

Virtual Love. Virtual Healing.

Episode Transcript

Black Mothering: Surviving and Adapting during a Pandemic

Thursday, May 28 , 2020

Scheherazade Parrish: Hi everyone viewing world My name is Scheherazade Washington Parrish I'm an associate with the Allied Media Projects speaker's bureau, we are presenting for you the virtual love virtual healing session to with Andrea Ritchie and Dani McClain, today we will be covering black mothering surviving and adapting during a pandemic during this session we will center experiences and stories of black mothers, lifting off possible solutions are parenting, particularly for black women and black children in a pandemic.

Allied media projects produces the Allied media conference. We also support art media and technology projects, working for social change, the speaker's bureau is responsible for managing and representing speakers who are a part of Allied media projects through their sponsor projects program.

I would like to start this with an acknowledgement. Land acknowledgement. We began by acknowledging and uplifting the history of Detroit, as Anishinaabe and other indigenous peoples stolen land, the largest majority black city in the nation with a long legacy of African diasporic global contributions, which was once the last stop on the Underground Railroad known by its code name midnight. Detroit is also the United States city with the largest concentration of Arab Americans, a border city with historic and growing Latin x communities, and a legacy of Asian American communities and



movements. So I would like to open up this conversation with Dani McLean, and Andrea Ritchie, are you there.

Okay.

I don't see Danny, I can't hear you Andrea.

Scheherazade: For the participants in the room. We have a chat room, we've got a chat box, please feel free to engage with the speakers with the topics if you hear something that you like by all means say Shona drop it in the chat. If you have questions for the speakers, please use the q&a box, and we will address those.

So, um, let's start the conversation I had an entire thing, you know laid out about motherhood, right, mothers, and then current events, these last few days and current events with George Floyd and rioting in. In Minnesota, and LA, and also, Amy Cooper in this instance in New York where we find these blatant weaponizing like weaponizing race against people.

Anybody Andrea, Danny Do you want to. Let's start there, like how is this impacting Danny you as a mom, as a mom like how does this impact you. What is, what is your adjustment to this How are you coping with these types of music, and like releases that are happening.

Dani McClain: Hmm. Well, first I just want to say thank you Scheherazade for pulling this together and thank the AMP Speaker's Bureau. And everyone at home who is making time to tune into this. I'm glad to be in conversation today because this is actually I would say one of the ways that helps me cope, is to be in contact with people, and be talking through these issues with people who have an analysis that I trust and who have an analysis that helps me try to make sense of the world and know which way to move. I mean, my child is three and a half. So, I think one of the challenges that I do not yet face is having to explain to her what's going on. I don't look forward to that day is coming very soon. But I'm still at the stage where, you know I learned my lesson. She's very verbal and I remember in January February I was driving her, you know I would be driving her to preschool in the morning, and I was listening to all things



considered, we would listen to NPR while I was driving her and that was when the news out of China was coronavirus coronavirus coronavirus and she very soon started asking you know what is what is coronavirus, so I know to be honest at this stage of limiting her access to the news because she understood. She. She is hearing her ears are open, and I'm not yet prepared to have to explain to her about a state violence about a police officer kneeling on a, on a man until he dies on the neck of a man until he dies.

Dani: I would say that the benefit of being connected to communities like app to having spent years learning from Andrea, people who are looking at issues of criminalization talking about prison abolition and talking about defunding police and moving those resources elsewhere. The benefit of having those years of connections, is that when moments like this happen. I know that there is movement work in progress, I am of course, shaken by the inhumanity and the, the brutality and just the disgusting nature of. You know what happens. And then I, to be honest I quickly pivot to like okay well who is doing this work, who I can look to for direction, who is doing this work. That is going to offer a message in this moment that helps people who aren't already organized get organized.

So that's a little bit about what I would say you know the Amy Cooper thing is what I'll say about that is, uh, you know I just was I just moderated a conversation that was about it was about a lot of things but it was largely about school desegregation, and it was a conversation between two scholars of the civil rights movement and one of the books that I read to do that conversation was this book called mothers of massive resistance and it was about the history of white woman's role and white supremacy and upholding white supremacy. And I got to be in conversation with Elizabeth Gillespie who wrote that book mother's a massive resistance I highly recommend it. So I just spent you know weeks, studying the history of the very specific ways that white women uphold white supremacy. So when the Amy Cooper notes news broke is like one more, you know, contemporary manifestation of the ways that this works. Um, so I'll say that.

