar Thompson Works was one of the two operating mills documented by the government-sponsored survey. In 1989 and 1990, Pennsylvania Republican U.S. Senator John Heinz secured $285,000 in appropriations to support the documentation of the steel industry in Allegheny County.[39] McWilliams's team consisted of employees who would be responsible for producing large scale black and white photographs and architectural drawings. McWilliams documented the interior of the mill, including the blast furnaces, slab mill and soaking pit as well as external views of the mill from all cardinal directions.

[39] National Park Service "1989 Annual Report Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record," 1989, 5.

The proximity of the Edgar Thompson Works to the town of Braddock makes the dearth of images featuring evidence of the community striking. Aside from long distance views made across the river that picture the plant in a lush tree-lined valley, only one photograph in his series on the mill features any indication of the town. The photographs made around the periphery of the mill give the impression of a photographer with a large format camera, skulking around the perimeter of the town with his back and his lens turned away from the residents in favor of fixing an image of the plant, a gesture that reinforces a sense of abandonment. The chaotic layering and intersections of power lines in *Looking southwest toward the basic oxygen steelmaking plant from a neighborhood in Braddock by Eleventh Street* (figure 3) contrast with the formal order of the McWilliams photograph of the plant and reflect the frenzied infrastructure of the mill town. No people are visible on the street where McWilliams has set up his camera though a parked car offers some trace of human presence. The overgrown sidewalk and stark contrast in the high midday sun seems to

Figure 3: John McWilliams, *Looking southwest toward the basic oxygen steelmaking plant from a neighborhood in Braddock by Eleventh Street. - U.S. Steel Edgar Thomson Works, Basic Oxygen Steelmaking Plant, Along Monongahela River, Braddock, Allegheny County, PA*, 1989, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HAER PA,2-BRAD,2C--1

reinforce an inhospitable landscape and imbues the image with a general sense of abandonment. Though still operational, the mill does not appear to produce any visible clouds, unlike the mill in *Self-Portrait (United States Steel)*. The large-format negative and bright light has captured in stark detail, shadows cast by the mill, but evidence of toxic contributions to the air are as invisible as the community

The HAER survey and federal financial support for the initiative are emblematic of a flurry of efforts to preserve and interpret the history of the steel industry in Western Pennsylvania during the late 1980s. In addition to aiding the HAER efforts in 1988, members of the Steel Industry Task force announced a plan to establish a $41 million museum devoted to the industry. Historians are described as descending on mills to collect artifacts left behind by workers in closed mills.[40] This fixation on "heritage" displaces the impact of industry as a contemporary problem and instead treats it as a relic of the past. The sad irony is that community efforts and funds put towards the preservation of "heritage" occurred at the precise moment when public services and public sentiment in the region turned its back on vulnerable populations of citizens actively struggling in industry's wake, especially low income residents of the communities beyond the factory gates.

The Braddock to which McWilliams turned his back was that of Frazier's childhood. By 1989 Frazier and her mother were among the 41% of African Americans

[40] Eshleman, "Museum Of Steel Preserving The Heritage Of An Industry Upon Which A Region Was Built."

struggling in poverty in Allegheny County.[41] For the first seven years of her life, Frazier lived with her mother in Talbot Towers, a public housing development in an area of Braddock known as "the Bottoms" just a few blocks away from where McWilliams made his 11th street photograph.[42] In 1988 African Americans, who made up the majority of residents of Talbot Towers, filed a suit against the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Pittsburgh Housing Authority to prevent a scheduled demolition of the high-rise in order to erect a new one in the same location. The residents argued that, though the buildings were indeed poorly designed and in disrepair, the planned construction of a new high-rise in the same location would reinforce racial segregation. But even after the court ruled in favor of the residents, it became impossible to find space for low-income black families in the predominately white suburbs of outside of majority black Braddock because of entrenched social segregation.[43] The Towers were demolished in 1990 and displaced residents sought housing in Braddock. Frazier moved in with her Grandma Ruby.[44] This provides a geographically-oriented example of a systemic form of racism— in this case environmental racism— which framed Frazier's experience of the impacts of industry and an attempt at the systematic removal of low income minorities from the cultural landscape.[45] Discriminatory housing

---

41 Joe William Trotter, *Race and Renaissance: African Americans in Pittsburgh since World War II* (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 153

42 Moriah Balinit, "Generations Apart: Installation Reflects 2 Women's Different Experiences of Growing up in Braddock," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. September 2, 2009.

43 Trotter, 154-155

44 Balinit, "Generations Apart."

45 Alair MacLean, "Environmental Racism," in *Environmental Encyclopedia*, 4th ed., vol. 1 (Detroit: Gale, 2011), 605–6, accessed March 15, 2014. http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX1918700535&v=2.1&u=txshracd2598&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w&asid=ee68fdfc6b93707674f5e34b3a45feb9.

practices and economic circumstances kept Frazier and her mother in close proximity to the still operating steel mill and therefore left them continually exposed to airborne toxins.

By 1989 the year McWilliams arrived Braddock was under severe economic distress. One year prior it became the third community in Allegheny County to enter the state's distressed communities program.[46] Municipal corruption compounded with dramatic outmigration, increased unemployment and fewer available jobs in the new service economy made the impact of decreased federal support of welfare programs in the 1980s even more profound. As federal and state funds for support programs declined, Allegheny County cut social services and reduced the enforcement of affirmative action programs.[47] These cuts disproportionately affected African Americans in the Allegheny County community, for whom the poverty rate was four times that of white residents by 1989.[48] Lack of job opportunities led to an exodus of economically mobile African Americans away from Pittsburgh, another form of vanishing from the landscape.[49] The government sponsored survey for which McWilliams made his photographs reflects broader social divergence of attention away from Frazier and other members of struggling communities that occupied the postindustrial landscape and obscured the racial and social injustices to which their residents continued to be subject.

---

[46] "Braddock's Defeat." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.* May 8, 1997.
[47] Trotter, 151.
[48] Massey, "Economy leaves blacks behind; Pitt study finds region to be among worst in country."
[49] Trotter, 145.

Even the media in the Pittsburgh region positioned African Americans and residents in Braddock as left behind or irrelevant in the postindustrial world, contributing further to and the narrative of absence that Frazier contests. In 1994 Steve Massey of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported on a University of Pittsburgh study which revealed that "black residents failed to share in the region's economic rebound and appear to be losing ground."[50] The article positions black residents as a population continuing to bear the brunt of economic instability related to deindustrialization. In another article, a study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh revealed widespread evidence of discrimination and declared that a "lost generation" of black residents unable to find work or the support necessary to procure it.[51] This rhetoric of loss, disappearance, and absence in relation to the African American community centered on Braddock in an article published by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* when Frazier was 15 years old. The author of "Braddock's Defeat," composed a brutal and one-sided lamentation of the borough's decline that positioned the current residents as undesirable and immaterial. Noting the rise of gang violence, municipal corruption and the number of residents in federal subsidized housing, the unnamed author quotes Michael Foreman, a local government official responsible for overseeing distressed communities for the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. Foreman describes Braddock as a place of wreckage and loss that "looks like a town in a war that ended yesterday." The author questioned "when Braddock will be able to stand on its

[50] Massey, "Economy leaves blacks behind; Pitt study finds region to be among worst in country."
[51] Jim McKay, "Black lost jobs and a generation with manufacturing's demise."

own feet - if ever."[52] Foreman's personification of Braddock, as a body struggling to stand, perhaps unable to stand, marks another association of the town with a body. Foreman concludes his bleak account by calling into question the value of such a community's existence with a quote from Foreman: "Basically, Braddock was a steel town. It was built for the convenience of steel workers so they could walk to work, and for the companies to have a readily available work force."[53] This article recognizes a single arch of history linked to a capital-driven narrative. According to the article and its sources, without industry, the community should not exist, its residents and their needs have become inconvenient and should disappear, like mythical Magarac. Two letters to the editor published a week later criticized the article and Foreman for their injurious account of Braddock, for perpetuating a sense of government sanctioned abandonment, reinforcing negative stereotypes of the residents and neglecting to account for an array of community-organized programs working to address social concerns from within the borough. Less than ten years later Frazier would use her camera to continue resident's critiques through works like *Self-Portrait (United States Steel)*.

