

**EVERY MOTHER'S SON.**

Tami Gold and Kelly Anderson's film, making its TV debut under the banner of public TV's "P.O.V." series, considers the grief, anger and reform efforts of three women whose sons were killed by New York City police. Premieres tonight at 10 on WNET / 13.

BY NOEL HOLSTON

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In the criminal justice system, the people are represented by two separate yet equally important groups, the police who investigate crimes and the district attorneys who prosecute the offenders. "Every Mother's Son" is about six people who were failed by both groups:

■ Iris Baez and her son Anthony, who died of asphyxiation in the street in front of their Bronx home in 1994 when a New York City police officer put him in a choke hold.

■ Kadiatou Diallo and her son Amadou, a West African street peddler, who was shot 41 times in the vestibule of his Bronx apartment building by four New York cops in 1999.

■ Doris Busch Boskey of Dix Hills and her emotionally disturbed son, Gary, who was pepper-sprayed in the face by officers in Brooklyn responding to a 1999 disturbance complaint and then shot 12 times when he became agitated and refused to put down a hammer he was waving at them.

"Every Mother's Son" revisits the incidents and the trials, none of which resulted in convictions, although Francis Livoti, the officer who choked Anthony Baez, later got a 7-year federal sentence for violating the young man's civil rights. It also chronicles the grassroots movement against police brutality that the three grief-stricken and outraged mothers helped inspire and energize when they became allies, demanding answers from the police and taking their case to the media.

The film won the audience award at this year's Tribeca Film Festival, and it's easy to understand why. It's an emotionally powerful piece, never more so than when Boskey, her voice cracking, reads a passage from a police patrol guide that reminds officers that their first duty is to preserve human life.

Tami Gold and Kelly Anderson, who produced and directed "Every Mother's Son," have alarming material to work



PHOTO BY ANNA CURTIS

Iris Baez, left, Kadiatou Diallo, center, and Doris Busch Boskey as seen in "Every Mother's Son," this week's "P.O.V." entry tonight at 10 on WNET / 13

REVIEW

# Dead sons, public grief

Documentary focuses on 3 mothers  
who turn their sorrow into activism

with. They inform us that Baez, Diallo and Busch were but three of 107 civilians killed between 1994 and 1999 by New York police "under circumstances that community groups felt represented an overuse of force."

The root of abuse, they say, was then-Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and his hard-line, "slam-and-jam" crusade to rid his city of street crime. Giuliani was not interviewed afresh in the film. He appears only through TV news clips from the '90s that tend to make him

look like an insensitive jerk who supported the police regardless of evidence of their misconduct. No doubt some viewers will complain the filmmakers stacked the deck against the former mayor. Others no doubt will say Giuliani makes it all too easy.

I recommend the film but with reservations. The Giuliani-bashing isn't as troubling as the filmmakers' failure to represent the police's perspective adequately.

Anderson says in a preface to the film that she believes

the NYPD's problems are "systemic" and that the cops themselves are victims "in the sense that they're in a situation where they're being forced to police in a way that doesn't really make sense." But that's pretty much the extent of the slack they cut the police department and its members.

They note that none of the officers involved in the three shootings agreed to be interviewed, which isn't surprising. But Gold and Anderson should have found someone to speak for the police beyond one detective, Cliff Hollensworth, identified as a member of 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care, who talks mostly about the stress of being part of a police force whose street officers disproportionately stop minorities.

Granted, this is an advocacy film, produced to describe a problem and celebrate three women who were moved to activism by personal tragedy. And it is being presented by "P.O.V.," which exists to showcase nonfiction films with a undisguised point of view. But more balance would have made it harder to assail and, thus, stronger.