I don't even know.

Scheherazade: I. There's a question. How are you speaking about this news with your children and you've already answered that you say your, your child is three. She's



saying that. Yeah, that's, that's a challenge as having a 13 year old and a 13 year old male child, it is. You know I want to leave these things to his dad to talk to him about right and we're in a good place and we have a good communication stuff like relationship so that's not an issue. I still feel this responsibility, right, to talk to him about these things but I have no idea.

I don't know how to approach the subject, I have, like, no. No idea. Andrea, can you chime in on that like how I know that your expertise is in in law, and specifically police brutality. Yes. How would you advise mothers of teenage black children, right, like how do we how do we talk to our children about what's going on in the news, how do we talk to our children about how to deal with confrontation.

From these with the.. What the media is calling the Karen's is this phenomenon of like micro policing.

Andrea Ritchie: I think a few things. One, I can't imagine I'm not a mom and I want to just acknowledge I really can't imagine how to tell a black child that the law really doesn't protect them. And that anytime they step out of the house, they could be killed. They could be beaten, they could be sexually assaulted or raped by the people who are named as their protectors and, and I wouldn't. I mean obviously three and a half is, is young, but I wouldn't say, you know, it starts at, and also that people could be that the police could be weaponized against them by white people or displeased by something that they're doing.

And you know, one story that comes to mind when we think about the incident in Central Park is, you know, the permit Patty incident which happened in San Francisco where a white woman called the police on eight year old girl who was selling water outside her own house on the street, because she was annoyed by the sound that hurt, you know, offering the, the water for sale and so I don't know how you explain to a black child, you know, white ladies might call the police and get you killed or your mere presence somewhere, might get you killed, I, my heart breaks for moms who have to do that and you know at the inner names network which is a national network of organizations working to end police violence against black women, girls trans and gender non conforming people, many of our members are moms or siblings of people who have been killed by police or moms of people who are their daughters and sons and



gender nonconforming children who they're concerned about and fighting for. So they're leading the resistance against police violence and, and also having had those conversations at the same time and so I think the way I would start just based on having worked with young people is they're already talking about it.

They already know, as Dani was saying and so to ask them what they know and what they think and how they're feeling, and to not leave it to men to have the talk with young men and leave young women out of it either, because young women, you know like myself were told you know if you're being harassed by you know anyone or you feel sexually threatened by anyone go to the cops well when I did that, the cops sexually harassed me and sexually assaulted me and so we need to say to young girls this is not the place to go and to also be careful about their interactions with with white folks in the world.

And I think the last thing I'll say is that I do train people on the law people need to be armed with the law, but I also train them that the best way to resist police violence is to survive the encounter. And so, and that actually that might feel different than what your body is telling you resistance looks like in the moment. And so, to give folks tools to do that, and then to fight like hell afterwards and I want to really lift up what's happening in Minneapolis and LA right now as an uprising, as a demand for our dignity, a demand for our lives and not theirs, it's a it's it's a it's really how we express this how we're expressing, not only our dignity and our, our demands for our lives but also our recognition of what gets protected and prioritized right that that George Floyd died because of a claim of theft or forgery. Right, or in some allegation that there was some something involving property, he died over property. And so the fact that people are targeting property and stores that call black people cops on black people all the time and place their lives at risk, all the time, over property over often necessities makes total sense to me as a target for an uprising it's a strategic target for an uprising. I do want to say that the people who are charged with the kinds of things that George Floyd are charged with are often black women that the top five charges around the country for black women and, including black moms are theft shoplifting taking stuff you need half the people who need diapers can't afford to pay for them. And so, and diapers are not a thing that again I'm not a mom but in my experience wipers are not optional. And so you're going to take what you need or food for your kid is not optional or things that



you need in order to keep your kid close and safe are not optional. And so we need to start addressing that police interaction which people tend to normalize people are like oh no one should be arrested for drugs or for being homeless or for, you know, these kinds of things but no one's saying no one should be arrested for that. Right. In fact, that's where all this sort of conversation is happening now about alleged theft in Minneapolis and the fact is that if we care about black moms we care about the criminalization of black moms we care about black moms who are fighting for their families, then we need to come up with a different response to people taking things they need, than police. And we need to recognize all the moms out there who are having to have the conversations you're talking about, about both white people in the street, and about police and the ways in which, in fighting for the people in their lives. They're also subjected to police violence in many different ways.