Frazier's video resists gestures toward material and representational erasure. By juxtaposing the mill as a symbol of industry with her body, Frazier reveals a contested geography in which her presence and affective reality confronts the cultural forces that attempt to obscure it. By surveying the legacy of the body in Braddock and highlighting a selection of representations that propagated attempts to erase low-income African

[52] "Braddock's Defeat."
[53] Ibid.

Americans from the physical and cultural landscape of Braddock, this chapter has outlined the socio-cultural history to which Frazier responds. In *Self-Portrait (United States Steel)* and her photography, Frazier is arguing against mythic and existing representations of Braddock. Her work refuses to willingly give her life for industry and is a counter document to a legacy that has historically obscured presence in favor of historical amnesia.

Chapter 2:

LaToya Ruby Frazier and the Functioning Legacy of Documentary Photography

In the introduction to her photographic history of the black female body, art historian Deborah Willis contends that the pictured black female body has historically functioned as the negative black opposite of the positive white woman, "as a visual transformation from presence to absence." Black female photographers working at the end of the twentieth century used their own likenesses to contest this absence and, instead, used the camera to "incorporate photographic legacies with contemporary realities in order to present images of real black women who are no longer acted upon but who possess, in one body, both active voice and visual self-presentation." [54] Frazier's video and photographic work is an inversion of the historical tension between absence and presence that Willis describes. She is engaged in a battle of visibility and wields the camera against material and sensible forces beyond the frame of the image. "For me," Frazier says, "it's realizing that whatever the cyclical beast has been that has ravaged my family, that I would stop it and confront it every time I froze an image in time." Her work is an assertion that, "I will no longer be consumed by these types of dark histories." [55] By photographing her own body and the bodies of her family members, Frazier gives human form to deindustrialized experience; she highlights and engages with a series of

[54] Deborah Willis, *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 1–3.
[55] Frazier quoted in Kristen O'Regan, "Kirsten O'Regan: These Dark Histories," *Guernica: A Magazine of Art*, April 17, 2013, http://www.guernicamag.com/daily/kirsten-oregan-these-dark-histories/.

assumptions about documentary and photography to illustrate the pervasive impact of industry on the lives of those who exist in its wake.

As a photographer who is operating in both autobiographical and documentary modes, Frazier navigates assumptions about photographic objectivity and the history and critique of documentary. Photographically, Frazier is working at the intersection of multiple aesthetic and methodological lineages. Often at odds with one another in the discourse of photography, such photographic methodologies have undermined representations of the poor, women and African Americans among other marginalized persons in the United States. Frazier's position also corresponds with bell hooks' definition of marginalized groups in relation to creative production "all groups of individuals…who have systematically been denied resources to make artistic production possible."[56]

Her practice is informed by traditional social documentary, the use of portraiture to challenge photography's representational power and role in identity formation, as well as late twentieth-century images of the changing American landscape. Photographs from the series *Notion of Family* reveal that Frazier's documentary practice can be read amid multiple threads of postmodern critique. This chapter grounds Frazier's work in the particularities of her medium and its legacy in and around Braddock. Looking to the photograph *Mom Making an Image of Me* (2008) (figure 5) in the first section and *Self-Portrait in a Pile of Rubble* (2007) (figure 7) in the second section, this chapter will explore some of the ways Frazier's work is concerned with the rhetoric of identity

[56] bell hooks, "Workers for Artistic Freedom," in *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: New Press, 1995), 142.

expression that considers agency, authorship, and subjectivity. Frazier's use of photography's past in support of her concerns for the present attests to the continued vitality of the medium in the face of its alleged attenuation. Calling attention to the omissions of the past and documenting the present is another means by which her artwork resists cultural erasure.

Postmodern Critique and the Photograph as Constructed Space

Frazier's fraught relationship with documentary photography and the politics of representation is highlighted in a frequently recounted anecdote about her first encounter with Dorothea Lange's 1936, photograph popularly known as *Migrant Mother* (figure 4). The photograph sparked a litany of questions about the subject, Florence Owens Thompson, her history and her relationship to photography, and about Lange's relationship and responsibility to her as a documentarian. Rather than reading the image as merely illustrative of national economic conditions, Frazier recalls wondering "Who's that woman and how did this [photograph] help her? How did it help to put her own image out into the world? Or how

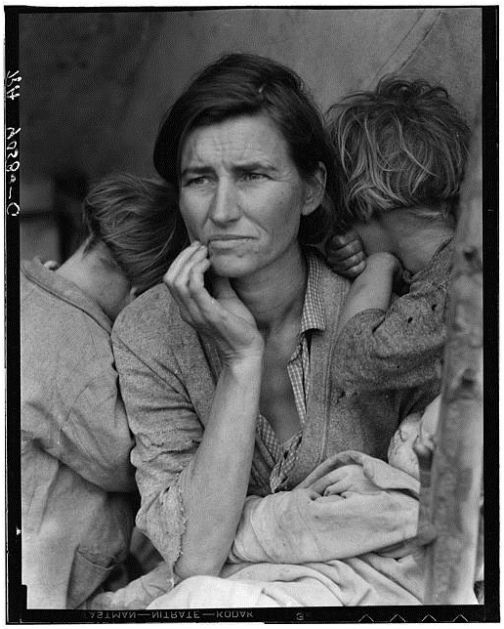

Figure 4: Dorothea Lange, *Destitute peapickers in California; a 32 year old mother of seven children. [Migrant Mother],* February 1936
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, [LC-DIG-fsa-8b29516]

did it help her to reveal what is happening in those moments for her and her family?"[57] As well as wondering "What would happen if Thompson was handed the camera? What kind of picture would she have made of herself?"[58]

These are questions Lange never asked, and Lange's recollection of the moment reinforces the act of photographing as translating the particularities of Florence Owens Thompson's situation into a universal symbol of the Great Depression, obscuring her identity and reducing the complexity of Owens Thompson's experience in exchange for five frames. Lange recounted making the photograph:

> I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother as if drawn by a magnet…There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it…I knew I had recorded the essence of my assignment.[59]

