

# Tonika Lewis Johnson

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## EDUCATION

- **Master of Business Administration - 2005**  
National-Louis University - Chicago, IL
- **Bachelor of Arts in Print Journalism & Photography - 2003**  
Columbia College Chicago - Chicago, IL

WEBSITE: [www.tonikaj.com](http://www.tonikaj.com)

## GRANTS/AWARDS/ FELLOWSHIPS

- **2024 - Gordon Parks Foundation Fellow**
- **2023 - Community Impact Award - Metropolitan Planning Council**
- **2022 - Influencer - Landmarks Illinois**
- **2022 - City of Chicago's Together We Heal Creative Placemaking Grant**
- **2021 - City of Chicago's Dept. of Cultural Affairs & Special Events Artist Response Program awardee**
- **2021 - National Public Housing Museum Artist-As-Instigator Residency**
- **2021 - Illinois Humanities Award**
- **2021 - Museum of Science & Industry's 2021 Black Innovator Gallery Inductee**
- **2021 - Public Narrative Community Media Uplifting Voices Award**
- **2020 - North American Cartographic Information Society - Imaginative Cartography Award**
- **2020 - American Planning Assoc. - IL Chapter Planning Advocate Award**
- **2020 - Streetwise Newspaper - 20 Most inspiring People of 2020**
- **2019 - Leaders for a New Chicago Award Recipient**
- **2019 - Images & Voices Of Hope (ivoh) Fellow**
- **2018 - Propeller Fund Grant**
- **2018 - Oppenheimer Grant**
- **2018 - The Chicago Community Trust Grant**
- **2017 - Chicago Magazine's Chicagoan of The Year**
- **2017 - City Bureau Photography Fellow (Summer)**
- **2016 - City of Chicago's Dept. of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) Individual Artists Program (IAP) Grant**
- **2013 - Magnum Foundation's SEE POTENTIAL Project Fellow Chicago, IL**

## **PUBLIC ART (COMMISSIONED PROJECTS)**

**January 2020 — Altgeld Public Library** - with the COVID-19 pandemic right around the corner—Tonika Lewis Johnson was personally selected by residents of the Altgeld Gardens neighborhood to create public artwork for the new Altgeld Garden Branch Library, designed by Jackie Koo. This project was personal for the artist; her grandmother, Marilyn Lewis, migrated to Altgeld Gardens from New Orleans and raised her father and his thirteen siblings on Corliss Street. As her concept, Tonika Lewis Johnson proposed a juxtaposition of historic and current-day photos of the community stunningly backlit by the library's large windows. The final project was met with community admiration.

**January 2017 - CTA's Year of Public Art** - The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) partnered with the City's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) to create the CTA Lightbox Project, part of the collaboration's Year of Public Art. Four of Tonika Lewis Johnson's photos were selected for the Lightbox Project, which featured lightbox installations in train stations that highlighted the perspective of Chicago artists and their neighborhoods. Tonika Lewis Johnson's installation was installed on the Indiana Green Line L stop. One image, entitled "Glow Radiant," of a girl picking a dandelion in a vacant lot, was also included in the Chicago Cultural Center's 2016 exhibition 50x50 Invitational/The Subject is Chicago: People, Places, Possibilities. The exhibition highlighted the work of one artist from each of the City's 50 wards.

## **EXHIBITIONS**

- **2020 (Fall) – The Long Dream, Museum of Contemporary Art, Featured Artist, Chicago, IL**
- **2019 (Summer) – Envisioning Justice Exhibition, Sullivan Galleries at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago**
- **2018 (Summer) – Folded Map, Loyola University Museum of Art, Featured Artist, Chicago, IL**
- **2018 (Spring) – Everyday Englewood, Loyola University Museum of Art, Featured Artist, Chicago, IL**
- **2017 (Oct.) - Alter Call: The Architecture of Black Sacred Space, RootWork Gallery, Chicago, IL**
- **2017 (August) - Shoot Your Shot: Evolution of Chicago's Street Art + Culture, RootWork Gallery, Chicago, IL**
- **2017 (April – June) – From the INside, Harold Washington Library Featured Artist, Chicago, IL**
- **2017 (Feb.) – (New Work) Everyday Rituals, RootWork Gallery, Chicago, IL**
- **2017 (Feb-April) – Chicago: Places, People & Possibilities, Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL**
- **2016 (Oct. 15) – From the INside, First Annual Englewood Art Fair, Featured artist, Chicago, IL**