And one of the things I saw on the last few days was an arrest of a young man named Ty Anderson in Midland, Texas, which is horrifying military terribly unnecessary terrifying. Thankfully you lived encounter with police and seeing his grandmother who was 90 years old whose house this was happening in front of come out and come and stand next to her grandson between the cops, assuming that being a nine year old black woman would de escalate the situation would protect her grandson, and having the cops just shove her throw it to the ground and there's so many stories of moms and grandmothers, and people women in the community where moms pregnant people who are trying to protect members of their communities, experiencing police violence in those moments I just really want us to think of ways to be with all those moms to be with Diamond Phillips who had to explain to her three and a half year old, or four year old child. The killing of her partner in a car in front of her, and then have her child in Minneapolis. Try to console her mom. After that incident I just, we, we have to recognize that black moms in this moment are experiencing this in so many of the ways that you're like how do we even talk about it and then how do we intervene and how do we recognize that that they're leading uprisings and resistance and so we're so proud to have so many black moms who are part of our network, Kat Brooks in from anti police terror project and moms of folks who were killed in another spot so we're just really super grateful for the resistance of moms against police violence everywhere all



the time and for raising the next generation of freedom fighters who are out in the streets, every day.

Scheherazade: Absolutely, thank you so much for that.

And thank you I am getting questions in through the link I'm going to get to them. We're going to address them. Thank you so much for them and continue to ask those questions I want to pose this to both of you. It's not necessarily a question, but a police violence isn't anything new. No one should be surprised because police came from slave patrols and people need to stop acting like this is something new. So, this is not an uncommon stance. When we bring these issues to light like when we are saying this is, you know, this is messed up this is not right this is wrong, then there's always that view that this isn't anything new, why are we acting like this is something new. How would how. Yeah, I want to know how you two would address uhm like this thought process or this sentiment. And, yeah, was reserve that question for after you are, how do we address these.

Andrea: I think that the notion that it's not something I mean, you know, part of what I do an invisible no more which is a book that I wrote about police violence against black and brown and indigenous women and trans people traces a very long history back to slave patrols back to the first colonists landing on Turtle Island of, you know, police violence against everyone and particularly against women, queer and trans people and their communities and, you know, each new life is taken is a new life taken, you know, and each person's life is valuable and each, each I mean, we were sitting here preparing and I was like I can't keep track, you know, a black trans man was killed in Tallahassee Tony McDade a black woman was killed in Toronto, you know, under suspicion of police that police involvement recently reached just crushes ..., you know, Brianna Taylor we're still mourning. Her death we're still mourning the deaths of so many folks who are killed by police and each time a life is taken that is our allies our communities and we see ourselves in those people and we see ourselves in their mothers and in their communities, families and so it's important to have the context and to look at the causes and the things that keep bringing us into contact with killer police whether it's shoplifting laws drug laws, no knock warrants broken windows policing policing of motherhood policing of Child Welfare policing of pregnancy and keep looking at those



things, and getting at the root causes in the context. But we also are completely entitled to turn it off every time one of us has taken because, because they're our beloved's their communities, even if we never met them.

I grew up, organizing.

Dani: And the one thing I would just add to that is, we might have, we might know that you know the history that connects the contemporaries, you know policing to slave patrols but not everyone knows that right. So, we have to keep telling these stories we have to keep helping others along the path. I'm just thinking about you know I very rarely take time to like get into it with people on social media for a number of reasons, but today I had this really beautiful exchange with someone who's connected to my cousin who's not a, she's not an organizer, not an activist she's my cousin, and she's my cousin it posted something like Why do we always tap on neighboring neighborhoods like let's take it to their neighborhood and turn up there, and I got into this really beautiful conversation with someone who was, you know, really aligned with that point of view, and wasn't aware, you know, wasn't thinking about. First, like questions of ownership and property that Andrea's already raised but also that uprisings are one kind of immediate expression of rage and pain that's happening alongside strategic efforts that are continual right that is not that often we're the ones who are sitting home watching whatever's on the evening news or we're like looking and seeing what cnn is showing. And we also need to be reminded that that's just one expression that's just one response that's happening to this tragedy that there are also organizations working through a black feminist lens are working, you know that there are a number of different ways that people can plug in. And so yeah I just I, I feel where that question is coming from and I think we take every opportunity we can to remind each other, of not just the roots of these outrageous moments but also the legacy of resistance and what's happening currently that you know ways that people can plug in.