The omission of her subject's names, the distillation of Florence Owens Thompson into an "essence," combined with the dissemination of Lange's image detached from Lange's notes and intent has become part of photographic lore and a nexus for postmodern critique of photographic agency and authenticity. For Lange and many of her contemporaries, photographic subjects might have been acknowledged by the camera but the specificity of their circumstances and their identities are absent; they were overlooked in exchange for their support of universal ideal of New Deal reformism. Postmodern critics such as Abagail Solomon-Godeau read the work of Lange and other

---

[57] Frazier in "American Icons: Migrant Mother," *Studio 360*, April 19, 2013, http://www.studio360.org/story/287358-american-icons-migrant-mother/?utm_source=sharedUrl&utm_media=metatag&utm_campaign=sharedUrl.
[58]Interview with the author, March 26, 2014; "American Icons: Migrant Mother."
[59] Dorothea Lange, "The Assignment I'll Never Forget: Migrant Mother," *Popular Photography* 46, no. 2 (February 1960): 126.

social documentary photographers from the early 20th century as reducing the depiction of the subject into a pictorial spectacle or trope, "presenting the visual 'fact' of individual victimization or subjugation as a metonym for the (invisible) conditions that produced it" resulting in an "inevitable slippage from the political to the anecdotal or emblematic."[60] Similarly artist and critic Martha Rosler excoriated the work of photographers such as Lange for further exploiting their suffering subjects through "exoticism, tourism, voyeurism, psychologism and metaphysicis, trophy hunting—and careerism."[61] Documenting and disseminating photographs of victims of poverty and degradation reinforced the subject's disenfranchisement and their distance and difference from the viewing classes, highlighting difference in order to concretize it.[62] The documentary photograph was material evidence of the photographer's status as separate from the subject and translated individual experience for the photographer's ends rather than the subjects and was an inadequate medium for communicating social realities.[63] Criticisms such as these called into question the definition of social documentary as an inherently non-fictional representation by pointing out some of the ways in which the photographer's subjectivity and contemporary context constructed the photograph. Artists who responded to the criticisms such as those of Rosler and Godeau focused more on

[60] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Who is Speaking Thus?" in *Photography at the dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 179.
[61] Martha Rosler, "in, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography),"in *The Contest of Meaning*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 307.
[62] Ibid, 303-341.
[63] Ibid.

photography as an image-making process with the capacity to critique rather than a craft.[64]

As her account of seeing *Migrant Mother* indicates, Frazier identifies with both the subject and photographer and also echoes the concerns of critics such as Solomon-Godeau and Rosler. As the subject Frazier associates with the crisis of agency experienced by those marginalized by poverty, race, or gender, as well as with the documentary photographers who use their camera for reformist missions. Frazier's reaction positions her work in the legacy of social documentary as well as that of its critics. She acknowledges the photograph's capacity to reveal material truths but potentially at the expense of the subject. Frazier's impulse is to give the camera to Owens Thompson, to better understand Owens Thompson's circumstances by taking the camera from the privileged outsider, Lange, and instead handing it to the subject to picture themselves. Frazier's preoccupation with a photograph's capacity to aid or harm the subject reflects a concern for the politics of dissemination and representation. It is both a rejection of a disaffected relationship with the camera and a reflection of her concern for the potential exploitation of subjects through photographs.

[64] Marien, 438.

Frazier's collaboration with her mother is one of the ways that she addresses historic concerns for agency and documentary photography. Collaborative portraits made by Frazier and her mother such as *Mom Making an Image of Me* (figure 5) in *Notion of Family* are an adaptive form of documentary that uses the aesthetics and legacy of mid-century photography as a tool to create a photograph that self-consciously confronts the constructed nature of photography. Frazier and her mother engage with the discourse of the camera to assert their artistic and social relevance. Staring out at their viewers in galleries of the Whitney Museum of Art or Brooklyn Museum of Art, these photographs confront the historic absence and inauthentic or injurious representations of the work of minorities and women in the fine art and photographic world. Throughout the series, Frazier and her mother are never pictured in an archetypal engagement of mother and child. Instead, their image contests simplified or universalized representation using a visual language by making the architecture of the image clear.

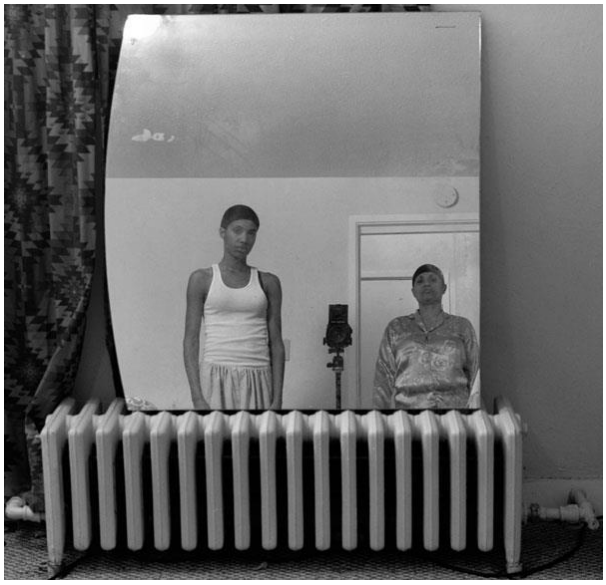

Figure 5: LaToya Ruby Frazier, *Mom Making an Image of Me,* 2008 from the series *Notion of Family* © LaToya Ruby Frazier 2014

Each collaborative photograph is a multivalent cultural construction; what bell hooks has called a "shift in standpoint" that is part of an "ongoing transformation of ways

of seeing that sustain oppositional spheres of representation."[65] It is not a "corrective" representation in the sense that it presents a "positive" view of two African American women that attempts to "salvage the denigrated image of blacks in the white American imagination."[66] Rather, it is a document of a very localized experience that decenters, interrogates and displaces dominant forms of representation and negative stereotypes in favor of the everyday.[67] Race, gender, class and representational power dynamics are all present in this image, but none is privileged as the sole avenue of analysis, which coincides with what John Tagg terms the "selective employment of determinate *means of representation*" rather than a corrective representation.[68] Throughout *Notion of Family* but particularly, *Mom Making an Image of Me*, Frazier and her mother engage with the history and structures of the "documentary aesthetic" as a tool of artistic production that responds to the absence and misrepresentations of low income African American women in front of and behind the camera.

