



P.O.V.

Discussion Guide

Season

17

# Every Mother's Son

A Film by Tami Gold & Kelly Anderson



[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)



## Letter from the Filmmakers

NEW YORK, 2004

### Dear Viewers,

In 1999 when Amadou Diallo, an unarmed man, was shot at 41 times by police officers in New York, we felt we had to get out there with a camera and talk to people for our own sanity, to understand what was happening. It was like the topic of this film chose us.

We were concerned about the high level of visibility of this topic, and the challenge was to find a unique angle on something that had had a lot of media coverage already. Then we found the mothers as a way in that was different and decided to focus on their enormous transition from this terrible experience to speaking out for changes in policing, and we decided to look at what was in them that pushed them to do that.

We felt that it was not enough to make a documentary about police brutality alone. We wanted it to deal with this issue but also to have a human component and an aspect of hope. The three mothers in *Every Mother's Son*—Iris Baez, Kadiatou Diallo and Doris Busch Boskey—have found a resilience within themselves that is remarkable and can provide inspiration to others.

We have always been attracted to stories that explore large social and political questions through the intimate personal experiences of people affected by them. Policing was such a dense topic that we decided that focusing on New York City during the Giuliani years (1994–2000) and on the stories of three mothers (though they are part of a larger movement) would allow us to get at the big issues through a very personal lens.

Ultimately, we would like you to understand that police brutality is a problem that extends far beyond individual “bad cops.” Many of the problems facing us are systemic in that they have to do with policies that put police officers in situations where abuses are likely to take place. We would like Americans who don't live in poor urban areas to have a sense of what people in these communities experience from the police on a daily basis. We know it will be shocking for many people to see how unequal policing is in terms of its effect on citizens.

Finally, we hope that this film will motivate you to take action to promote community policing, and to push for the creation of independent citizen review boards with enforcement capability and for the creation of independent prosecutor positions where they do not exist. We hope you join and work to build organizations that are fighting to reform policing in America.



Filmmakers Kelly Anderson (left) and Tami Gold

Photo: Anna Curtis

### Tami Gold & Kelly Anderson



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### Thanks to those who reviewed this guide

Blanca Vazquez  
Tami Gold

*Our dear friend and community activist Richie Perez died on March 27, 2004, shortly after we completed Every Mother's Son. Richie was invaluable for his insights throughout the making of this film, and he will be missed by all the lives he touched during the three decades he fought tirelessly against police brutality.*  
— the filmmakers.



## Introduction

In just under an hour, *Every Mother's Son* documents the courageous personal and social transformations of three women—Iris Baez, Kadiatou Diallo and Doris Busch Boskey. During what some refer to as “the Giuliani years” (1994–2000 in New York City), this journey ignites for viewers the critical balance between public safety and civil liberties as these three mothers demand truth and justice after losing their sons at the hands of officers in the New York City Police Department.

Using the “zero tolerance” law enforcement policies that swept American cities in the 1990s as the context for these intimate portraits, filmmakers Tami Gold and Kelly Anderson follow Iris, Kadiatou and Doris as they navigate through the criminal justice system and the insular police culture that exists within the NYPD, and as they advocate for accountability and justice in cases of police abuse of power.

*Every Mother's Son* allows us to remember the early deaths of Anthony Raymond Baez (1965–1994), Amadou Diallo (1976–1999) and Gary (Gidone) Busch (1967–1999), yet gives viewers broader insight into how individual trauma can unite people of differing backgrounds toward common goals and shared values. As an outreach tool, the tragedies that brought Iris, Kadiatou and Doris together provide viewers an opportunity to examine attitudes about policing, the role that law enforcement plays in their communities, and the effect that policing policies may have, particularly in neighborhoods that are politically or economically

disadvantaged and on people deemed to be “dangerous,” such as people with emotional problems.

By juxtaposing individual mothers against institutions that have wide-ranging impact on our lives, this documentary reveals ways in which viewers can begin to



1995 March for Anthony Baez, killed by police officer Frances Livoti in Bronx, N.Y.

Photo: Kirk Condyles

examine their own beliefs and experiences with local policing and reclaim their right to participate in the creation of law enforcement policies and criminal justice processes, redefine what “security” means across communities, and work with neighbors to ensure that policing is both equitable and effective.



## Potential Partners

*Every Mother's Son* is well suited for use in a variety of settings and is especially recommended for use with:

- **Families dealing with police brutality cases and their supporters**
- **High schools and youth programs**
- **People involved with law enforcement training and policing policies**
- **People involved with the justice system (e.g., judges, attorneys, police officers, parole officers, city government, prison guards and inmates, educators, social service providers)**
- **Your local PBS station and their Program Club:**  
[www.pbs.org/pbsprogramclub/about.html](http://www.pbs.org/pbsprogramclub/about.html)
- **Groups focused on any of the issues listed above**
- **Faith-based organizations**
- **Academic departments and student groups at colleges, universities, community colleges, and high schools**
- **Community organizations with a mission to promote education and learning, such as P.O.V.'s national partners Elderhostel Learning in Retirement Centers, members of the Listen Up! Youth Network, or your local library**

## Key Issues

*Every Mother's Son* is an excellent tool for dialogue because it raises issues that touch all mothers, families, civic workers and public policy makers, including people from different races, socioeconomic classes, religions, and political perspectives. It is of particular interest to young people and organizations working with youth, as young people are so often the victims of police abuse.

