

APRIL 2022

BLACK MOTHERS 4 JUSTICE

5 Steps to
Navigating
Self Doubt

Meet the
Board of
Directors

Do You Have a
Story to Tell?

**MELINDA
ROBERTSON**



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Are you a Black Mother impacted by the criminal justice system? Have you been ostracized by society for a crime your child committed or accused of committing? Have you lost a child to gun violence? Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired?? If you answered yes to any of these questions, the Black Mothers 4 Justice Magazine is for you!!!

In 2016 my then twenty-year old son was in his junior year of college when he was wrongfully incarcerated for stabbing a student to death during a brawl on the campus of a prominent HBCU in Baltimore, Maryland. He was taken to trial with no DNA evidence linking him to the crime and found NOT GUILTY of the bogus murder charges, however, during the trial the racist judge “added” an accessory after the fact charge that wasn’t a part of the indictment, to which he was found guilty. The sentencing investigator recommended time served and probation because my son had NO PRIORS, but the judge gave him TEN YEARS for the non-violent offense. Three and a half years later the Court of Appeals overturned the conviction, and he came home, but his life will never be the same. Sadly, the student’s murder remains UNSOLVED today!!!

I had no idea how corrupt the criminal justice system was until it knocked on my door and if it happened to my son it can happen to yours. During those dark days God revealed to me that I wasn’t just fighting for My Son, but I was fighting for Our Sons, and I vowed to give Black Mothers something we’ve never had...a Voice!! Too often we hear about innocent Black Men getting exonerated after spending years in prison for crimes they didn’t commit, but you never hear about their Mothers, many of whom died broken hearted long before their sons’ convictions were overturned. Although they were silenced, Black Mothers 4 Justice stands on their shoulders and are honored to pay them homage.

The Black Mothers 4 Justice Magazine is a space where Mothers can share their "untold" stories of injustice. It's an opportunity for them to have their voices heard and bring closure to begin the healing process. Our mission is to bring Black Mothers together from city to city and state to state to Rebuild the Village that is desperately needed in the Black Community!!!

Melinda Robertson

Nadia Fischer

Social Justice Activist



Nadia Fischer is a native of Flint, Michigan and a significant aspect of her contribution is advocacy and public relations work on behalf of mothers of murdered sons. She was the catalyst for the relevancy for, Mothers of the Movement- a group formed to campaign with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in support of her candidacy for President of the United States and advocate for an end to senseless acts of violence. This group of mothers included: Sybrina Fulton (Trayvon Martin), Geneva Reed-Veal (Sandra Bland), Gwen Carr (Eric Garner), Maria Hamilton (Dontre Hamilton), Congresswoman Lucy McBath (Jordan Davis) and others for social justice reform involving police and African American citizens, especially

black males. Nadia felt these tragedies needed a much larger voice, so she shifted her passion toward television. Her involvement is credited with television networks such as TV One Limited Docu-series and BET. Some of her projects include: Two Sides narrated by Viola Davis, The Quad, Black Girls Rock, and The High Cost of Membership a Columbia University Legal Studies Documentary Initiative.

In 2014, Nadia established “Incarceration Relief Resource Center,” a non-profit organization dedicated to faith and community based interventions for offender re-entry. IRRC is a nationwide social justice advocacy organization with the mission to reduce incarceration and improve outcomes for system-involved offenders. IRRC assists offenders to successfully re-enter their communities by helping to provide

housing employment, education, access to effective mental health, chemical

dependency, primary care treatment services, government assistance programs, and spiritual connectedness. To date, Nadia has been the conduit for the release of 102 returning citizens, with 0% recidivism.

As the Chair of the Cincinnati NAACP Prison Branch Committee and the Community Lead for MOBB United, Nadia is charged with extending community and educational resources to returning citizens as well as emotional encouragement to support hurting, broken-hearted moms of incarcerated sons. The emotional aftermath of incarceration is often overlooked by the judicial system and the public when families lose their loved ones to the system. Nadia’s goal is to raise global awareness of the silent cries and deep emotional trauma experienced by the population that she serves.