In *Mom Making an Image of Me,* Frazier and her mother are reflected in a mirror with a medium format camera on a tripod situated between them. They are dressed in loungewear, Frazier in a tight white tank top and loose pants; her mother in a silken pajama set that reflects the glare of the light source. Both have their hair bound beneath stocking caps. The mirror is curved on one side, convex like the lens of a camera, making the image a conceptual interchange between representation and documentation. It is

---

[65] hooks, "Diasporic Landscapes of Longing," *Art on My Mind*, 66.
[66] Michelle Wallace, "Positive/Negative," in *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory* (New York: Verso, 1990), 1.
[67] hooks, "Diasporic Landscapes of Longing," 66-67.
[68] Frazier interview with author, March 26, 2014; Tagg's emphasis not mine. Tagg, "The Currency of the Photograph: New Deal Reformism and Documentary Rhetoric," 155.

propped up between a large radiator and the wall. The wall to the right of the mirror is bare, just like the starkly white wall and ceiling in the reflection behind the two women. An ikat-patterned curtain is draped to the left of the mirror. It is pulled to aside, creating a proscenium for the women's reflected bodies, a reference to portraiture as inherently performative. Even within this intimate and familiar space, the women have created a stage upon which they can perform the act of making a picture and being pictured. The camera in this case is not invasive, but is a part of the platform upon which they can create an image. Yet the gelatin silver print presents a range of greys and black tones associated with traditional documentary style. The darkest blacks in the print are in the camera and in the corrugated shadows of the radiator. Regimented stripes of black and white bisect the image. Their figures rise up from this binary opposition of light and shadow. While their skin contrasts with the white walled background, their bodies are rendered tonally such that they move beyond the positive/negative or white/black binary, formally heeding to bell hooks' call for forms of African American cultural production that move beyond a racist ideology that posits black subjects as inherently inferior.[69]

Frazier and her mother began experimenting with different objects in their house including curtains, bed sheets, comforters, and this dresser mirror to create a series of self-portraits around 2007.[70] They turned their bedroom into a domestic studio space, moving furniture, experimenting with different tableaux, exchanges of gazes via reflection, interactions with fabrics, performing for the camera and each other.

---

[69] bell hooks, "Art on my Mind," 1-9.

[70] At least one of these objects are repeated in *Huxtables, Mom, and Me*, 2009; *Mom Relaxing my Hair*, 2005; *Momme Portrait Series (Floral Comforter*), 2008; *Mom and Me*, 2005; and *Momme Portrait Series (Wrestle)*, 2009; *Momme Silhouettes*, 2010 and in *Self-Portrait (United States Steel),* 2010.

Conceptually their collaborations were part of what Frazier calls "a family album" that "defies what I see in the media."[71] They are an attempt to document the relationship between mother and daughter regardless of the paucity of their surroundings and make the complexities or enigma of that relationship visible on their own terms.

Making images together was also a means of coping with particularly painful periods of chronic illness or when struggling with bodily pain.[72] The use of the camera might offer both a distraction from corporal sentiment while simultaneously acknowledging and archiving it. Literature and theories devoted to examining the representational limits of photographing the body in pain are vast and provide an avenue of analysis beyond the scope of my project. [73] These collaborations function as important documents of invisible physical experience. The act of photographing and investigating their relationship as mother and daughter is a way of chronicling their struggle with illness related to industrial pollutants in Braddock.

The constructed nature of *Mom Making an Image of Me* contrasts with its status as "straight photograph" or an image made straight on, printed with no editing or "tricks" in the darkroom. Straight photography implied the authenticity that defined the documentary genre. One of the first historians of American photography, Museum of Modern Art curator, Beaumont Newhall, who is often credited with outlining the framework for the American documentary, defined a documentary photograph as

---

[71] LaToya Ruby Frazier, "LaToya Ruby Frazier Makes Moving Pictures."
[72] Interview with author, March 26, 2014.
[73] For more about representation and the body in pain see: Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain the Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York, Picador, 2004).

"simple, straightforward photographs of great technical excellence interpreting not only the world nearest to them but also its social significance."[74] Newhall cited photographers such as Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Ben Shahn, and Margaret Bourke-White as exemplars of stylistic approaches to the documentary method.[75] Newhall groups these photographers together because of their participation in the photographic branch of the Farm Security Administration, the government agency for which Lange worked and that was charged with making a sweeping portrait of America at the end of the 1930s. Roy Stryker, director of the FSA photography branch, encouraged his photographers to displace their personal aesthetics and the particularities of their subjects' condition in service of a documentary approach that favored documenting the effect of the economic depression on Americans.[76] Frazier's use of a documentary aesthetic, in terms of making "straightforward" photographs on film, using cameras similar in size and structure to those used by the FSA, as well as her primary interest in documenting the economic impact of deindustrialization on her family and community, corresponds with the agency's goals as well as Newhall's definition. *Mom Making an Image of Me* is as technically masterful as it is conscious of its contemporary social significance and the significance when read against the history of photography. As an object it is masterfully printed as well as compositionally intricate featuring layered planes and bisecting lines as well as doubling. But when considered in context this collaborative self-portrait of two African American women highlights rather than displaces personal expression.

---

[74] Newhall, "Documentary Approach to Photography," 4.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Fleischhauer., *Documenting America, 1935-1943*, 1-11.

The mirrored reflection, doubling of the women's figures, and their cyclical interchange of gazes complicates the photograph's meaning. It conceptually implicates the subjects and the viewer into the construction. The widespread acknowledgment by Susan Sontag and other theorists and critics of the 1980s and 1990s of the imposition of the photographer's "standards" on the reality translated through the camera lens, effectively destabilized the objectivity the documentary photograph. Lauded works made by socially concerned photographers during the mid-twentieth century, including members of FSA, were reconstructed not as mimetic frames of reality but as the subjective interpretation of the photographer under socially, politically, and culturally constrained contexts. Sontag referenced the work of Lange and other FSA photographers as illustrative of photography's manifestation of the "shady commerce between art and truth."[77] Even photographers most concerned with using the camera as a means of recording reality or the conditions of their surroundings are, as Sontag notes "still haunted by the tacit imperatives of taste and conscience" such that "photographers are always imposing standards on their subjects."[78]

Sontag's distrust of photography extended to social documentary, which she argued was predatory and aggressive. For Sontag, the photograph reinforced a social distance and a distance in time between those pictured and the viewer that relieved the viewer from any real ethical engagement.[79] In Frazier's self-portraits, especially *Mom Making and Image of Me*, this distance is acknowledged and intentionally refracted. The

[77] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1977), 6.
[78] Ibid, 6–7.
[79] Ibid, 53, 63.

mirror and the exposed camera implicate the viewer into the cycle of making and reading images. The performative space of identity that Frazier and her mother occupy with the camera between them, positions the viewer between them as well. Though one may stand viewing the photograph in a gallery, the viewer's gaze is implicated in the cyclical interchange of gazes in Frazier's image. The presence of subject, photographer, and viewer are all acknowledged. The intersection of subject, photographer and viewer shift in the use of the camera to acknowledge the complexity of representation and opens up the history of photography as a creative field on which to build.

Also touching upon the relationship between mother and daughter within domestic space, Carrie Mae Weems's 1990 *Kitchen Table Series* is a precursor to Frazer's means of confronting the legacy of objectivity, race, gender and representation in traditional photographic documentary. *Mom Making an Image of Me* particularly resonates with *Untitled (Woman and daughter with makeup),* 1990 (figure 6) in Weems series. Both Weems' and Frazier's photographs reflect what Deborah Willis cites as a "self-awareness [of black female photographers] as social beings and critics,

Figure 6: Carrie Mae Weems, *Untitled (Woman and daughter with makeup)*, 1990 from the *Kitchen Table Series* © Carrie Mae Weems

observers and participants, image-makers and interpreters."[80] By fixing her camera on the kitchen table as the central setting, Weems stages a series of scenes relating a range of experiences of one woman, including the relationship between mother and daughter. The character Weems portrays is not specifically identified, and, as with Frazier's work, the black and white of the photograph resonates with the purportedly more "universal" meanings conveyed by documentary photography. In this case, Weems' female subject acts as an allegory for an array of experience, ranging from that of mother, lover, and empowered woman rather than a particular referent.