It will be of special interest to people interested in exploring or working on the issues below:

- Civil rights**
- Conflict resolution / Violence prevention**
- Education**
- Family**
- Gun control**
- Human rights**
- Justice system**
- Juvenile delinquency**
- Law enforcement**
- Legal studies**
- Parenting**
- Police brutality**
- Police reform**
- Police training**
- Policing policies**
- Psychology**
- Race profiling**
- Racism**
- Social services / Grief therapy**
- Social work**
- Sociology**
- Stereotyping**
- Therapy**
- Youth, particularly young men**



## Background Information

### People We Meet in *Every Mother's Son*



**Iris Baez**, mother of Anthony Raymond Baez, slain 1994; lives in the Bronx



**Kadiatou Diallo**, mother of Amadou Diallo, slain 1999; left Guinea, West Africa, to live in New York after her son was killed



**Doris Busch Boskey**, mother of Gary (Gidone) Busch, slain 1999; lives in Long Island



**Sean Carroll**, first police officer to open fire on Amadou Diallo



**Rafael Eisenberg**, witness to Gary (Gidone) Busch's shooting



**Tony Gair**, Diallo family attorney



**Rudolph Giuliani**, New York City mayor from 1994 to 2001



**Clifton Hollingsworth**, NYPD detective and founding member, 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care



**Susan Karten**, Baez family attorney



## Background Information



**Alan LeBlanc**, Baez family attorney



**Francis Livoti**, police officer who killed Anthony Baez



**Richie Perez**, Founder, National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights and Justice Committee, anti-police brutality activist, deceased March 2004



**Howard Safir**, New York City police commissioner from April 1996 to August 2000



**Judge Gerald Scheindlin**, presided over Francis Livoti's criminal trial



## Background Information

### Updates

In 1998, Iris Baez founded the Anthony Baez Memorial Fund, which is dedicated to assisting families confronted with police violence. Recently, Iris made the decision to run for public office because she feels that “working on the inside” will be the most significant way to impact police training and education. In 2000, the street where Anthony was killed was renamed “Anthony Baez Place” in his honor and as a reminder of the human cost of police brutality.

Kadiatou Diallo is the founder of the Amadou Diallo Foundation, dedicated to the promotion of racial healing through educational programs. She recently published her autobiography, *MY HEART WILL CROSS THIS OCEAN: My Story, My Son, Amadou*.

As of August 2004, Doris Busch Boskey is waiting for a decision from the Civilian Complaint Review Board concerning her case. She continues to speak out about the cover-up, evidence tampering and demonization that went on in Gary’s case. In addition, she is working to promote better screening and training of police officers, especially in the use of patience and verbal communication as opposed to the use of physical force and tools like pepperspray. She is working to publish a book of Gary’s poetry, which he finished and designed just weeks before he was killed.

Due to its apparent success in reducing crime rates during his years as mayor in New York City, the “Giuliani model” of policing is being exported to other U.S. cities and internationally. However, documentation exists showing flaws in Mayor Giuliani’s approach and that crime reduction has been achieved using models that employ greater citizen involvement in policing practices. [See Human Rights First letter regarding Giuliani Plan for Mexico City in the Resources section (p. 20) for more information and counter-arguments against adopting the “Giuliani model” in Mexico City.]



*Iris Baez, Kadiatou Diallo and Doris Busch Boskey (left to right)*  
Photo: Anna Curtis





## Background Information

### Film Background

- Police abuse remains one of the most serious and divisive human rights violations in the United States. The excessive use of force by police officers, including unjustified shootings, severe beatings, fatal chokings, and rough treatment, persists because overwhelming barriers to accountability make it possible for officers who commit human rights violations to escape due punishment and often to repeat their offenses. ("Shielded from Justice: Police Brutality and Accountability in the United States," Human Rights Watch, 1998)
- Two years after police shot Amadou Diallo and Gary (Gidone) Busch, there was still no comprehensive accounting on police shootings and use of non-lethal force for all of the nation's 17,000 police departments. ("When the Police Shoot, Who's Counting?" *New York Times*, April 29, 2001)
- In New York City, the "Quality of Life" campaign initiated and implemented by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and police commissioner William Bratton starting in 1994 was based on the "Broken Windows Theory," which was developed by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling. Wilson and Kelling used the analogy of a broken window to describe the connection between disorder and crime. (Chris Cunneen, "Zero Tolerance Policing." *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)*, 1999. <http://www.atsic.gov.au>)

According to the "Broken Windows Theory," disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence. Some social psychologists and police officers agree that if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken. One unrepaired window is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing. Serious street crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behavior goes unchecked. The unchecked panhandler is, in effect, the first broken window. Just as physicians now recognize the importance of fostering health rather than simply treating illness, so the police—and the rest of us—ought to recognize the importance of maintaining intact communities without "broken windows." (Chris Cunneen, "Zero Tolerance Policing." *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)*, 1999. <http://www.atsic.gov.au>)

In New York, this theory was the underpinning of "Zero Tolerance" policing, a strategy of law enforcement characterized by "street sweeps," "crackdowns" and other aggressive enforcement tactics such as stop-and-frisk. Under this approach, the primary method of solving many neighborhood problems is the enforcement of misdemeanor laws against "Quality of Life" offenses such as vagrancy, disorderly conduct, littering and loitering, resulting in arrest and conviction. ("Organized for Change: The Activists's Guide to Police Reform," PolicyLink, 2004, p. 4)