### **Photo/Arts-based Community Engagement**

● **2020 (August 08) - *Envision Englewood Initiative*** – In an immediate response to the looting and Black Lives Matter uprisings at the start of summer during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, Englewood Arts Collective (EAC) launched an initiative to evoke empowerment and healing energy in Englewood through a few artistic public activations titled #EnvisionEnglewood. The #EnvisionEnglewood campaign started with a Juneteenth billboard and a follow-up pop-up activation event in partnership with R.A.G.E.—a “So Fresh Saturday” where EAC gave away over 1000 PPE and 100 art kits and posters of the billboard. This visual messaging campaign culminated in an activation event on August 8th, where EAC partnered with R.A.G.E. again to organize and transform an abandoned “hotspot” known for violence into a vibrant, collaborative “art amusement park.”

● **2020 (November 09) - *We, Women*** – As an invited photographer to the national “We, Women,” social impact photography art project, Tonika photographed and interviewed additional “Map Twins,” for her Folded Map project and hosted a large-scale, public projection of the video and photographs in Englewood her home neighborhood on Chicago’s South Side. This event coincided with the opening reception of the Folded Map’s debut exhibition in Englewood at the Englewood Branded apparel store. More than 150+ people attended with majority being first-time visitors to Englewood.

● **2019 (April 16) - *Ain’t You Heard – What Happens to A Dream Deferred*** was an evening of storytelling through performances, curated large-scale projections, and memories collected at Woods Academy, one of the 16 schools closed in Englewood since 2002. Inspired by Langston Hughes’ poem, Tonika and Paola Aguirre organized the event in partnership with Resident Association of Greater Englewood, Borderless Studio, and Creative Grounds. It included curated visual projections depicting Black life during the Great Migration through historic photos of Chicago and the South; a “memory station” asking participants to share their stories related to their journey and belonging in Chicago, plus performances by Tonika and rapper Roy Kinsey. The event was supported by the curators of Dimensions of Citizenship: Architecture and Belonging from the Body to the Cosmos, the official U.S. entry at the recently concluded 16th International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale.

● **2018 (September 14) – *Englewood Pop-Up Projection Party***, On Friday, September 14, during and after Englewood’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Critical Mass night bike ride, Roll N Peace DaRemix, Tonika Johnson hosted a large scale, site specific projection party in Englewood to celebrate Black culture on Chicago’s South Side in partnership with Blvck Vrchives, Borderless Studio, and Exposure for Concerned Black Photographers. The video montage, curated by Tonika, included old family photographs from Englewood residents and historic images of neighboring south side communities.

● **2017 (April 2017 - March 2018) – *Englewood Rising Billboard Project***, The narrative? Englewood is damaged and dangerous. The truth? Englewood is a thriving community full of joy, cherished everyday life, and beauty from block to block. The Englewood Rising Billboard Project was born as a community-led campaign, created and funded by Englewood residents and activists. Each month between April 2017 and March 2018, a different collection of images from Englewood was featured on five billboards in Chicago. Tonika Lewis Johnson’s photography was the centerpiece.

## **PRESS**

**January 25, 2024 - Block Club Chicago**, "How An Englewood Artist And Activist Is Helping Black Families Keep Their Homes"

**January 15, 2024 - WTTW's Chicago Tonight**. Project Aims to Repair Englewood Homes, Combat Disinvestment Through the Arts"

**January 05, 2024 - Chicago Tribune**, "Repairing homes as a form of public art, Tonika Lewis Johnson helps Englewood reinvest in the disinvested"

**Apr. 8, 2022 - ARTNews**, "Artist Tonika Lewis Johnson's EXPO Chicago Installation Forces A Reckoning with Chicago's History of 'Racist' Housing Policies."