Meet the Black Mothers 4 Justice Board of Directors



www.blackmothers4justice.com



Melinda Robertson

Melinda is an author, activist and advocate from Washington, D.C. and Founder of “Black Mother’s 4 Justice, Inc.” a 501c3 non-profit organization, created to provide a safe space where Black Mothers with children incarcerated can speak their truth without being judged. BM4J educates Mothers about an ‘unfair and unjust’ criminal justice system and "systemic racism." The mission is to help free them of the hurt, pain, shame, and guilt they tend to carry and begin the healing process because healthy Mothers are Key to building Better Communities!!!

In May 2020 Melinda became the host of “NjustUs,” a one-hour podcast that shares stories of Injustice, allows listeners to ask questions and seek advice, further solidifying her role as an activist and advocate. NjustUs has featured such notables as Emeritus Willie F. Wilson of Union Temple Baptist Church, in Washington, D.C., the University of the District of Columbia’s Dean of Law, Professor Renee Hutchins, Tyrone Parker, Executive Director of The Alliance of Concerned Men and Al-Malik Farakhan, Founder of Cease Fire Don’t Smoke the Brothers and Sisters to name a few. NjustUs airs on Tuesdays, from 8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Visit www.blackmothers4justice.com for more information.



Robyn Ross-Nell

Robyn was born in Washington D.C. and is the Assistant Director of Black Mothers 4 Justice, Inc. She's a wife, proud mother of three and grandmother. She is outgoing and loves to assist, engage, empower, educate, and advocate for those in need from life's challenges.

Robyn has a Master of Science degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Substance Abuse from Shippensburg University and has worked in multiple counseling settings to acquire knowledge and gain experience in her profession. She provides a safe, non-judgmental, and a supportive environment that is significant in conveying comfort to bring about change clients are seeking in their lives, relationships and creating that kind of environment in counseling is her primary goal. Today, Robyn advocates for those who struggle with mental health, against injustice issues, human trafficking, domestic violence, and teenage suicide to name a few. Robyn works with people from diverse backgrounds including religious, racial, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and different abilities. Contact: chocarah@gmail.com



Jocquette Wrenn

Jocquette is the Treasurer for Black Mothers 4 Justice. She's a single mother of two sons, Davon and DeMarco Wrenn. She has one grandchild, Zoei, whom she calls her love bug. Joquette's love for children and her expertise of nearly 20 years as a licensed childcare provider in the State of Maryland speaks for itself. She is a black businesswoman, entrepreneur, leader, trainer on budget planning and what excellent customer service look like on the other side of your business doors.

Jocquette is on the Board of Black Mothers 4 Justice and her inspiration is most derived from knowing everyday she can support, give unconditional love, and listen to the needs of other mothers after becoming entangled in the judicial system through a situation her oldest son encountered. Jocquette had no idea how corrupt lawyers and judges were until her own experience, which compelled her to join the Black Mothers 4 Justice movement. She is greatly concerned about the injustices people of color or

subjected to by an unfair and unjust criminal justice system.

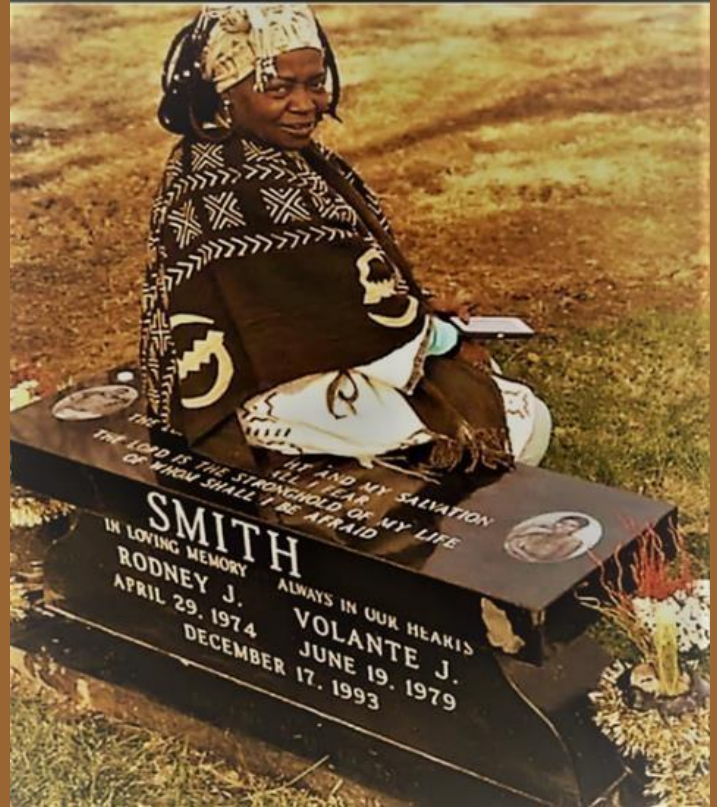
Joquette is a long-time member of Union Temple Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. and accredits her faith for sustaining her and her son during those dark days.