George Kelling later wrote that the ideas presented in "Broken Windows" were antithetical to the kinds of tactics used in New York, particularly the use of street-sweeping tactics targeting "undesirables." Rather, Kelling and Wilson had advocated close collaboration between police and citizens, including street people, in the development of neighborhood standards. Moreover, neighborhood rules were to be enforced for the most part through nonarrest approaches—education, persuasion, counseling and ordering—so that arrest would only be resorted to when other approaches failed. ("Organized for Change: The Activists's Guide to Police Reform," PolicyLink, 2004, p.4–5)

- Another feature of the Giuliani/Bratton policing model was the introduction of Compstat, a system that provided up-to-the-minute crime statistics to police commanders by precinct and then held precinct leaders responsible for cutting crime rates in those communities. Critics of this program argued that it blanketed neighborhoods (usually those populated by people of color) with police forces and led to massive street sweeps targeting men of color and often leading to civil rights violations. Some police officers and precincts felt it put pressure on them to make greater numbers of arrests and issue greater numbers of summonses even if crime wasn't increasing in the precinct. (Chris Cunneen, "Zero Tolerance Policing." *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)*, 1999. <http://www.atsic.gov.au>)
- In 1995, the racial distribution of the NYPD was 72.2% white, 15.2% Latino, 11.5% African-American and 1.1% "other," including Asian. Amnesty International is disturbed by evidence suggesting that a disproportionate number of people shot in



## Background Information

apparently nonthreatening or questionable circumstances in New York City are racial minorities. At least 32 of the 35 suspects shot by police in the cases examined by Amnesty International were minorities (16 were Latino, 15 were black, 1 was Asian, 1 was white, and in two cases the race of the deceased was unknown). While it appears that much of the abuse is directed toward racial minorities, the problem of excessive force within the NYPD is not confined exclusively to white officers and may reflect a wider police culture. ("Police Brutality and Excessive Force in the NYPD," Amnesty International, 1999)

- Several prominent civil liberties and lawyers' associations have called for the office of State Special Prosecutor to be re-established, and for its jurisdiction to extend to police brutality cases. In New York, such an office operated from 1972 to 1990 to investigate and prosecute allegations of corruption within NYC's criminal justice system, independently of the district attorneys. ("Police Brutality and Excessive Force in the NYPD," Amnesty International, 1999)
- New York City has had a Civilian Complaint Review Board to investigate complaints by members of the public against police officers since 1953. Until 1987 the board was composed entirely of nonuniformed members of the police department. From 1987 until 1993, the CCRB was composed of six private citizens appointed by the mayor and six civilian employees of the police department appointed by the police commissioner; it lacked subpoena power and most of its investigators were serving police officers. There was increasing concern about the board's lack of independence and the very small proportion of complaints that were substantiated (around 7% on average).
- In 1997, a task force to review police-community issues was established by the mayor of New York following the beating and torture of Abner Louima. The Mayor's Task Force on Police-Community Relations was consisted of 31 members including clergy, the director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, members of the City Council, community leaders, a retired police chief and lawyers. The task force recommended:

- the elimination of the 48-hour rule, which prohibits the questioning of police officers suspected of criminal activity for 48 hours after the event (a killing by a police officer, for example)
- the adoption of an NYPD affirmative action plan
- the development of a comprehensive NYPD employment plan that includes a prospective residency requirement for police officers and the development of a Police-Community Relations training program, increasing the NYPD Academy training program from six months to a year
- the creation of websites to provide the public access to data collected by the NYPD and the CCRB.

Mayor Giuliani rejected the recommendations of the Task Force in March 1998. He publicly criticized its Majority Report. (Law and Justice Report, ATSI, 1999; see "Deflecting Blame: Dissenting Report of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's Task Force on Police/Community Relations" in the Resources section (p. 21) for a community-initiated review of the Task Force's recommendations and reaction to the mayor's response.)

- In some communities, years of strained relations between the police and communities have led to new, community-based approaches. In Boston, for example, the police department chose a path of strategic, narrowly targeted enforcement based on a problem-solving model heavily supported by intervention and prevention initiatives. During the early 1990s, in partnership with the community, the private sector and other governmental agencies, the Boston Police Department initiated a job training program that resulted in employment opportunities for at-risk youth, coordinated a youth service provider network to link youth to needed social services, and launched an initiative to improve the attendance rates of truant students. Through this new approach, Boston was able to reduce crime at a level equal to that achieved by New York City under Mayor Giuliani. ("Organized for Change: An Activists's Guide to Police Reform," PolicyLink, 2004, p. 6)



## Background Information

### Glossary

#### “Blue Wall of Silence”

The secrecy of police officers who lie or look the other way to protect other police officers; “the blue wall cracked when some officers refused to take part in the cover-up.” ([http://blue\\_wall\\_of\\_silence.bluerider.com](http://blue_wall_of_silence.bluerider.com))

#### “Civil Disobedience”

Civil disobedience is a form of nonviolent breaking of the law to call attention to a particular law or set of laws with questionable morality or legitimacy. (Legal Definitions.com)

#### “Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB)”

The New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board is an independent and non-police mayoral agency, which empowered to receive, investigate, hear, make findings and recommend action on complaints against New York City police officers that allege the use of excessive or unnecessary force, abuse of authority, discourtesy, or the use of offensive language. Dispositions by the board on complaints are forwarded to the police commissioner. As determined by the board, dispositions may be accompanied by recommendations regarding disciplinary measures.

