

For Immediate Release Nicholas DiSabatino

 Publicist

 ndisabatino@beacon.org

617-948-6596

“Ritchie is not content with compiling a list of incidents. She challenges readers to organize and demand solutions that provide transparency and accountability. The systemic police exploitation of women and girls in marginalized communities will not cease without changes to the very structure of policing. Ritchie’s focused study and call to action is an essential work.”

**—Booklist, \*\*\*STARRED REVIEW\*\*\***

 “This is a book that dares us not to turn away…A close-up account from the person who litigated many of these cases, has engaged in activist work with various antiviolence organizations and agencies, and authored or coauthored central policy reports, this book is testimony of a life devoted to collective struggle and radical social transformation.”

**—Angela Y. Davis, Distinguished Professor Emerita of History of Consciousness & Feminist Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, from her Foreword**

“The charge of *Invisible No More* is to not only shed light or increase awareness; it is to agitate us all into deeper political commitments to ending policing and abolishing all punitive institutions in the United States, while developing alternatives to dealing with conflict and harm based in restorative and transformative justice models.”

**—Charlene A. Carruthers, national director, Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100), from the Afterword**

“*Invisible No More* is also an invitation to resistance to each of us and will serve as a long overdue and invaluable resource to anchor and inform the efforts of young people organizing today against state violence in all its forms.”

**—Mariame Kaba, founder, Project NIA, and co-organizer, Survived and Punished, from her Foreword**

**Invisible No More:**

**Police Violence Against Black Women And Women of Color**

By

**Andrea J. Ritchie**

On Sale: August 1st, 2017

Rodney King. Oscar Grant. Eric Garner. Mike Brown. Freddie Gray. Philando Castile. These names are at the center of the ongoing public dialogue surrounding the epidemic of police violence and brutality in the United States. While the stories of Black men have often been the focus of most media-driven narratives, the experiences of Black women and women of color deserve our attention – especially in the current political climate.

In ***Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color****,* Andrea J. Ritchie, a Black lesbian immigrant and police-misconduct attorney with more than two decades of experience advocating against police violence and criminalization of women and LGBTQ people of color, seeks to undo this erasure by bringing women’s experiences front and center, calling for a paradigm shift in how we understand police violence and struggles for racial justice. In this groundbreaking work, Ritchie draws on individual stories and existing research to identify broader patterns of policing driving police violence against Black women and women of color, all while identifying commonalities and differences with respect to the experiences of Black men and men of color. The stories Ritchie documents include those of Rosann Miller, a seven months pregnant Black mother placed in a chokehold by New York City police; Alesia Thomas, repeatedly kicked and beaten by a Los Angeles police officer while handcuffed in the back of a cruiser who later died in police custody; and Mya Hall Black trans woman who was shot dead by police after making a wrong turn onto National Security Agency property outside of Baltimore; and of course, Sandra Bland, “who came to stand for every Black woman who has ever changed lanes without using a turn signal or expressed frustration at getting a traffic ticket.” Ultimately, Ritchie writes, *Invisible No More* “is the story of the evolution of my own understanding of policing and criminalization of Black women, Indigenous women, and women of color over the past twenty years, as well as the evolution of a movement.”

* **Ritchie explores the ingrained history of police violence against Indigenous women during colonialism, Black women during slavery and later the Jim Crow era, and immigrant women across borders.**

Images and perceptions of women of color that have evolved over time shape how women are perceived by police today, she argues. Indigenous women have been framed as “inherently dangerous and violent, promiscuous, unclean, drunk, disorderly, incapable of feeling pain, and irresponsible.” Black women are punished for not being submissive “Mammies,” and labeled as sexually charged “Jezebels,” or domineering and emasculating “Sapphires.” Police interactions are informed by the notion that immigrant women are “not supposed to be here,” Ritchie writes, leading law enforcement agents to “violently exclude them or to eradicate their presence through killing, rape, or deportation.” Ritchie argues that we have a responsibility to understand and challenge these narratives in order to dismantle the systems of power that produce them.

