



Photo: David Nemeroff

I WAS HERE is a media workshop that puts digital cameras and photoblogging websites into the hands of young parents. A group of women, all pregnant or parenting, have been documenting their lives in Toronto through their own eyes. All have had experience with homelessness. Each participant has her own private photoblog, where she can load up her pix and write stories, comments and insights. An exhibition of their work recently toured several Toronto venues including the Rotunda at City Hall and Toronto Free Gallery. It was also featured in the Contact Photography Festival this May. Participants efforts to raise awareness about issues affecting young parents has captured the attention of Mayor David Miller, staff with Ontario Works, health care professionals, social service providers, journalists and the general public.

The women meet weekly at a community centre where childcare, a hot lunch, and TTC tokens are available. The digital cameras are on loan from the National Film Board of Canada, as part of the Filmmaker-in-Residence project at St. Michael's Hospital. The project partners media with medicine.

For more information about I WAS HERE visit: www.nfb.ca/filmmakerin-residence/iwashere. Workshop participants selected the following images to share in this special issue of the *Journal of Research on Mothering*.



Photo by Adrienne, "I'm late, but I'll get there."



Photo by Jess, "One of my first, yet one of my best."



Photo by Keneisha

- Outcast: A person who is rejected from society or home.
- Outcast: Friendless, excluded from a society.
- Outcast: One who has been excluded from a society or system.
- Outcast: Alone in the world with no one to care.

With stress on my shoulders and burdens to bear, I am a one-woman army.
Battles I fight, struggles I overcome, sitting at times wondering, why me, why
have I chosen this life?

Artist's Statement

We've come together as a group to have our voices heard.

"I guess I kind of liken it to voting," says Adrienne. "People say it's just one vote, one small voice, it doesn't count, but you do it anyway because it all adds up in the end."

We want to show that we have many struggles in our lives, but that ultimately we are strong, we work really hard. Through photoblogging, "We are creating

windows into our lives,” says Jess. “And hopefully, it will take the judgemental edge off and change people’s perceptions of us.”

We have been documenting our journeys, transitions, our homes, our families, our daily lives, exploring how and what we see. “Since I started using the camera, I look for beautiful things,” says Meghan. “I analyze what I see. I think, where would be a nice place to go? I always keep my eyes open; alert to what inspires me.”

We hope, in the words of Keneisha, that “People will take time to look at our photographs and read our stories, not just look and go, ‘Oh, that’s nice’ and walk off. But really look at the work we’ve done and think about what it feels like to walk in our shoes.”

—*I WAS HERE* Photobloggers
January 10, 2007



Meghan and Xzavior

**St. Martin's Manor
Young Parent Resource Centre, Hamilton**



Sharon and Emma



Shannon and Tyler



Sarah and Liam



Nicole and Raine