(<http://www.nyc.gov/html/ccrb/home.html>)

A CCRB may investigate complaints involving excessive force; abuse of authority; discourtesy; and offensive language (including slurs against a person’s sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, gender or disability). Other types of misconduct, including corruption, do not fall within its jurisdiction. (“Police Brutality and Excessive Force in the NYPD,” Amnesty International, 1999)

#### “Criminally Negligent Homicide”

A person is guilty of Criminally Negligent Homicide when that person engages in conduct that creates or contributes to a substantial and unjustifiable risk that another person’s death will occur. (Penal Law 125.10)

#### “The Diallo Package”

Proposed legislation from the Black, Puerto Rican and Hispanic Caucus, and authored by Assemblyman William Scarborough (D-St. Albans). The package includes the creation of a police

academy for minorities, the creation of a special prosecutor for allegations of police misconduct, incentives for officers to live in the city, and financial benefits for bilingual officers. The package has passed the Assembly and is pending in the state Senate. (Economy Spurs Biggest Concern Among Blacks, *Times-Ledger*, July 13, 2000)

#### “Manslaughter in the Second Degree”

A person is guilty of Manslaughter in the Second Degree when that person engages in conduct that creates or contributes to a substantial and unjustifiable risk that another person’s death will occur and when he or she is aware of and consciously disregards that risk. (Reckless Homicide, Penal Law 125.15[1])

#### “Pepper Spray”

Pepper spray (“OC” in police jargon for its Latin name of oleoresin capsicum), an oil derived from cayenne peppers, is classified as a chemical weapon, and as such is banned for use in war—but not in domestic police work. Pepper spray was introduced to the U.S. in the 1980s by the Postal Service, which used it as a dog repellent. Thereafter, it was quickly adopted by corrections officers and police departments, which adopted it primarily for use in incapacitating violent suspects. (FAIR, Extra, March/April 2000)

#### “Slam and Jam”

Slang for the police practice of slamming a suspect against the wall and physically abusing him/her. (Tony Gair, in *Every Mother's Son*)

#### “Zero Tolerance”

The idea behind zero tolerance policing is that a strong law enforcement approach to minor crime (in particular public disorder offenses) will prevent more serious crime from occurring and will ultimately lead to falling crime rates. While there can be no singular definition of zero tolerance policing, it is certainly most commonly associated with an NYPD policy of strict law enforcement toward “antisocial” behavior and “quality of life” offenses including public drinking, jaywalking, vagrancy, loitering and panhandling. (Cunneen, Chris. “Zero Tolerance Policing.” *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission* (ATSIC), 1999. <http://www.atsic.gov.au>)



## Using This Guide

**This guide is designed to help you use *Every Mother's Son* as the centerpiece of a community event. It contains suggestions for convening an event, as well as ideas for how to help participants think more deeply about the issues in the film. The discussion questions are designed for a broad audience. Rather than attempt to address them all, choose one or two that best meet the needs and interests of your group.**

### Planning an Event

In addition to showcasing documentary films as an art form, screenings of P.O.V. films can be used to present information, get people interested in taking action on an issue, provide opportunities for people from different groups or perspectives to exchange views, and/or create space for reflection. Using the questions below as a planning checklist will help ensure a high-quality/high-impact event.

- **Have you defined your goals?** With your partner(s), set realistic goals. Will you host a single event or engage in an ongoing project? Being clear about your goals will make it much easier to structure the event, target publicity, and evaluate results.
- **Does the way you are planning to structure the event fit your goals?** Do you need an outside facilitator, translator, or sign language interpreter? If your goal is to share information, are there local experts on the topic who should be present? How large an audience do you want? (Large groups are appropriate for information exchanges. Small groups allow for more intensive dialogue.)
- **Have you arranged to involve all stakeholders?** It is especially important that people be allowed to speak for themselves. If your group is planning to take action that affects individuals other than those present, how will you give voice to those not in the room?
- **Is the event being held in a space where all participants will feel equally comfortable?** Is it wheelchair accessible? Is it in a part of town that's easy to reach by various kinds of transportation? If you are bringing together different constituencies, is it neutral territory? Does the physical configuration allow for the kind of discussion you hope to have?
- **Will the room setup help you meet your goals?** Is it comfortable? If you intend to have a discussion, can people see one another? Are there spaces to use for small breakout groups? Can everyone easily see the screen and hear the film?
- **Have you scheduled time to plan for action?** Planning next steps can leave people feeling energized and/or optimistic, even if the discussion has been difficult. Action steps are especially important for those who already have a good deal of experience talking about the issue(s) on the table. For participants new to the issue(s), just engaging in public discussion serves as an action step.



## Using This Guide

### Facilitating a Discussion

**Controversial or unusual topics often make for excellent discussions. By their nature, those same topics also give rise to deep emotions and strongly held beliefs. As a facilitator, you can create an atmosphere where people feel safe, encouraged, and respected, making it more likely that they will be willing to share openly and honestly. Here's how:**

### Preparing Yourself

**Identify your own hot-button issues.** View the film before your event and give yourself time to reflect so you aren't dealing with raw emotions at the same time that you are trying to facilitate a discussion.

**Be knowledgeable.** You don't need to be an expert on law enforcement or policing to facilitate a discussion, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track and gently correct misstatements of fact. In addition to the Background section, you may want to take a look at the suggested websites in the Resources section on p. 20.

**Be clear about your role.** You may find yourself taking on several roles for an event: host, organizer, projectionist. If you are also planning to serve as facilitator, be sure that you can focus on that responsibility and avoid distractions during the discussion. Keep in mind that being a facilitator is not the same as being a teacher. A teacher's job is to convey specific information. In contrast, a facilitator remains neutral, helping move along the discussion without imposing his or her views on the dialogue.