Grieving D.C. Mother Reflects on Losing Two of Her Kids to Gun Violence the Same Night!

It has been 28 years since Shanda Smith's nineteen-year-old son and fourteen-year-old daughter were gunned down in the streets of Washington, D.C. in a case of mistaken identity on December 17, 1993. Rodney was home from college on Christmas break and Volante' was a fourteen an honor roll student in high school. Shanda and the family were on their way to Marion Barry's annual Christmas party when her Life was changed forever.

She remembers standing in the morgue to identify her babies and promising them that she would see to it that justice would be served. Rodney was driving the car and Volante' was in the passenger seat when their car was sprayed with bullets. Every bullet that entered Rodney's body went straight through and struck Volante's killing them on impact. After leaving the morgue she went back to the scene of the crime, where there was no yellow tape or blood on the ground. She fell to her knees and prayed the Lord's prayer and asked God to use her.

Eight years had passed when she received a call from a homicide detective informing her that they had suspects in custody. The following year they went to trial. Six codefendants and thirty victims. It was one of the first death penalty trials to come back to the Nation's Capital after residents had voted it out. They spent nearly a year of deliberating and the jury found all the defendants guilty and although they were seeking the death penalty it wasn't in me to witness a man die so I was glad he was sentenced to Life in Prison.



Shanda Smith @ her Kids' Gravesite

Shanda is the Founder and Executive Director of MURDERMISTAKEN, a notfor-profit organization created to help families of homicide victims in the Nation's Capital. Shanda has been sponsoring and hosting annual Christmas parties for children who've lost parents to gun violence out of pocket over 15 years to help fill the void of missing their parents during the holidays, which helps her just as much. Her commitment does not go unnoticed and has not been in vain with the support of the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, the U.S. Attorney's Office and other organizations.

Contact: shandasmith32@gmail.com

5 Steps to Navigating Self Doubt...

Melinda Coles developed 5 Steps to Navigating Self Doubt to help women navigate self-doubt to identify and inhabit their own abundance. Her coaching approach is combined with her formal social work education, 10+ year mindfulness practice derived from her own ongoing healing process.



As your coach Melinda asks questions more than she gives answers and centers your time together on uncovering truths that may currently be blocked or unclear to you. She co-creates a space that allows you to step into your full self and leave with tools that you can use immediately and repeatedly in your life.

If this type of support sounds like it would be beneficial to you, please consider taking her one-hour session where participants will be introduced to the 5 Steps to Navigating Self Doubt. In this interactive space, participants will walk through each step briefly and get an overview of the other program offerings. Please visit www.melindacoles.com for more information.

TKO's Corner



MENTAL ILLNESS + FEAR = a LETHAL COCKTAIL...

Imagine waking up every morning with an overwhelming sense of “FEAR” for no particular reason, yet a million reasons so you’re forced to pick one just so you can function at some level of normalcy UGH!! Cursing GOD asking “WHY YOU KEEP MAKING ME DO THIS?” I wish I had died in my sleep...

