



## **EVERY MOTHER'S SON**

**A documentary by Tami Gold and Kelly Anderson**  
**[www.andersongoldfilms.com/everymothersson](http://www.andersongoldfilms.com/everymothersson)**

### **SYNOPSIS**

EVERY MOTHER'S SON, a one hour documentary, is an intimate portrait of three women who feel they have paid the ultimate price for the aggressive, "zero tolerance" policing that swept American cities during the 1990's - they each lost an unarmed child at the hands of law enforcement. Over the course of seven years, we follow Iris Baez, Kadiatou Diallo and Doris Busch Boskey as they navigate the difficult journey from individual trauma to collective action. They deal with the repercussions of their children's deaths on their own lives and on their families; they learn the ins and outs of the criminal justice system; and they gain insight into the reasons that prosecuting police officers is next to impossible. And, though they are all from very different backgrounds, they come together and learn to organize in their communities and speak out throughout the United States about the need to rethink and reform policing.

The mothers' movement was catalyzed by Iris Baez, whose 29-year-old son Anthony was killed by officer Francis Livoti in 1994. Anthony, a religious youth worker who was in the process of becoming a police officer himself, was playing football with his brothers in front of his home in the Bronx when the ball accidentally hit Livoti's parked patrol car. Anthony died at the scene as Livoti crushed his windpipe in an illegal chokehold. The medical examiner determined his death to be a homicide.

Iris, a Puerto Rican mother of 6 biological and 4 adopted children, was an unlikely activist. "I never raised my voice to anybody," she says. "I taught my kids to go to church, to respect the law. I lived in a pink world." Her world was shattered not only by the death of her son, but by the obstacles she encountered when she tried to find justice in what seemed a cut-and-dried case of police misconduct.

As Iris tried to pursue justice in the courts, she came up against the Blue Wall of Silence. As a union delegate, Officer Livoti was a powerful figure in the NYPD. Despite the fact that a Grand Jury voted to indict him, the case was dismissed after a typographical error mysteriously appeared on the indictment at Livoti's arraignment. Iris began to meet with others who had lost loved ones at the hands of police officers, and together they staged a sit-in in the Bronx District Attorney's office that eventually led him to re-indict Livoti. But the victory was short-lived, as a Latina officer called to testify broke ranks with her coworkers, who had all testified that Anthony died of an asthma attack and not the chokehold. The judge called the police testimony "a nest of perjury" and acquitted Livoti because the state had presented contradictory testimony and weakened its own case.

Then, in 1999, Amadou Diallo was shot at 41 times by police officers in the vestibule of his Bronx apartment building. Amadou, a young West African man who had come to New York to study computer science, was unarmed. The incident made international headlines, and Amadou's mother, Kadiatou, flew to New York from Guinea. Kadiatou won the sympathy of the city as people turned

out by the thousands to mourn her son's death and protest years of mistreatment at the hands of the NYPD.

EVERY MOTHER'S SON follows Kadi through her discovery of the events around her son's death, and her efforts to uncover the reasons her unarmed son was killed so brutally when by all accounts he had done nothing wrong. "I learned that things were happening in the community," she says. "Young men were being targeted by the NYPD for no other reason than where they live and the color of their skin."

Richie Perez of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights discusses the Giuliani administration's practice of designating certain neighborhoods as drug-prone criminal areas, enabling them to stop and frisk citizens at will. "Their policy was, you stop and frisk everybody, and you'll find something," he says. Kadi, Richie and others make the case that the officers who shot Amadou were not looking for a serial rapist, as they claimed, but were engaged in a random stop-and-frisk encounter based on Amadou's race. When they approached Amadou, they mistook his wallet for a gun and fired, killing him. But as Kadi's attorney Tony Gair says, "They might have panicked when they shot him, but they didn't panic when they got out of that car. And there was no reason for them to get out of the car – there was no 911 call, no reports of suspicious activity ... there was no reason for them to stop him, except for one thing: maybe he'll have a gun, we'll get credit if we get it, and if he doesn't, who cares? He's just a poor, black kid in the Bronx. He has no recourse."

The third story in the documentary is that of Doris Busch Boskey, whose son Gary (Gidone) was killed by police officers in Borough Park, Brooklyn on August 30, 1999. Gary, a Hasidic Jew, had moved to Borough Park eight months earlier, after having just made Dean's List in computer courses he was taking. On August 30th, police responded to a call about a disturbance. Gary was inside davening (praying) and holding a small religiously-inscribed hammer. They called him out of his apartment and, as he stood in the stairwell in front of his door, an officer pepper-sprayed him in the eyes and face, causing him to scream in pain and blindly run up the steps. As he stood close to a low wall screaming in fear and blinded, holding the small hammer over his head, the officers crouched down and fired, hitting him 12 times as many people watched in horror. Hundreds of angry residents turned out that night to protest the seemingly senseless shooting.

Gary's death, in a white Jewish neighborhood that historically supported the Mayor and the NYPD, necessitated immediate damage control. Early the next morning, without an investigation, Police Commissioner Safir and Mayor Giuliani met with Rabbis, community leaders and the press and released false stories that Gary was killed while attacking an officer, and the shooting was justified. But eyewitnesses said Gary posed no threat and was not attacking the officers, creating a crisis for the City and its law enforcement policies.

"He was not a criminal, he had no gun or knife," Doris says in her Long Island home. "They had to find something to justify the shooting so they seized on the fact that he had been hospitalized for depression in the past." We follow Doris as she discovers her son's death, realizes the cover-up that has taken place around it, and fights for justice for her son through the legal system and by coming together with other mothers of police brutality victims.

Doris, Iris and Kadi come together to support one another through their own legal battles, and as they reach out to other families and speak out, they become part of a national movement against police brutality. Though justice is hard to find in the courts, they become powerful advocates for reforms in policing, including the need for better training, independent investigators and prosecutors, and a more effective independent Civilian Complaint Review Board free of police or political control.