**Know your group.** Issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Is your group new to the issue or have they dealt with it before? Factors like geography, age, race, religion, and socioeconomic class can have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles, and prior knowledge. If you are bringing together different segments of your community, we strongly recommend hiring an experienced facilitator.

### Finding a Facilitator

Some university professors, human resource professionals, clergy, and youth leaders may be specially trained in facilitation skills. In addition to these local resources, groups such as the National Conference of Community and Justice ([www.nccj.org](http://www.nccj.org)) may have some advice on good facilitators in your community.



## Using This Guide

### Preparing the Group

**Consider how well group members know one another.** If you are bringing together people who have never met, you may want to devote some time at the beginning of the event for introductions.

**Provide those who have a personal stake in the issues the opportunity to identify themselves to the group.** This should be a voluntary description of personal experiences, such as working in law enforcement or losing someone to police violence.

**Agree to ground rules around language.** Involve the group in establishing some basic rules to ensure respect and aid clarity. Typically, such rules include no yelling or using slurs and asking people to speak in the first person (“I think ...”) rather than generalizing for others (“Everyone knows that ...”).

**Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard.** Be clear about how people will take turns or indicate that they want to speak. Plan a strategy for preventing one or two people from dominating the discussion. If the group is large, are there plans to break into small groups or partners, or should attendance be limited?

**Talk about the difference between dialogue and debate.** In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and actively listening to each other. Remind the group that everyone is engaged in a dialogue.

**Encourage active listening.** Ask the group to think of the event as an opportunity to listen, as well as discuss. Participants can be encouraged to listen for things that challenge as well as reinforce their own ideas. You may also consider asking people to practice formal “active listening,” where participants listen without interrupting the speaker, then rephrase to see if they have heard correctly.

**Remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of his or her own experience.** Who we are influences how we interpret what we see. So everyone in the group may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film they have just seen, and all of them may be accurate. It can help people to understand one another’s perspectives if they identify the evidence on which they base their opinions as well as share their views.

**Take care of yourself and group members.** If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. You might also consider providing a safe space to “vent,” perhaps with a partner or in a small group of familiar faces. If you anticipate that people may be upset, be prepared to refer them to local support agencies and/or have local professionals present. Be sure to make it clear whether or not members of the press are present and whether comments are “on the record” or there is a reasonable expectation that requests for confidentiality will be honored.



## General Discussion Questions

When people begin to think about police misconduct, police brutality, or deaths involving police shootings, reactions can be intense. You don't want to suppress passion, but you do want participants to be thoughtful as well as emotional, to reflect and not just react. So, immediately after viewing the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen or pose a general question. People may need some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion.

Unless you think participants are so uncomfortable that they can't engage until they have had a break, don't encourage people to leave the room between the film and the discussion. If you save your break for an appropriate moment during the discussion, you won't lose the feeling of the film as you begin your dialogue.

One way to get a discussion going is to pose a general question, such as:

- If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, who would you ask and what would you ask them?
- What insights or new knowledge did you gain from this film?
- If you were going to tell a friend what this film was about, what would you say?
- Two months from now, what do you think you will remember from this film and why?
- Did anything in this film surprise you? If so, what? Why was it surprising?
- What is the significance of the film's title?



1999 memorial for police brutality victim Amadou Diallo

Photo: Kirk Condyles



## Discussion Prompts



*Doris Busch Boskey (second from left) and Iris Baez (fourth from right) and other mothers of police brutality victims, with Antonio Romero and William Acosta from the Latino Officers' Association*  
Photo: Courtesy of Anderson Gold Films

**1** Reflect a moment on a tragic experience in your own life. Iris, Kadiatou, and Doris's stories portray their ability to turn grief into action. What would motivate you or someone else to do the same? Who did the mothers reach out to (or who reached out to them)? What support could you count on?

**2** Officer Livoti says, "I'm not going to apologize for who I am, or apologize for what I've done. I've been the best cop I can be on the street, and I see no reason to be ashamed of that." What do you think he means? What concerns do you think police officers might have? Should police officers be held to a different standard than ordinary citizens? Why or why not? What is the role of the police department—and of citizens—to ensure that police are held accountable when they abuse their power?

**3** Recall Judge Sheindlin's verdict in the *People v. Livoti*: "Anthony Baez's death was tragic, unnecessary and avoidable. It is clear to this court that the defendant's [Francis Livoti's] conduct failed to rise to the level one would expect of a professional. His behavior did not serve to calm the waters of this rapidly unfolding minor conflict. I do not find that the defendant is innocent. I do find, based on the quality of the evidence presented, that the people have failed to establish the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The defendant is found not guilty." Also recall that in response to conflicting police testimonies, Judge Sheindlin stated, "There has been a nest of perjury in this courtroom." Do you think that justice was served? In all of the cases covered, why do you think the officers were acquitted at the local level? Do you think there's a problem with the way the criminal justice system deals with these cases? In your opinion, why can't these families find justice through the courts? What do you think could be done to change the situation?

**4** Do you know your rights if you are arrested or questioned by police officers?

**5** We learned in the film that "Between 1994 and 1999, 107 civilian killings by police occurred in New York City under circumstances that community groups felt represented an overuse of force." How does this fact and its context make you feel about law enforcement and its role in society? What other alternatives or strategies can you think of to get handguns off the street or maintain safe neighborhoods? Is it necessary for some innocent people to be killed accidentally for society as a whole to be safe? If you think it is, where do we draw the line as a society? What do you think the relationship between the police and the people they are charged to protect should be?