**Mar. 21, 2022 - WBEZ Chicago**, "An Englewood Artist Highlights the Pain and Plunder that Contract Buying inflicted on Black Families."

**Mar. 3, 2022 - Block Club Chicago**, "After Homeowner Removes Sign of Home Once Sold Through Racist Practices, Englewood Activist Will Adjust Art Project."

**Feb. 23, 2022 - Block Club Chicago**, "Englewood Artist Launches 'Inequity For Sale' Exhibit Featuring 2 South Side Homes Sold Through Racist Practices."

**Feb. 22, 2022 - NBC 5 Chicago**, "Artist's Immersive Exhibit Invites Chicagoans to Walk Through Englewood."

**Feb. 2, 2022 - FOX 32 Chicago**, "Inequity for Sale" Project Shows the Lasting Impacts of Racism."

**Dec. 21, 2021 - Crain's Chicago Business**, "Artist maps Englewood homes where Black residents were denied ownership."

**Nov. 17 2021 - Block Club Chicago**, "Black Chicagoans were Cheated Out of Owning Homes for Decades. This Englewood Art Project Shows Racism's Lasting Impact."

**Apr. 27, 2021 - WTTW Chicago Tonight**, "Arts 77 Program."

**Mar. 3, 2021 - CBS Chicago**, "Women's History Month - Trailblazing Women Series."

**Feb. 8, 2021 - Colossal**, "Tonika Johnson Discusses Using Photography as a Starting Point to Explore Chicago's Ongoing History of Segregation."

**Dec. 10, 2020 - CBS This Morning**, "Mapping Inequity"

**Nov. 4, 2020 - Block Club Chicago**, "Find your Map Twin with Free Folded Map Action Kits"

**Sept. 20 2020 - ABC 7 News**, "Chicago Justice Gallery exhibit explores Segregation, Inclusion through Eyes of Youth"

**Sept. 15, 2020 - CBS News**, "COVID-19 & Folded Map Project sheds lights on the disparities in Chicago"

**Aug. 12, 2020 - Associated Press**, "Chicago Artist: Disinvestment led to Unrest"

**Aug. 10, 2020 - Al Jazeera**, "Folded Map Project brings Chicago's residents together"

**July 24, 2020 - Chicago Tribune**, "South Siders & North Siders together bring paint, plants, & hope to a Chicago Block"

**Aug. 2, 2020 - Reuters**, "Chicago Artist tackles Urban Segregation"

**Feb. 11, 2020 - WTTW Chicago Tonight**, "Folded Map highlights Chicago Segregation"

**Nov. 18, 2019 - VICE Magazine**, "This Artist is Rewriting the Narrative of a Segregated Chicago."

**Nov. 8, 2019 - The Chicago Tribune, Column**: "Tonika Johnson brings acclaimed Folded Map Project home to Englewood"

**Sept. 18, 2019 - The Chicago Tribune, Column**: "Don't go to the South Side.' Really? Tonika Johnson has some thoughts about that."

**July 15, 2019 - The Christian Science Monitor**, "How a Chicago photographer uses art to bridge racial divides"

**April 26, 2019** – **South Side Weekly**, “Ain’t You Heard”

**Feb. 26, 2019** - **WBEZ’s Morning Shift**, “Photographer Tonika Johnson’s ‘Folded Map’ Project Expands Westward”

**Oct. 15, 2018** - **Bad At Sports**, “Tonika Johnson & Natasha Ritsma Bring Englewood to the Magnificent Mile”

**Sept. 16, 2018** - **ABC 7’s Sunday Morning News**, “Folded Map project puts Chicago’s Inequities on Display”

**Sept. 4, 2018** - **ABC 7’s Windy City Live**, “Folded Map Project Capturing the Division of the City”

**Sept. 25, 2018** - **Sixty Inches From Center**, “Tonika Johnson Uses Visual Activism to Combat Distorted Truth”

**Sept. 12, 2018** - **Loyola University**, “Where North meets South”

Sept. 10, 2018 - **A Beautiful Perspective**, “In racially divided Chicago, ‘map twins’ break down barriers’