* **Women of color are affected by the war on drugs, “broken windows” policing, immigration enforcement, and the “war on terror.”**

Each of these policing trends – all of which are intensifying in the current political climate - increases the likelihood that women of color will come into contact with police, sometimes with deadly consequences. Against this backdrop, Ritchie analyzes the policing of girls, people with disabilities, and of gender, sex, sexual violence, and motherhood. According to Ritchie’s research, a significant number of instances of police brutality and police shootings of Black women stem from police interactions with women in actual or perceived mental health crises, or in the context of police responses to domestic or sexual violence. Many of these encounters often reflect police perceptions of Black girls and women as volatile and violent, “to be met with deadly force rather than compassion, no matter their condition or circumstance.”

* **Police sexual violence is an invisible, but pervasive form of police violence.**

Half of 35 of the top fifty police departments in the U.S have no policies whatsoever prohibiting police sexual violence against members of the public, Ritchie reports. Some additional factors contributing to widespread sexual violence by police include officers targeting of young women, women of color, trans women and criminalized women, as well as a lack of accountability, enabling patterns of abuse to continue at other jurisdictions. She argues that a space must be created for survivors of police sexual violence to come forward without going to the institution that perpetuated the violence against them in the first place. Sexual abuse of women of color by the police will continue, Ritchie notes, unless major steps are taken including: decriminalizing prostitution and poverty-related offenses, developing alternate responses to domestic violence and mental health crises, ending the war on drugs and “broken windows” policing, and creating community supports and safety mechanisms.

* **Mothers of color face significant risks of police violence.**

Assumptions about Black mothers and mothers of color have painted them as unworthy of motherhood, or as “welfare queens” incapable of caring for their children, Ritchie argues. As a result, pregnant Black women and women of color are subjected to the use of Tasers, physical force to the abdomen, or other types of police violence that directly threatens their pregnancy and well-being during police encounters. When Black mothers and mothers of color do turn to public institutions for support, their parenting is subject to harsh scrutiny by staff that is likely to report perceived deviations from white middle-class parenting standards to child-welfare authorities or to the police.

* **Trans and queer women of color are uniquely at risk of police violence.**

Ritchie recounts how historical enforcement of gender binaries have created a powerful legacy of presumptions by police that people whose appearances are deemed gender nonconforming are “inherently fraudulent and mentally unstable.” They have also contributed to the demeaning practice of “gender checks,” or searches aimed solely at determining an individual’s physical characteristics for the purpose of assigning them a gender, punishment, or humiliation. Failure to meet subjective expectations of gender appropriate behavior, Ritchie submits, is read by the police as “disorder” leading to “intensified scrutiny.” Ritchie also reports that once a transgender woman’s gender identity is discovered by officers responding to domestic or transphobic violence, she is often further punished rather than protected.

* **A growing movement calling for a radical reimagination of safety and how to achieve it.**

“There is no question that the shroud of invisibility around Black women’s and women of color’s experiences of police violence has been irrevocably lifted in the post-Ferguson moment and movement,” Ritchie writes. In the current political climate of increased fearmongering and virulent racism, Ritchie argues, “We can no longer be complicit in the notion that we can achieve safety through policing…” and must focus on what is required to make women of color safe from all forms of violence, including police violence.

About the Author:

**Andrea J. Ritchie** is a Black lesbian immigrant and police-misconduct attorney, and a 2014 Senior Soros Justice Fellow, with more than two decades of experience advocating against police violence and the criminalization of women and LGBTQ people of color. She is currently Researcher-in-Residence on Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Criminalization at the Barnard Center for Research on Women and the coauthor of *Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women* (AAPF, 2015) and *Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States* (Beacon, 2011). She lives in Brooklyn, New York, and Chicago.

***Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color* by Andrea J. Ritchie**

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