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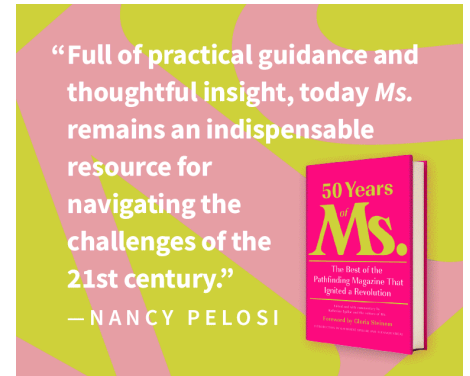
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Mothers of Victims of Police Don't Want Your Pity. They Want Solidarity—and Justice.

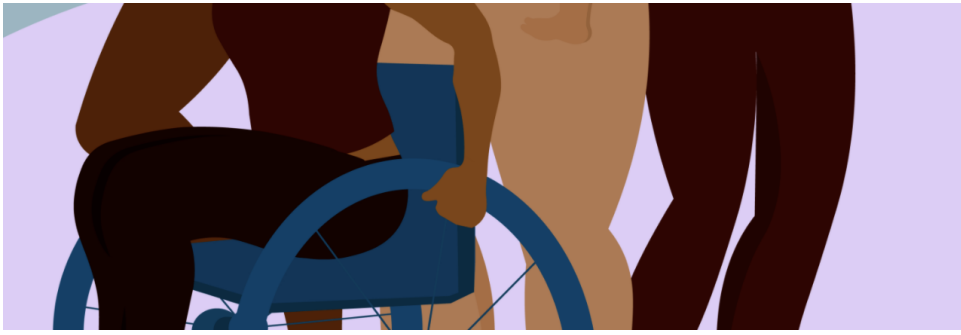
9/30/2020 by **NADINE NABER**



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([MotheringsRadical.com](https://motheringsradical.com))

With his face pinned down on the cold concrete floor and the weight of Derek Chauvin’s body pressed against his neck for over eight minutes, the final cries from George Floyd repeatedly calling for his mother reverberated in minds and hearts across the nation last May and ever since.

The cry of a dying child for their mother has inspired grave sympathy across the globe for centuries. From the ways the media sensationalizes the grief of Afghan and Iraqi mothers who lost children in the war on terror, to how U.S. culture remembers the grief of Black mothers who lost enslaved children to lynching, our world is full of sentimentalized beliefs that the suffering of a mother is unlike any other.

To be sure, [losing a child to police violence](#) is deeply traumatizing and Black mothers in the U.S. share a disproportionate burden of this trauma.

Yet, what is the consequence of responding to mothers of victims of police (or other violence) with sentimental tropes that assume a mother’s reproductive capacities render her the ultimate sign of life, the absolute beacon of comfort and protection, and therefore, the ultimate victim?

Indeed, mothers of police violence are not merely biological extensions of their children, who exist only to nurture them through life and cry and grieve through their child’s pain. They are revolutionaries. By integrating the work of grief, nurture and

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care with their ongoing fight for justice, these women are the kinds of activists we need to have leading the way.

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"All mothers were summoned when George Floyd called out for his mam:

Seen at protests across the United States.

In his last moments Floyd cried for his mother while the police officer had knee on his neck, even though his mother passed away years ago.

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Some mothers I know in Chicago are a good model of this. I co-founded an [organization](#) that supports mothers whose primarily Black and Latinx children were tortured by Chicago police officers. The women call themselves “mothers of the kidnapped.”

One of these mothers, Bertha Escamilla, has documented [130 such cases in Chicago since 1994](#) after three police officers spent eighteen hours punching, slapping and spitting on her son, Nick, and threatening his girlfriend and their child until he signed a false confession. Nick served fourteen years in prison. Although he was released, he remains “a felon” on paper, and his life has been devastated.

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All of the “mothers of the kidnapped” share similar experiences. They are supporting not only their biological children, but all torture survivors in obtaining justice.

Forced to learn the law and figure it out collectively, Bertha Escamilla collects data on the cases of Chicago’s torture survivors. She looks into police reports, locates information about each case, contacts family members by phone or meets them at the courthouse and explains to them what to do and what to look for.

[Armanda Shackelford](#) says that because her son Gerald is not incarcerated alone, she speaks at protests in support of all prisoners.

Esther Hernandez, mother of the “[Hernandez Brothers](#),” mobilizes people to show up at court hearings for all the victims since an empty courtroom could harm a case.

Mothers like [Denice Bronis](#) are trying to make sure her son, and all inmates, do not die in COVID-infested prisons and jails.

[Regina Russell](#) and [Rosemary Cade](#) are demanding the state of Illinois change the ways it investigates torture claims.

The current structure, [Torture Investigation Relief Committee](#) (TIRC), entails a lengthy process, taking on average ten years to resolve. Even if the TIRC finally determines that an individual has a valid claim of torture, a judge can still deny the claim in court at the drop of a hat.



Bertha Escamilla. ([Twitter](#))

Bertha Escamilla is fighting to hold the officers, judges and prosecutors with whom they worked accountable for violating the rights of torture survivors with impunity.

Christina Borizov is fighting for her son and other inmates to be adequately treated for health problems like diabetes, kidney failure, heart conditions, hypertension and blood clots. Together, mothers of the kidnapped are fighting so that no mother—and no person—will ever have to suffer at the hands of the police.

To be sure, there is excruciating pain and there are tears, and the road to healing never ends. Yet we can no longer allow our reactions to mothers of police violence victims begin and end with mere pity. Mothers of the kidnapped, like enslaved Black mothers, mothers of children in ICE prison camps, or mothers of

prisoners of war are affirming what they want, and it is not our pity. It is action.

Their activism models for all of us what we should be doing if we really want to end police violence, and it's much more than grief.

It's also about justice. That's why they do not need our pity. They need solidarity in whatever form that might take, whether it's protest, pressuring public officials or voting.

TAGGED: [ACTIVISM](#), [BLACK WOMEN](#), [POLICE VIOLENCE](#)

ABOUT NADINE NABER

[Nadine Naber](#) is a professor of gender and women's studies and global Asian studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a public voices fellow of The OpEd Project. She is the author and/or co-editor of [five books](#), [a TEDX speaker](#); and co-founder of [MAMAS](#) and [Liberate Your Research](#).

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