Scheherazade: Yeah, thank you.

Andrea: Just to add to that, one thing is that part of the resistance is building responses to things whether it's poverty or domestic violence or violence in general that don't involve the police right that that's a huge form of resistance that's going to



prevent these kinds of interactions and that is definitely work that moms are doing every day.

Scheherazade: Right, right, I, I hear that type of question and I want wonder like what, then should happen like Should we just accept it like because it's not something new or is like are we saying is, is this thought saying that we should accept it, we should move on we should like expect it. And then my, my question to that is, okay. So if we, if we stop acting like it's new, What then is your suggestion that we do. And also the fact that it is still happening, given this long history, given its long, you know its legacy and its longevity. I don't necessarily think that we're acting like it's something new, but maybe enraged that it is still very much alive and thriving.

Right. Um, one of the questions that came from the audience is. And you just touched on it briefly Dani. But what is the impact of seeing these videos and pictures of murders like over and over again?

Dani: Um, you know, personally I don't watch them anymore. The last video I saw of a black person being killed, I think was Eric Garner, I definitely remember watching Oscar Grant be shot in his back on the subway platform in Oakland. To me it doesn't. It's not motivating, it's not the rage and the disgust and the desire for change is already there. I personally have drawn a line for myself. I think a lot of us are suffering. I think a lot of people are suffering. I was actually, I kept seeing people saying that the video of Ahmad Armory being killed was like auto loading in their Twitter feeds, so I had days where I was like I'm not going on Twitter because I don't even want to happen on it. I don't even want to accidentally see it. Um, so I think I think a lot of people are suffering.

And I think what's very hard is that we know that. I mean, correct me if I'm wrong but like for example the police had the footage of Ahmad being killed right so what's difficult is that it is the release, and the widespread dissemination dissemination of the video that actually forces some kind of like prosecution or charges even being brought, so we see the value of it unfortunately, but the actual emotional and psychic impact that it has on us is is very, very difficult. And I saw somebody in the chat talking about like having to kind of figure out how to process their own emotions. Like in thinking about how to deal with their children right because it's, you know, say you see footage



of someone being executed and then you have to go make dinner, and you're, you're crying. I mean I've had, you know, many of us have had this happen, you're like crying while you're trying to get through debt bath time or whatever. And then that it's hard to say like, I'm going to just, I don't want to raise this with my child right now, but then it most many of us can't lie to our kids so when your kid says what's wrong. It's going to come up that you say, you know, well I just saw this or. And so I think that's one of the things that's called for in this moment is we have to really know how to take care of ourselves and each other. I think there's a lot of people turning off. Totally you know logging off when they need to. And I think that's good. I. One other thing I'll say is you know I interviewed Monifa Vendelay for the book that I wrote about black, black motherhood. And I had Monifa is a parent of teenagers I don't know for, its for our children are still teenagers but when I interviewed her a couple years ago her. They were girls were teenagers, and she goes off to HBCUs right I know they are they both off to HBCU

Andrea: Spelman and Howard

Dani: okay there you go so well when I interviewed when her she said, the her children were in high school and she was talking about how you know she was like when Rodney King was killed, we had to wait to get home at the end of the day to see it on the evening news but now my children can just watch these murders, over and over and over again, and thinking about what the impact is of that is on their hearts and their minds. And so how this new piece of parenting becomes staging interventions with these handheld media, you know, with these devices like while you go to sleep I'm actually going to hold on to your phone, because not only might you watch it but you and your friends, understandably so are like processing this together, you know, and you're. And there might be some of it that's helpful and there might be some of us that that's really traumatizing and so she was just she really opened my eyes to this new piece of parenting in the digital age that's around trying to mitigate some of the mental health effects of that are related to our, our young people's access to digital media.