Aug. 30, 2018 - **WBBM NewsRadio**, “Newsmaker Making a difference: Tonika Johnson, Folded Map Project”

Aug. 30, 2018 - **CITYLAB**, “Map Twins’ Bridge the Gap in a Segregated Chicago”

Aug. 26, 2018 - **Chicago Magazine**, “Tonika Johnson Bridges Neighborhoods to Break Down Walls of Segregation”

Aug. 26, 2018 - **LensScratch**, “Yvette Meltzer on Tonika Johnson”

Aug. 14, 2018 - **VICE**, “These Powerful Images of Chicago’s South Side Are Filled With Love”

Aug. 14, 2018 - **Next City**, “Chicago Segregation Mapping Project Makes Real-Life Connections”

Aug. 7, 2018 - **WGN Radio Cornerstore Podcast**, “Tonika Johnson: Documenting Englewood”

July 5, 2018 - **ABC 7 Eyewitness News**, “Art exhibit looks at Chicago segregation in a new way”

June 20, 2018 - **Backseat Rider**, “Tonika Johnson changing Chicago one map at a time”

June 8, 2018 - **Newsy**, “Artist’s Folded Map Project Aims to Break Down Cultural Barriers”

May 26, 2018 – **U.S. News & World Report**, “Chicago Photographer’s Project Shows Disparities in the City”

May 23, 2018 – **WBEZ’s Morning Shift**, “Folded Map Project Addresses Segregation in Chicago”

May 22, 2018 – **The Chicago Tribune**, “Bid to bridge a segregated city”

May 21, 2018 – **Chicago Sun-Times Online**, “Activist’s art project analyzes Chicago’s segregation in Folded Map project”

May 12, 2018 – **WGN’s Outside The Loop radio show**, “The Folded Map Project”

Mar. 1, 2018 – **National Geographic**, “MFON: Women Photographers of the African Diaspora”

Jan. 24, 2018 – **The JAM TV**, “Englewood: Through An Artist’s Lens”

Jan. 4, 2018 – **CJR** “Lens of an Insider: Photographer defies media portrait of Chicago Neighborhood”

Dec. 2017 – **Chicago Magazine**, “2017 Chicagoans of the Year”

Nov. 28, 2017 – **Windy City Live**, “Chicago Magazines Chicagoans of the Year 2017”

Aug. 2017 – **Chicago Reader Arts & Culture Feature**, “Englewood: Beyond the Headlines”

July 2017 – **WTTW Chicago Tonight**, ‘Englewood Rising’ Campaign a ‘Reflection of What Already Exists’

Mar. 2017 – **The Establishment**, “The Role of Photography in Resisting Trump and Racism”  
Feb. 2017 – **Vocalo (91.1FM)**, Featured artist on Morning Amp  
Feb. 2017 – **FOX 32 Good Day Chicago**, “Tonika Johnson examines “Everyday Rituals” in Englewood  
Feb. 2017 – **FOX 32 News**, “Chicago Artist Captures the Reality and Beauty of Englewood”  
Jan. 2017 – **South Side Weekly**, Englewood  
Through My Lens Photo Essay  
Dec. 2016 – **N’DIGO**, Featured Photographer Photo Essay  
Nov. 2016 – **Northwestern’s Social Justice News Network**, Englewood  
Through My Lens Essay & Photos  
Aug. 2011 - **Chicago Reader**, Published essay “Remembering the Wonder Years,” By: Tonika Johnson  
Mar. 2011 - **Chicago Tribune**, “Journalism Program a Study of Perceptions.”

