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Above The Fold

Tyra Mitchell documents the eroding culture—and resilient beauty—of D.C.'s young black families

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The photographer shares exclusive images from her show ‘Raising Our Youth’, opening today at IA&A at Hillyer.

Opening June 8 in Washington D.C., photographer Tyra Mitchell’s *Raising Our Youth* exhibits select images from her ongoing photo-documentary series—an exploration of gentrification, young parenthood, and a resilient sense of beauty. A native D.C. resident herself, Mitchell engages with the erosion of the city’s rich culture and the impact of these losses on future generations.

“Gentrification has been slowly happening in my hometown for many years,” Mitchell said. “But the implications of it never captured me the way it has now that I have a family that I am raising here.” Mitchell met with D.C.-native parents under 30 years of age in their homes across the city, documenting everyday joys as well as the challenges of raising children in a hometown that feels increasingly foreign. Documenting single mothers and their children as well as co-parent households, Mitchell said she’s drawn upon the new perspective motherhood gave her to paint a moving, ultimately celebratory of image of families creating homes and passing on their history despite decades of systemic erasure. 

“Aside from the growing economic segregation, D.C. has always been known for its beautiful, rich black culture,” Mitchell said. “The ‘chocolate city’ I knew growing up is not what it is today and I made it my duty to utilize the power of my art to highlight natives and their stories. I wanted to give my peers a platform to be seen and heard in spaces that they may not have been otherwise.”

“Raising Our Youth” is on view from June 7 at IA&A at Hillyer and continues through the end of the month. You can find Tyra Mitchell at @tyrathезombie on Instagram.