## Discussion Prompts

**6** As Doris pointed out, the New York Police Department's patrol guide states, "The primary duty of all members of the service is to preserve human life." What happened in Gary's case and that of the others covered in the film? What other factors came into play? How can this issue be addressed in the training of police officers?

**7** In the film, Richie Perez talks about how Francis Livoti had been singled out as a problem officer and was being monitored by a supervisor at the time of the killing, yet none of this prevented Anthony's death. Why do you think the department policies were not effective in isolating Officer Livoti and preventing him from harming citizens? How could the public ensure accountability and that abusive police officers are removed from the force?

**8** Clifton Hollingsworth, the NYPD detective who is a member of 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care, said, "If I was an officer in a patrol car, and Anthony Baez and his buddy were playing football and it hit my patrol car, I would have gotten out of the patrol car too. I would have gotten out of the patrol car and I would have yelled at him, 'Yo, over here.' He would have thrown the football to me, and I would have thrown the football back, that's community policing." What does he mean by this? Are there strategies for policing that you would like to see in your community and others? What would they be?

**9** Kadiatou states, "The only reason the four officers approached my son, Amadou, that night is because he is black, the color of his skin." Doris says about her son's death, "If it could happen to my son, it could happen to anyone." Does police abuse of power affect some communities more than others? Why or why not? If so, why do we all have a stake in making sure policing is fair and effective?

**10** Kadiatou recalls the women in a Harlem rally saying, "Every night, when my child goes out, I will not sleep until they come home." Why do you think this mother can't sleep when her child is out? Do you feel similar fears when your loved ones are not at home? If not, why might you have a stake in making sure that nobody feels that way?

**11** The trial for the Amadou Diallo shooting was moved to Albany, NY. Kadiatou "really lost hope, because [she] learned that Albany is a very different culture in terms of experiences with the police than those who live in the Bronx." Did she have a valid point? When the "not guilty" Diallo verdict was delivered in Albany, what factors might have influenced the jury's decision?

**12** After Gary was shot by police in Brooklyn, a TV announcer reported, "Right now, a live picture of hundreds of Jews taking to the streets of Brooklyn, after a Hasidic man wielding a hammer is shot and killed by police. ... Police say the man used the hammer to hit an officer in the arm. Eyewitnesses say that's not what they saw." Consider the first two sentences of this report, and then re-read the report with the eyewitnesses' claim first. How does this affect what you hear? Does the message change with the re-ordering of statements? How would you have reported the Brooklyn street scene? How do media reports about killings by police influence the way people think about these events?

**13** Did the early statement by Police Commissioner Safir and Mayor Giuliani to the media supporting the police (made prior to an investigation of Gary's killing) have an impact on your initial opinion of what happened? How do political leaders influence the public's thinking about policing issues? What is their responsibility to the public when an incident occurs?



## Discussion Prompts

**14** Doris said, "The Mayor and the Police Commissioner got together with the rabbis, the press ... the very next morning at 8:30, without an investigation, and repeated the story that my son was killed while attacking an officer with a claw hammer." The next day, the *New York Times* ran a front page story with the headline, "Mayor defends police shooting of violent man." What role did the media play in the aftermath of the killings? Did they calm or complicate people's reactions to the events? Who would be reassured by the media coverage? Who would be angered? Do you think describing Gary as "violent" before an investigation took place is professional journalistic practice?

**15** Doris said, "Gary began having problems, more depression and things like that. But there was never any violence ... if anything he would become more withdrawn." She believes the police, "figured they could create this image of a violent, deranged person." What do you think about this? Are emotional problems such as depression something to be feared? Have you felt depressed? How did people around you react to you while you were feeling that way? Would you prefer that they behaved differently? Do you think your local police are sufficiently trained to deal with mentally ill or emotionally disturbed people? How can this problem be better addressed by police departments and by community members?

**16** One of Doris's last statements is as follows. Take a moment and fill in the blank. "I think there's a certain feeling that we all share, because our sons didn't die because of an illness, they didn't die because they were hit by a car, there was no accident, our sons were killed by the police, and that's a far different thing than losing your son any other way. I guess it's made me more aware of what really happens out there. Things that, you know, when you live out here, I'm away from the city, and it's a quiet life and you don't have that out here. And I think what it's done is it's made me aware of \_\_\_\_\_."

**17** Richie Perez said, "In the first year of the Giuliani administration, the number of juvenile arrests rose by 98,000." This was perceived by many as "cleaning up the streets." However, most of these encounters did not result in arrest, and even when arrests were made, many were thrown out. (See Spitzer report in the Resources section for more information on stops and frisks in New York.) Would this kind of aggressive policing be tolerated in all communities? How are civil liberties threatened with these kinds of police tactics? How does this policy impact the relationship between the police and the community? Does it make the job of policing easier or more dangerous when distrust of police is a factor in communities?

**18** Imagine how it would be to parent surviving siblings after they've lost a brother or sister. Iris's other children would ask, "Why go to church?" "Why pray?" "Why ask God for anything, because Tony did everything step by step, and yet he was the one that was taken away?" If a child said any of the above statements to you, what would you say or do to comfort him or her? Would your actions change if an adult said these things to you? Was there a time when you said similar things to yourself or to friends? What helped you feel better?

**19** When Iris and Kadiatou visited the High School for Legal Studies in Brooklyn, Kadiatou said to the students, "This is about you also, it's about the future generation. After the verdict, we have two other people already that have been killed by the police. So what can we do about this? I would want to know from all of you, and I need you to take it seriously." If Iris, Kadiatou, and Doris were standing in front of you today, how would you answer them?