## **PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT**

**2017 – Oct. 2018**

### **Program Manager for Resident Assc. Of Greater Englewood (R.A.G.E.)**

The Resident Association of Greater Englewood (R.A.G.E.) is a grassroots organization whose guiding principle is that the key to improving Englewood is activating more residents to be involved with positive change. Today, R.A.G.E. boasts nearly 300 members however, in November 2010, R.A.G.E. was founded by a collective of 13 residents with Asiaha Butler at the helm. R.A.G.E.’s overarching mission is to convene residents, Englewood’s public officials, business owners, and other organizations to strategize, build their power, promote healing, create community solidarity and tangible solutions while actively serving as a credible source for critical information about Englewood.

**2013 - 2017**

### **Program Manager for Growing Home, Inc.**

**Growing Home** is an organic urban farm in Englewood that offers 25 hours per week of paid on-the-job experience and job- readiness training plus the support to conquer issues like criminal records, medical needs, child-care, and housing. Each year Growing Home, Inc. start 40+ people on the path to self-sufficiency and uses their unique model to impact neighborhoods with the greatest need. That’s why its farms are located in Englewood, a community on the South side of Chicago that has been under-served for decades and has extremely high rates of unemployment and poverty, hundreds of acres of vacant lots, and a distinct lack of healthy food choices.

**2011 - 2012**

### **Co-Founder & Lead Teacher**

**MEDIA-N-MOTION MNM** is free, 8 week, youth journalism program for youth in Englewood. During two, two-hour sessions each week for two months, Media-N-Motion created and implemented a news writing & reporting curriculum for three cohorts of 15 middle to high-school students. MNM utilized a variety of effective and professional teaching techniques

and

methods to assist students in attaining the performance objectives of Media-N-Motion. MNM's culminating project included a newsletter, written by the youth and a student showcase. Reporter Joel Hood wrote a feature article about Media-N-Motion in the March 02, 2011 issue of the Chicago Tribune titled "Journalism Program : A Study Of Perceptions by Joel Hood.

### **2010 - Present**

#### **Co-Founder of R.A.G.E.**

**Resident Association of Greater Englewood (R.A.G.E.)** is a resident-driven association established to build relationships with fellow residents, Englewood's public officials, business owners and organizations. R.A.G.E. is a grassroots organization that strategizes to address community problems, creates tangible solutions and actively seeks ways to keep fellow residents informed about the latest news in Englewood, Chicago. R.A.G.E. is the voice speaking out to empower, educate, uplift and motivate fellow residents and stake holders on many of the issues that face the community. R.A.G.E.'s main focus areas are Education/Youth Development, Economic Development and Civic Engagement & Empowerment in the Greater Englewood neighborhood.

### **2017 - Present**

**Co-Founder of Englewood Arts Collective (EAC)** is a united team of 14 professional Artists with deep connections to the Englewood community – they all live, were raised in, and/or currently work in Greater Englewood. The ultimate goal of the Englewood Arts Collective is to reflect the beauty of, enrich the community within, and help produce events and interactions that reflect the Englewood Chicago community in a positive way—reframing the mainstream narrative, from the inside out. They believe in: the power of a people when they tell their own story; the power of Art as a legitimate, viable conduit for positive change in communities; and the potential for Artists to be leaders and influencers of said change.

## **TEACHING ARTIST EXPERIENCE**

### **2014**

#### **Changing Worlds**

- Academy for Global Citizenship, Chicago Photography Teaching Artist (Dec.- March 2015)
- Pilsen Elementary Community Academy, Chicago Arts & Literacy in Action Afterschool Program Teacher (Oct.-Dec.)
- Charles Evans Hughes Elementary School, Chicago Digital Photography Teaching Artist (Jan.-June)

### **2013**

#### **Changing Worlds**

- *Johnson Elementary School, Chicago Introduction to Photography Teaching Artist, (Jan.- June)*
- *Hearst Elementary School Photography Teaching Artist, (April-June)*
- *Pilsen Elementary Community Academy, Chicago Photography Teaching Artist, (Aug.-Dec.)*
- *Hearst Elementary School Arts & Cultural Connections After-School Program, (Aug.-Dec.)*

### **2013**

#### **Changing Worlds**

- *Tilden Career Academy High School Photography Teaching Artist, (June)*
- *Gregory Elementary School Photography Teaching Artist, (Feb.-May)*