Mom Making an Image of Me differs in its specificity and its literal emphasis on the relationship to photographic representation and personal experience. Rather than gathering around a table, as in Weems' series, Frazier and her mother surround the camera, more explicitly confronting the legacy of outsider documentary in documenting persons who are culturally marginalized from centers of authority. There is no question that the women in the image are both artist and subject. Though the shutter release is not visible in the frame, the title of the photograph denotes authorship and the use of the camera; relationship to the image and each other is rendered clearly. The making of these images at distinct moments of corporeal pain attest to their use of the photograph as a form of testimony as much as it is an artwork. The photograph is not allegorical; rather, it is a document of the particular moment of the construction of a photograph.

The distance between the viewer, the photographer and the reality of the subject was part of the foundation of traditional documentary discourse. Newhall's definition of

[80] Willis, *The Black Female Body*, 3.

documentary photography perpetuated an assumption that photographers must be distanced from their subject; the distance may be emotional, psychological or class-based. Photographer and subject occupy different realities. Newhall acknowledged the aesthetic appeal of the "homes and lives of the under-privileged [sic]" and the "decay of man and his buildings" and encouraged a sociological approach to such subjects. Here Newhall established a presumed separation between the conditions and position of the photographer and the reality and perspective of those being pictured. While the photographer must put "into pictures what he knows about, what he thinks of the subject before his camera," the conditions of that reality remain objectively beyond the photographer's sense of self and certainly outside of the capacity of the subject to render it on her own.[81]

Frazier traverses the binary between subject and photographer that Frazier which is, ironically, upheld in critiques of traditional documentary. Even arguments by critic Martha Rosler do not make space for the subject to document themselves or their community. Rather she calls for the rejection of existent documentary forms altogether.[82] Photographer and subject are two distinct actors existing in two different fields of reality, with the photographer positioned as dominant because of the politics of the camera and the photographer's presumed ability to visit the subject's circumstances and report to the dominant sphere. Boundaries are confined to the binary of privileged photographer and victimized subject. In line with Rosler, Hal Foster's evaluation of an anthropological

[81] Beaumont Newhall, "Documentary Approach to Photography," *Parnassus* 10, no. 3 (March 1, 1938): 5, accessed February 21, 2014, doi:10.2307/771747.
[82] Rosler, 325.

trend in art of the 1990s as having the potential for creating new engagement with political action is also very wary of the ways that it can perpetuate the "otherness" of the other and may threaten to remake the other through a neo-primitivist guise. Yet he consistently positions the art maker as a member of the dominant group and does not examine the potential power that engaging with this ethnographic trend might have for artists who are working from within a marginalized social space. He focuses on the differences or conflations that might occur in the projection of the artist identity onto his or her subject but does not consider what similarities might be found.[83] In some ways, one might argue that, by not identifying her mother by name, or listing her in the artist field, Frazier is also reinforcing the distance and difference between photographer and subject. I can only speculate on the reasons for keeping her mother's name private, but there is a certain irony in the fact that the only way her Frazier's mother is named is in regards to her relationship to the photographer, as the "photographer's mother." Regardless Frazier insists upon considering her mother a collaborator to open up the conversation about not only what groups of persona are considered artists but also about the agency of subjects in controlling their image.

Through shared authorship, self-portraiture, and revealing the architecture of image-making in works such as *Mom Making an Image of Me*, Frazier both broaches and moves beyond critics' disavowal of the documentary image with uncertainty. Frazier and her mother's comportments in *Mom Making an Image of Me* reflect a varied regard for the camera. Frazier's mother's jaw is clenched tight, her chin is held high, and her

[83] Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer" in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 171-204

shoulders are set back in a position of defiance. Frazier is more demure in stature, her shoulder slant forward and her face is soft, her eyebrows are raised as if she too is skeptical of the camera and viewer's gaze.

Their skepticism is warranted. Since the nineteenth century photographs of black female figures have been positioned as an iconographic opposite against which depictions of the white female figure would be fashioned. Photography helped perpetuate the notion that African American were ultimately associated with sexuality and exoticism and were otherwise objects to be possessed or colonized by the photographer and the viewers' gaze.[84] Documentary photography's relationship to veracity and truth perpetuated these racist ideologies. In fact, monitoring the divisions between races and inventing race has historically been one of photography's primary objects in the United States. As art historian Jennifer González notes the "truth effect" of photography parallels the "truth" behind the construction of race. The history of photography is inseparable from the history of racial discourse, "Both naturalize ideological systems by making them visible and apparently self-evident. As with photography, the visual or visible elements of race function to produce 'truth effects' that appear natural."[85] Frazier and her mother control the camera but their gaze is wary of how their image might be used expressing a conscious confrontation with the legacy of the camera and racial discourse.

Claiming that the photograph is now "singed and burned into my eyes and my mind since I was a child," Frazier attests to the status of *Migrant Mother* in her personal

---

[84] Willis, *The Black Female Body*, 1–2.
[85] Jennifer A González, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 43.

visual lexicon and as an icon in American visual culture.[86] It represents the paradox that is at the heart of Frazier's conceptual engagement with photography: how can the cultural form of documentary be used by marginalized persons to effectively represent their realities? The industrial depression that Frazier and her mother experienced in Braddock resonates with Owens Thompson's experience of the Great Depression. But their engagement with the camera simultaneously adopts Lange's position as observer. They present a counter image of mother and child during the twenty-first century great recession. By harnessing the power of photographic authority as a member of the community being subjected to suffering, not just to raise awareness but also to execute the agency of the archive, Frazier creates a record of the particularity of her position and its relationship to cultural injury.

Rather than furthering the injustices inflicted upon residents of Braddock, Frazier uses photographic realism as a stylistic language through which her subjective experience can be placed in dialogue with broader cultural and representational issues. This is not unlike Allan Sekula's salient reminder that not all realism feeds into the hegemony of dominant systems: "if we are to listen to, and act in solidarity with, the polyphonic testimony of the oppressed and exploited, we should recognize that some of this testimony…will take the ambiguous form of visual documents, documents of the 'microphysics' of barbarism."[87] The collaborative self-portraits made by Frazier and her mother contest cultural narratives that depict the citizens of Braddock as absent while calling attention to the architecture of image making. Frazier's work is concerned with

[86] "American Icons: Migrant Mother."
[87] Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (December 1, 1986): 64, doi:10.2307/778312.

issues of agency and the ways that art forms, grounded in the particularities of place and identity, can counter existing representations and work against cultural erasure.