Imagine being the single parent of a young BLACK KING and trying to help him navigate the insanities of a world that seems to hate everything about him while you fight the voices in your head that are trying to

convince you that you’ll be the next mother on the local news asking WHY??? One of my biggest fears is my son being attacked, stabbed or shot and calling out for me in fear and I’m not there.

My mental illness forced me to sit in front of his school for seven hours just in case.

Imagine being the go to person, the listening ear, the problem solver and advice giver for your friends and family, yet never asked “HOW ARE YOU?”

Imagine being one of the most successful promoters in the LGBTQ community as well an extraordinary LIP-SYNC entertainer, always smiling yet feeling as if a black cloud is always following me.

Imagine fighting BREAST CANCER for the third time in the mist of all the above mentioned, then reminding myself to take a deep breath and remember who GOD is!!

Remembering the many sacrifices JESUS made just for me. Reassuring myself that I’m stronger than I think I am, and that I share the DNA and carry the knowledge, wisdom and experiences of some very RESILIENT women.

Now that you’ve been given a small glimpse into my world, welcome to “TKO’s Corner” where no topic will be off limits and your feedback is welcome!!

Contact: eMPIREdarling202@yahoo.com

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

HAVE YOU LOST A LOVED ONE TO GUN VIOLENCE?

IS SOMEONE YOU KNOW WRONGFULLY INCARCERATED?

DO YOU HAVE A LOVED ONE MISSING AND NEVER FOUND?

HAS YOUR FAMILY FACED AN INJUSTICE YOU WANT TO SHARE?

CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF A LOVED ONE WITH A COVER STORY!

* * * *

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A CONTRIBUTING WRITER FOR
THE BLACK MOTHERS 4 JUSTICE MAGAZINE?

Email blackmothers4justicemagazine@gmail.com for more info.

ADVERTISE

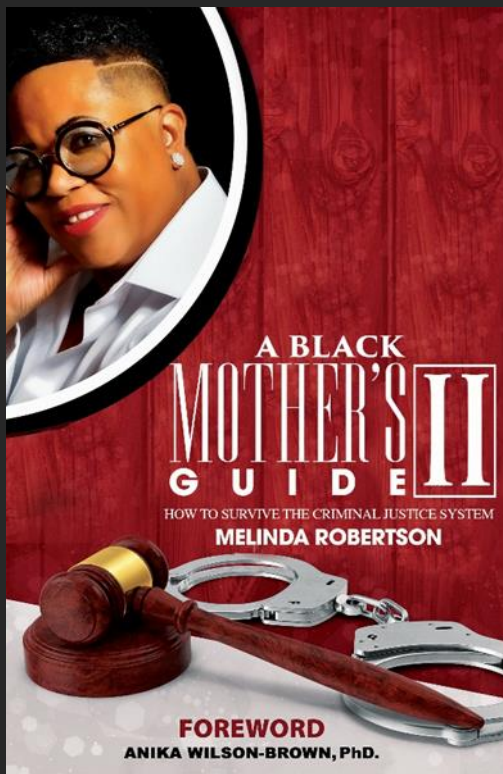
Your Business & Upcoming Events in BM4J!!



NjustUs HOSTED BY AUTHOR
Melinda Robertson
Real Stories of "Injustice" from Real People

Join the conversation
Airs on Tuesdays
8:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. EST

 www.blackmothers4justice.com
GUEST CALL IN (516) 666-9977



SPRING 2022 RELEASE

"A Black Mother's Guide: How to Survive the Criminal Justice System II," provides detailed information about arrest warrants, summons, indictments, Miranda rights, interrogations, arraignments, bail/bonds, public defenders, etc. Part I included stories of how five Black Mothers survived the criminal justice system and information about Re-Entry Programs and The Innocence Project available from State to State. It was written out of necessity to enlighten and educate Mothers about an unfair and unjust criminal justice system and systemic racism to give them a better understanding of the legal process, so they are more informed about plea deals, court hearings, grand juries, trials, and sentencing because Knowledge is Power!!!

OUR PARTNERS



Join the Movement...



**Black Mother's 4
Justice, Inc.**

www.blackmothers4justice.com