## Taking Action

Below are some starter suggestions to consider, depending upon your organization and community resources and needs.



*Family members of police brutality victims march*

Photo: Kirk Condyles

- Imagine that you know a family whose child was shot and killed in an incident involving the police. Brainstorm a list of questions that you would want answered in order to understand what happened. Using this list as a starting point, create a resource list of information sources that can be distributed in your community.
- If your community decided to create an independent Citizen Complaint Review Board (CCRB) for civilian oversight of your local police department, what kinds of activities would the CCRB be concerned with? Find out if a CCRB or some other organization exists in your community and become familiar with their activities. They will also have reports from town officials, which will further inform you about how policing occurs in your neighborhoods.
- Set up a visit with your local police precinct as a group and meet with some of the officers. Find out what their community policing policies and concerns are.
- Imagine that you are nearby when police officers are confronting people. Brainstorm a list of civil rights due us when questioned by law enforcers. It is common practice for citizens to observe, even videotape, police behavior in civil disobedience actions. How would you prepare yourself to be one of these "observers?"



## Resources

### Websites

#### **P.O.V.'s *Every Mother's Son* Website**

**[www.pbs.org/pov/pov2004/everymothersson](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2004/everymothersson)**

#### **General Overview**

Access the *Every Mother's Son* website to find out more about law enforcement issues and promising practices for community policing from interviews with experts, community members and policemen around the country, articles about policing and links to organizations on all sides of the issue.

#### **Film Update**

Get updates from the mothers featured in *Every Mother's Son* and news about other cases that have occurred in New York and throughout the country since filming stopped.

#### **Overview & Interviews**

Find out more about the history, definitions and best practices of community policing, and what political steps are necessary to make positive change in policing possible in several Web-exclusive interviews with experts, policemen and community oversight board members from around the country.

#### **NYPD Patrol Guide**

Read excerpts from the New York City Police Department Patrol Guide.

#### **Resources**

Find links to organizations concerned with ending police brutality and links to programs, organizations and tips for good community policing models around the nation—including civilian complaint board models and inter-departmental investigation models—and other related PBS and NPR programs and websites.

### What's Your P.O.V.?

*P.O.V.'s online Talking Back Tapestry is a colorful, interactive representation of your feelings about **Every Mother's Son**. Listen to other P.O.V. viewers talk about the film and add your thoughts by calling 1-800-688-4768. [www.pbs.org/pov/talkingback.html](http://www.pbs.org/pov/talkingback.html)*



## Resources

### Community Tools and Resources

#### **ANTHONY BAEZ FOUNDATION**

718-364-2879

#### **AMADOU DIALLO FOUNDATION**

[www.amadoudiallofoundationinc.com](http://www.amadoudiallofoundationinc.com)

#### **ANDERSONGOLD FILMS, INC.,**

**WEBSITE FOR EVERY MOTHER'S SON**

[www.andersongoldfilms.com/everymothersson](http://www.andersongoldfilms.com/everymothersson)

#### **AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION: "FIGHTING POLICE ABUSE: A COMMUNITY ACTION MANUAL"**

[www.aclu.org/library/fighting\\_police\\_abuse.html](http://www.aclu.org/library/fighting_police_abuse.html)

Since Rodney King's beating by police officers in 1991, communities all across the United States have organized to bring about real and lasting reform. Some of the most successful strategies are described in this manual, now in its third printing. This manual was not inspired by, nor is it intended to generate, animosity toward the police, or to promote the perception that all police officers are prone to abuse. They are not. The ACLU publishes a free palm card advising citizens of their rights when stopped by the police.

#### **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA**

[www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org)

Amnesty International has published many reports on police brutality and excessive force by law enforcement in the United States.

*"Police Brutality and Excessive Force in the New York City Police Department,"*

[www.amnestyusa.org/rightsforall/police/nypd/](http://www.amnestyusa.org/rightsforall/police/nypd/)

This is an investigation by Amnesty International into allegations of ill treatment, deaths in custody, and unjustified

shootings by police officers in the New York City Police Department.

#### **ATSI (ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMISSION), LAW AND JUSTICE REPORT**

[www.atsic.gov.au/issues/law\\_and\\_justice/zero\\_tolerance\\_policing/report/](http://www.atsic.gov.au/issues/law_and_justice/zero_tolerance_policing/report/)

This is a study on "zero tolerance policing," including an excellent summary on the New York City experience and efforts to promote and import zero tolerance policing policies to Australia.

#### **NEW YORK CITY CIVILIAN COMPLAINT REVIEW BOARD (CCRB)**

[www.nyc.gov/html/ccrb/home.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/ccrb/home.html)

Visit this official site to read the history of the board, as well as statistics and case profiles.

#### **NEW YORK CIVIL RIGHTS COALITION**

*"Deflecting Blame: Dissenting Report of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's Task Force on Police/Community Relations"*

[www.nycivilrights.org](http://www.nycivilrights.org)

In 1998, community activists made recommendations to the Giuliani administration in order to improve the effectiveness of the Task Force on Police/Community Relations and the Citizen Complaint Review Board. A general criticism of Mayor Giuliani's performance in combating police brutality, the Dissenting Report informs and gives focus to the Task Force Majority's final report, but goes further in advocating critical, fundamental changes in NYPD—proposals rejected or not considered by the Majority, which would have established significant accountability over the NYPD.