The Photographer's Subjectivity in the Documented Landscape

In the black and white photograph, *Self-Portrait Lying on a Pile of Rubble*, a figure in the center of a concrete lot is barely discernible. A cement brick wall and wavering chain fence bisect the image and partially shield three buildings in the background: a garage, a warehouse and a Late-Victorian era home with boarded windows. The figure faces up, angling her body away from the camera, foreshortening her figure. This position, combined with her hearty outerwear, obscures the details of her physical form; it is difficult to discern if it is the body of an adult or a child; male or female. But the inclusion of "Self-Portrait" in the title indicates that the viewer is meant to perceive the figure as Frazier. Her right arm sinks into the small valley between the two mounds of aggregate. From her position on the pile's peak, the rocks spill downward and scatter across the surrounding cracked concrete. Like the heap of old tires in the background and the mounds of snow peaking from behind the cement brick wall, the pile

Figure 7: LaToya Ruby Frazier, *Self-Portrait Lying in a Pile of Rubble*, 2007 from the series *Notion of Family,* © LaToya Ruby Frazier 2014

of rocks reflect the sense of stillness and desolation that pervades the image. The soft outline of two braids, barely visible on the top of the figure's head is the most apparent mark of her identity outside of photograph's misleading title. Though titled as a self-portrait, the person in the image is Frazier's younger cousin, J.C., not Frazier herself.[88] The child is an allegorical reference to Frazier. Her figure marks the artist's photographic practice as a trans-generational exploration of environment of Braddock and African American women and girls in the past, present and perhaps the future; what

[88] Interview with author, March 26, 2014

Frazier terms "an intergenerational transference of our identities existing in the history of Braddock, Pennsylvania."[89]

The allegorical use of Frazier's young cousin, the structures and objects around her, and the black and white photograph intermingle past with present. The architecture of the house, warehouse and garage which all stand in disrepair, reference a period of industrial growth before either Frazier or J.C. were born. Much of the surroundings have fallen into disrepair. The tires have been separated from their primary function and immobilized in a heap. The metal fence posts lean onto the concrete brick wall. Piles of snow plowed from the road crest over the wall. Even the term "rubble" in the photograph's title distinguishes the mound on which Frazier's doppelgänger lays as ruins. The traffic signs on the flailing fence signal the eye to move along the image from the left to the right edge of the frame, as if saying there is "nothing to see here." The photograph's setting is distinctly post-industrial, distinguished by traces of an industrial past.

Yet, the sight of J.C.'s figure slows down the viewer and reorients the composition's horizontal planes making her body the focal point. The slopes of the aggregate and tires; the shadows cast by the slanting poles, even the cracks in the concrete direct the eye towards the body near the center of the image. The focus of the photograph is therefore not on the piles of materials in disuse or the structures in disrepair, but on the human presence. It challenges the viewer's expectations of emptiness and abandonment in a post-industrial landscape. The care with which J.C. has

[89] Frazier, "Statement."

been positioned; the scattering of stones in the foreground and the undulations in the rubble piles could all be markers of Frazier's imprint on the scene in addition to her allegorical representation. J.C.'s puffy snow suit protects her from the physical conditions of the cold and is indicative of the season. Though not naked to the elements, this form of protection does not prevent the assault of invisible airborne pollutants on her body. By photographing a child in a space otherwise devoid of human form and inhospitable to the rhythms of everyday life, Frazier is turning her lens towards her particular experience in Braddock, one that was at once protected and exposed. The child's presence among the aggregate in *Self-Portrait Lying on a Pile of Rubble* entangles her form with the man-altered landscape, making the identity of one inseparable from the other. Frazier, therefore, is able to visually reinforce the portentous connection between herself, her family, place and industry.

By distinguishing the photograph as a "self-portrait" rather than a landscape, Frazier emphasizes the work as a representation of "self," as a defining act aided by the camera and informed by her surroundings. The photographer's presence in front of the camera upsets the traditional interpretative structure of a photograph that is usually part of a fairly linear three-stage engagement between photographer, camera, and subject. Self-portraiture causes the viewer to reflect more closely on the constructed nature of the image and meditate on the role of the photographer more obliquely than in other genres of photography. Frazier's work builds on delineations of the "self" in contemporary photographic self-portraiture outlined by historian Susan Bright. Moving beyond the understanding of the depicted self as a stable universalized subject, Bright argues that

self-portraiture continues to break identity down into a range of depicted elements and "when we look at a photographic self-portrait we do not see an individual or a visual depiction of an inner existential being, but rather a display of self-regard, self-preservation, self-revelation, and self-creation open to the interpretation imposed upon by each individual viewer."[90] Frazier complicates this definition further by using the figure of her cousin in place of her own.

As much as a photograph might function as a still record of experience, the self-portrait is always linked to the act of the photographer and a genre meant to provoke the viewer to consider the meaning of image making as well as subjective content. Frazier directly engages with viewer interpretation, claiming, "My work is a series of questions." It is designed "for someone to come up to, and project their own race, class and gender on these images and introspectively consider who they are, and what presumptions and biases they have about the people in my images."[91] Many questions can be asked about the identity of the figure in *Self-Portrait Lying in a Pile of Rubble* and her relationship to the space around her. The enigmatic placement of the figure makes age, race, gender difficult to discern. By turning away from the camera the allegorical subject's gaze does not direct or confront the viewer, rather it opens up what bell hooks has called an "alternative space" that is both "self-defining and self-determining."[92] Though Frazier is not materially present in the portrait, she makes her authorial control and allegorical presence clear. Frazier's use of her cousin in a representation of the self interweaves the

---

[90] Susan Bright, *Auto Focus: The Self-Portrait in Contemporary Photography* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2010), 9.
[91] Frazier in "Kirsten O'Regan: These Dark Histories."
[92] hooks, "Facing Difference: The Black Female Body," in *Art on My Mind*, 95.

identity of the artist with the place it pictures and highlights the act of the photographer projecting her identity onto their pictured subject.

By using a familiar and familial allegorical reference to the self, Frazier rejects a disaffected view of the post-industrial space popularized by photographers influenced by the New Topographic style with which this photograph resonates. Noted for maintaining what the curator William Jenkins termed "an essentially *passive* frame," the photographers included in the 1975 George Eastman House exhibition *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* heralded a wave of landscape photography focused on stark industrial landscapes rather than transcendent natural vistas in which, "rather than the picture having been created by the frame, there is a sense of the frame having been laid into an existing scene without interpreting it very much."[93] This style of landscape was predicated on the photographer establishing a degree of distance from the reality presented in the image and restricting the level of emotional connection with the subject.[94] By positioning these photographs as detached and impersonal encounters, Jenkins obscured these photographer's subjective engagements with the land and land issues and contributed to an enduring misunderstanding about the relationship between the photographer and the subject.

Frazier's balanced horizontal planes in *Self-Portrait Lying on a Pile of Rubble,* the camera's distance from her cousin's body and emphasis on (post) industrial detail is akin to industrial landscapes of Robert Adams in *New Topographics.* Though Jenkins

---

[93] William Jenkins, "Introduction," in *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape* (Rochester, NY: International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1975), 5.
[94] Britt Salveson, "New Topographics," in *New Topographics* (Tuscon, AZ: Center for Creative Photography, 2009), 16-17.

originally positioned *New Topographics* photographers as objective and apolitical, recent scholarly attention to the exhibition argues for a more activist reading of Adams' passive frame as attentive to cultural landscapes not often given a second glance. In *Mobile Home, North Glen Colorado,* 1973 (figure 8) for example, Adams maintains a similar distance from the homes at the center of the image. Compositionally Adams has divided the image into three smooth planes with the contrasting textures in the foreground drawing the eye through the center of the image, similar to Frazier. The high contrast between light and shadow highlights the inhospitable conditions in which the homes are parked. One might read this image as a passive frame, a photograph made with minimal sentimentality or little concern for the residents or land. But by picturing hitherto under-examined industrial geographies in a way that was neither celebratory nor damning, Adams and other *New Topographics* photographers were both removed from and calling the viewer's attention to the present, forestalling any historic amnesia resulting from photographs laden with nostalgia of American space.[95] Using a similar approach, Frazier calls attention to a space that might easily be overlooked, viewed as a generic empty urban space or passed over as post-industrial ruin. It is therefore impossible to consider Frazier's view of the space disaffected or detached,

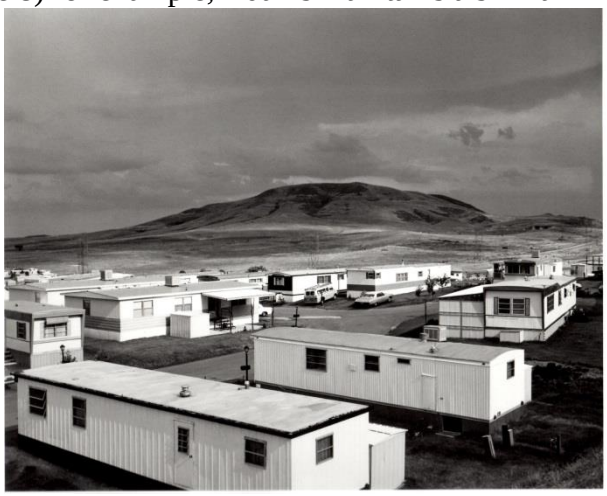

Figure 8: Robert Adams, *Mobile Home, North Glen Colorado*, 1973, © Robert Adams, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

[95] Salveson, 58.

instead she has crafted an image that cites an aesthetic wrongfully associated with apathetic documentary in a manner that calls attention to the flaws in photographic history and discourse and supports her emphasis on human presence as a mode of resisting erasure.

The carefully positioned figure in the center of the image keeps the photograph from being read as a passively -laid frame on an existing scene. The citation of the figure in the title forces the eye to slow down its sweep across the image and reflect on the artist's personal and physical connection to the site. Is figure protecting the debris or bolstered by it, defeated by it, or part of it? Is her position one of resignation or protestation? The photograph visualizes a charged relationship between the artist's body and place, her present positionality and that in history, both allegorically and literally. It works at the intersection of multiple local and photographic histories and can be read as an image of pathos, protest, and sociological critique. It repurposes the aesthetics and motivations of a particular documentary era of photographic history in the United States and marks Frazier and her family's presence in the landscape of Braddock.

By constellating Frazier's practice amid strains of documentary photography, one is able to begin to see the many ways in which she responds to and builds on critiques of the genre. While the objectivity of the photograph has been justifiably destabilized in documentary discourse, Frazier usurps points of destabilization to craft a photograph that is multivalent in its veracity and challenges our understanding of photography's past and present. The particularities of the subject and the paradoxical history of photography that is highlighted in Frazier's work attests to the continued and future relevance of the

medium. Her work contests historic absences in photographic discourse as well as efforts to enervate the medium today.

Epilogue

In a 1914 speech, steel mogul Andrew Carnegie articulated his championing of Braddock on the international stage by stating, "I want to say that being a citizen of Braddock is no mean asset. I am proud to be a man of Braddock, and in my travels through Europe and every continent, Braddock has been my cry." [96] Carnegie's language reflects ways that the legacy of Braddock and the conditions of its citizen's everyday lives are intermingled, rhetorically and structurally, with industrial capitalism. Today, Braddock is Frazier's cry; she uses her work to call international attention to the impact of the steel industry and its legacy on her person and her community. She states: "I am a citizen and an artist from Braddock, Pennsylvania. I had decided when I was a teenager that I had to make work that was socially and politically conscious… I never really believed what I was seeing because I was experiencing something that was totally different." [97] The acknowledgement of her duel role as citizen and artist and of the tension between seeing and experience is part of what makes Frazier's photographs a different kind of document. The formal, methodological and material resonances of her photographs with traditional social documentary mark them as engaged with the broader historic discourse of photography and representation as well as the enduring paradoxes of photographic practice. By sketching out the variety of contexts that have informed

---

[96] Andrew Carnegie quoted in Braddock History Committee and George Harris Lamb. *The Unwritten History of Braddock's Field*, 227.

[97] LaToya Ruby Frazier, "LaToya Ruby Frazier Takes on Levi's," *New York Close Up,* Art21, video, 6:32. June 17, 2011, http://www.art21.org/newyorkcloseup/films/latoya-ruby-frazier-takes-on-levis/.

Frazier and her artwork, this project intends to push the boundaries of her artistic intervention. It argues for an expanded form of documentary practice that breeches artistic, cultural and activist spheres because it is inherently concerned with the personal.

References

"1989 Annual Report Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record." National Park Service, 1989.

"American Icons: Migrant Mother," *Studio 360*, April 19, 2013, http://www.studio360.org/story/287358-american-icons-migrant-mother/?utm_source=sharedUrl&utm_media=metatag&utm_campaign=sharedUrl

"Artists Record the Death of the Mill's Way of Life." *The New York Times*. July 1, 1985, http://www.nytimes.com/1985/07/01/us/artists-record-the-death-of-the-mill-s-way-of-life.html.

Balinit, Moriah, "Generations Apart: Installation Reflects 2 Women's Different Experiences of Growing Up In Braddock," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. September 2, 2009.

Bolton, Richard, ed. *The Contest of Meaning*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.

Bright, Susan. *Auto Focus: The Self-Portrait in Contemporary Photography*. New York: Monacelli Press, 2010.

"Braddock's Defeat." Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, May 8, 1997.

Braddock History Committee and George Harris Lamb. The Unwritten History of Braddock's Field (Pennsylvania). Pittsburgh: Nicholson Printing Co., 1917. http://archive.org/details/unwrittenhistory00brad.

Buba, Tony. *Lightning over Braddock*. New York: Zeitgeist Films, 1988. Videocassette (VHS), 104 mins.

Bureau of the Census, United States Census 1960, accessed June 20, 2014, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/17216604v1p40ch02.pdf.

Bureau of the Census, "United States Census 2000: Braddock Borough, Pennsylvania," American Fact Finder. Accessed June 20, 2014, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml.

Burnett, Stephen and Jennifer Gilley. "Deconstructing and Reconstructing Pittsburgh's Man of Steel: Reading Joe Magarac against the Context of the 20th-Century Steel Industry." *The Journal of American Folklore* 111, no. 442 (October 1, 1998): 392-408. doi:10.2307/541047.

Congressional Budget Office. *The Effects of Import Quotas on the Steel Industry: Report to United States Congress*. Washington DC: Congressional Budget Office, July 1984.

Cowie, Jefferson R. *Stayin' Alive : The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*. New York: The New Press, 2010.

Daderko, Dean. "Upside Down, Left to Right." In *LaToya Ruby Frazier: Witness, 6-22. Houston: Contemporary Art Museum Houston*, 2013.

Environmental Protection Agency. "TRI Search." *Data & Tools*. Accessed March 27, 2014, http://oaspub.epa.gov/enviro/rsei.html?facid=15104SSDGRBRADD.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "Milestones: 1974," *EEOC 35th Anniversary*, 2000, http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/history/35th/milestones/1974.html.