## Resources

### **NEW YORK CITY PATROLMAN'S BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION**

**<http://nycpba.org>**

Home page of the New York Police Officers' Union.

### **NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**[www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/pct/cspdf.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/pct/cspdf.html)**

View weekly crime statistics for all 5 boroughs.

### **THE ELLA BAKER CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (EBC)**

**[www.ellabakercenter.org](http://www.ellabakercenter.org)**

The EBC documents, exposes and challenges human rights abuses in the United States' criminal justice system; builds power in communities most harmed by government-sanctioned violence; and advocates for proactive, community-based solutions to systemic "criminal injustice."

### **HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST LETTER REGARDING GIULIANI PLAN FOR MEXICO CITY**

**[www.humanrightsfirst.org/mexico\\_policing/](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/mexico_policing/)**

In 2003, Human Rights First and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights sent a detailed letter to Mexico City's Public Security Secretary, Marcelo Ebrard, offering a response to a summary of recommendations regarding policing. The recommendations came from a consulting team headed by former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, contracted by Mexico City's government for US\$4.3 million.

The full letter ([www.lchr.org](http://www.lchr.org)) cautions the Mexican government against adopting some of the Giuliani recommendations and urges the secretariat to ensure citizen participation in its law enforcement planning process.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH**

**[www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)**

Human Rights Watch has published many reports on police brutality and excessive force by law enforcement in the United States.

*"Shielded from Justice: Police Brutality and Accountability in the United States"*

This report examines common obstacles to accountability for police abuse in fourteen large cities representing most regions of the nation. Human Rights Watch is an independent, nongovernmental organization "dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world."

### **NYCLU, 100 BLACKS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT WHO CARE, AND LATINO OFFICERS ASSOCIATION**

**[www.nyclu.org](http://www.nyclu.org)**

In 1992, the New York Civilian Complaint Review Board found that the New York City Police Department failed to take action in cases involving nearly 150 officers engaged in misconduct. Subsequently, the New York Civil Liberties Union, 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care, and the Latino Officers Association began demanding that NYPD Commissioner Raymond Kelly and CCRB Chairman Hector Gonzales address the situation immediately.

### **THE NATIONAL POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT**

**[www.nlg.org/npap](http://www.nlg.org/npap)**

The National Police Accountability Project (a division of the National Lawyers Guild) is dedicated to curtailing police abuse of authority through coordinated legal action, public education and support for grassroots and victims' organizations combating police misconduct.

### **THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE CHIEFS**

**[www.aphf.org](http://www.aphf.org)**

A nonprofit, taxexempt, educational association of command law enforcement officers within the United States, its territories and military forces. It is the only spokesman for the American law enforcement professional representing the interests of 60,000 eligible members.



## Resources

### **POLICYLINK**

**[www.policylink.org](http://www.policylink.org)**

PolicyLink is a national nonprofit research, communications, capacity-building and advocacy organization dedicated to achieving economic and social equity and building strong, organized communities. The organization published the guide "Community-Centered Policing: A Force for Change" in 2001, and "Organized for Change: The Activist's Guide to Police Reform" in 2003.

### **SPITZER, ELLIOT. REPORT ON THE NYPD'S STOP AND FRISK PRACTICES**

**[www.oag.state.ny.us/press/reports/stop\\_frisk/stop\\_frisk.html](http://www.oag.state.ny.us/press/reports/stop_frisk/stop_frisk.html)**

Report published in 1999 by New York State Attorney General Elliot Spitzer, in response to the Amadou Diallo shooting and other incidents causing community concern.

### **THE STOLEN LIVES PROJECT**

**<http://stolenlives.org>**

The Stolen Lives Project's website provides important and compelling exposures of the nationwide epidemic of police brutality and murder. People who've been killed, their families and loved ones, and communities under the gun speak through the pages and tell their stories.



## How to Buy the Film

To purchase *Every Mother's Son* contact transit media via email [info@transitmedia.net](mailto:info@transitmedia.net) or phone 800-343-5540

### Co-presenters:



ITVS funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the PBS series Independent Lens. ITVS was established by an historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have helped to revitalize the relationship between the public and public television. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people. Contact [itvs@itvs.org](mailto:itvs@itvs.org) or visit [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org). *Every Mother's Son* was produced in association with the Independent Television Service.

### P.O.V. Interactive

[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. It also produces a website for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through community-based and educational applications, focusing on involving viewers in activities, information, and feedback on the issues. In addition, [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov) houses our unique *Talking Back* feature, filmmaker interviews and viewer resources, and information on the P.O.V. archives as well as a myriad of special sites for previous P.O.V. broadcasts.

### American Documentary, Inc.

[www.americandocumentary.org](http://www.americandocumentary.org)

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc), is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying, and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. Through two divisions, *P.O.V.* and *Active Voice*, AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, on line, and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback, to educational opportunities and community participation



Now entering its 17th season on PBS, P.O.V. is the first and longest-running series on television to feature the work of America's most innovative independent documentary storytellers. Bringing over 200 award-winning films to millions nationwide, and now a new Web-only series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent non-fiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Educational Foundation of America, PBS and public television viewers. Funding for *P.O.V.'s Borders* ([www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)) is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Support for P.O.V. is provided by Starbucks Coffee Company. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations including KCET/Los Angeles, WGBH/Boston, and WNET/New York. Cara Mertes is executive director of P.O.V., which is a division of American Documentary, Inc.

Front cover photo: Anna Curtis  
Doris Busch Boskey, Iris Baez  
and Kadiatou Diallo (left to right).