Eshleman Jr, Russell E. and Inquirer Staff Writer. "Museum Of Steel Preserving The Heritage Of An Industry Upon Which A Region Was Built." *Philly.com*. Accessed March 15, 2014, http://articles.philly.com/1988-08-26/news/26255894_1_steel-industry-mill-sites-steel-mills.

Evans, Walker and Leslie Katz, "An Interview with Walker Evans (1971)." *In Photography in Print*, edited by Vicki Goldberg, 358-369, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981.

Fleischhauer, Carl and Beverly W. Brannan. "Introduction." *In Documenting American, 1935-1943*, edited by Carl Fleischhauer, 1-11. Berkeley: University of California Press in association with the Library of Congress, 1988.

Foster, Hal, "The Artist as Ethnographer." *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, 171-204. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.

Frazier, LaToya Ruby. "2012 Biennial: LaToya Ruby Frazier." *Whitney Museum of Art* video, 1:53. 2010 http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/2012Biennial/LaToyaRubyFrazier.

— "LaToya Ruby Frazier Makes Moving Pictures." *New York Close Up*. Art21, video, 6:56. February 10, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7-sB3juDJU&feature=kp.

— "Statement." *LaToya Ruby Frazier*. Accessed June 20, 2014. http://www.latoyarubyfrazier.com/statement/.

— "LaToya Ruby Frazier Takes on Levi's." *New York Close Up*. Art 21, video, 6:32, June 17, 2011, http://www.art21.org/newyorkcloseup/films/latoya-ruby-frazier-takes-on-levis/.

Frazier, LaToya Ruby and Tom Chen, "LaToya Ruby Frazier at Whitney Biennial," *Art Info*, 2012, Video, 2:04. http://vimeo.com/38858886.

Frazier, LaToya Ruby and Rujeko Hockley. "A Conversation with Artist LaToya Ruby Frazier." *BKM Tech*, Brooklyn Museum of Art, June 26, 2013, http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/community/blogosphere/2013/06/26/a-conversation-with-artist-latoya-ruby-frazier/.

Frazier, LaToya Ruby and James Krivo. *The Uncritic Review: Exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum*, LaToya Ruby Frazier: A Haunted Capital. WBAI,. April 21, 2013. http://www.wbai.org/articles.php?article=1115.

Frazier, LaToya Ruby and Greg Lindquist. "Haunted: Q&A with LaToya Ruby Frazier." *Art in America*. March 19, 2013, http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/haunted-qa-with-latoya-ruby-frazier/.

Frazier, LaToya Ruby and PCK Media. "LaToya Ruby Frazier: Politics & Poetics." *State of the Arts*. NJTV video 8:10. April 1, 2012. http://vimeo.com/39481979.

Fusco, Coco and Brian Wallis, ed. *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*. New York: International Center of Photography in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 2003.

González, Jennifer A. *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008.

Grom, Robert M. *Braddock, Allegheny County*. Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012. Kindle edition.

Hine, Lewis. "Social Documentary." *In Classic Essays on Photography*, edited by Alan Trachtenberg, 109-114. New Haven, Conn.: Leete's Island Books, 1980.

hooks, bell. "Workers for Artistic Freedom." In *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, 138-144. New York: New Press, 1995.

—. "Diasporic Landscapes of Longing." In *Art on My Mind*, 65-73. New York: New Press, 1995.

—. "Art on My Mind." In *Art on My Mind*, 1-9. New York: New Press, 1995.

—. "Facing Difference: The Black Female Body." In *Art on My Mind*, 94-100. New York: New Press, 1995.

Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Roots Too White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Jenkins, William. “Introduction,” in *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape*. 5-7. Rochester, NY: International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1975.

Lange, Dorothea. “The Assignment I’ll Never Forget: Migrant Mother.” *Popular Photography* 46, no. 2 (February 1960):42-43, 126.

MacLean, Alair. “Environmental Racism.” in *Environmental Encyclopedia*, 4th ed., vol. 1. Detroit: Gale, 2011, 605–6. Accessed March 15, 2014. http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX1918700535&v=2.1&u=txshracd2598&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w&asid=ee68fdfc6b93707674f5e34b3a45feb9.

Massey, Steve. "Economy leaves blacks behind; Pitt study finds region to be among worst in country." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.* October 18, 1994.

Marien, Mary Warner. *Photography: A Cultural History*, 4th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2014.

McKay, Jim. "Blacks lost jobs and a generation with manufacturing's demise." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. November15, 1994.

Newhall, Beaumont . “Documentary Approach to Photography.” *Parnassus* 10, no. 3 (March 1, 1938): 3-6. Accessed February 21, 2014. doi:10.2307/771747.

Owens, Craig and Scott Stewart Bryson. *Beyond Recognition Representation, Power, and Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

O’Regan, Kirsten. “Kirsten O’Regan: These Dark Histories.” *Guernica: A Magazine of Art*. April 17, 2013, http://www.guernicamag.com/daily/kirsten-oregan-these-dark-histories/.

Piper, Adrian. "The Triple Negation of Colored Women Artists." In *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, 161-173.Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.

Ranciere, Jacques, *The Politics of Aesthetics*. Translated by Gavriel Rockill. London: Continuu. 2009.

Reutter, Clifford J. “The Puzzle of a Pittsburgh Steeler: Joe Magarac’s Ethnic Identity,” 33, 1980, *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 63 (January 1980), 31-36.

Ritchin, Fred. *After Photography*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009.

Rosler, Martha, “in, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography).” In *The Contest of Meaning*, edited by Richard Bolton, 303-341. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989.

Salveson, Britt. “New Topographics.” In *New Topographics*, 11-68. Tuscon, AZ: Center for Creative Photography, 2009.

Schulz, Constant B. “Introduction: The Pittsburgh Photographic Library,” in *Witness to the Fifties: The Pittsburgh Photographic Library, 1950-53*, edited by Constance B. Schulz and Steve W. Plattner, 3-26. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999.

Sekula, Allan .“The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (December 1, 1986): 64. doi:10.2307/778312.

Snyder, Joel. “Some Elegiac Stanzas,” *Is Photography Over?,* San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, April 2010, http://www.sfmoma.org/about/research_projects/research_projects_photography_over.

Solomon-Godeau, Abigail .“Who is Speaking Thus?” In *Photography at the dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices*, 169-183. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Picador, 1977.

Stephenson, Sam, “W. Eugene Smith and Pittsburgh,” in *Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith’s Pittsburgh Project*, edited by Sam Stephenson, 17-23, New York: Center for Documentary Studies in association with W.W. Norton, 2001.

Stubbles, John. “The Basic Oxygen Steelmaking (BOS) Process.” *Steel Works: The Online Resource for Steel*. 2014, Https://www.steel.org/en/Making%20Steel/How%20Its%20Made/Processes/Processes%20Info/The%20Basic%20Oxygen%20Steelmaking%20Process.aspx.

Tagg, John. *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

Trachtenberg, Alan. *Reading American Photographs: Images as History Mathew Brady to Walker Evans*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1989.

Trotter, Joe William. *Race and Renaissance: African Americans in Pittsburgh since World War II*. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010.

Wallace, Michelle. “Positive/Negative,” In *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory*, 1-12. New York: Verso, 1990.

Warren, Kenneth. *Bethlehem Steel: Builder and Arsenal of America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008.

Willis, Deborah. *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002.