Scheherazade: Yeah. Um, I think. Mark Zuckerberg Facebook was just they just had to pay out a huge settlement to people in their tech, like the tech department for PTSD, because it was their job to watch these videos and screen them as, you know, we put



this. You have to click the link, this is, you know, damaging material This is graphic material but there's actually a person who's sitting there in the office and their job is to watch these videos all day. And so,

Andrea: also the teens are taking these videos right the assault at Spring Valley High was videotaped by another team in the classroom. Mia Kenny, right, who was then arrested, and it was a teenager who filmed, George Floyd's death, and who is currently living with the trauma of having filmed this you know so I think that, you know, and again, you know, Diamond Phillips had to film her own partner bleeding out in front of her face and her kids face in this incident and so I think we need to recognize that way. There's a question of protection from what's available online but there's also a, creating a culture of copwatch among young people to, to be there for each other. And, and also help me de escalate or reduce these incidents but then we have to care for them as cop watchers because we have to understand the trauma of that so I'm telling you I'm grateful to black moms every single day, every minute of every day for the work y'all do

Scheherazade: another question related to a prior question. With regard to exposure, right. How do you balance or how do you weigh the importance of visibility, and this awareness building to police violence with these very real concerns about vicarious trauma and mental health for children, right. How do you make that judgment call, or, or, Dani, I guess. What do you use, what would you use to make that judgment call.

Dani: Well, in terms of in terms of protecting your child in terms of

Scheherazade: like how do you weigh the importance of the necessity for this visibility and for them to know that this is happening out here against them, their mental health like the protection of their mental well being.

Dani: I mean I think I can't speak to this experientially because again My child is very young, but I think a lot of this has to do with knowing your child right and having open lines of communication being able to sense into where they are and what they have capacity for. Because like Andrea said, Are our children know, right, so you want to meet them where they are and what they have capacity for so you know it's like.



You can tell when there's a look on your child's faces like I'm overwhelmed right and then you ease back a little bit, and I'm talking now about conversation that you have with your child but it could also be like, you look overwhelmed Let me hold on to your phone for a little while. Right. Um, so I think some of it is about being in sync. And so that means, that's the groundwork that we do all the time, not just when we're in crisis right that means that lines of communication are open, always, we know we can feel where our child is emotionally, we know how to meet them, that kind of thing. So then when these crisis moments hit we know how to walk shoulder to shoulder with them and support them, but I'm also thinking about what Andrea just said about like creating support for young people who are cop cop watching. But for all young people right and so I think that this is where it's important that we plug our children into community as well. Right now that's been what's getting me through this moment I mean even aside from these recent visibility around all this state violence and vigilante violence. Prior to that this the chaos around COVID, I have leaned very heavily into community and friendships that, you know, over the years, my like have been more social at some point but we are also comrades and like politically aligned and in these moments of chaos we are leaning on each other as sources of support as, you know, depending on each other for communication or information that we can trust and that kind of thing. And I think that making sure that our children are growing up with those same circles of support is also very helpful to the extent that we can curate friends, you know, make sure that they are around the right peer groups who are going to have their backs, who they're going to have fun with but also they can make meaning with who they can go to when they are scared or when they're like yeah when they're scared, you know, not friends who are going to run away from them. When the cop, you know when the police show up, or disappear when they're in moments where they really need to have each other's backs.

So I think that's important and that's something you know I wrote a whole chapter on that like this question of belonging, because how do you do that, how do you curate friendship groups for your kids that you're going to feel comfortable when, when it's nine o'clock on a Saturday night and they say I'm going out with so and so that you're going to be able to rest easy and not be terrified the whole time that they're out with them. And a lot of that so that is connected to like where are you choosing to send your child to school. What kind of after school or youth development, or you know, political



education environments are you putting them in. Because those are going to be the pools from which they pulled up front. So I think that's part of it is not sheltering them from the information, and knowing that in addition to you and the other adults in their lives, they're going to have peers who they can lean on when they need support.

Scheherazade: Andrea, you agree with that?

Andrea: Every word of it, word of it. Yeah.

Scheherazade: I got another question. You ready for another question?

I'm excited about these questions right. Where are black caucus people whose districts are 50 to 80% black were the John Lewis James Cliburn who said we know Joe Biden, aka Jim Crow by and who promoted the 90s crime still in still lying about it? Status Quo black leaders have been cowardly silent on this issue since the 80s and 90. Do you have any, how do you feel about that?

Andrea: Not all. I mean, yes, absolutely, I can't tell you the number of times I've been, you know, just in a meeting with someone just kind of being like, aren't you a black Mom, don't you, what, why don't we have this conversation right now, but I also want to lift up the folks who are doing the work. So for instance, there is a. My goodness this is middle aged This is terrible somebody helped me. There is a black alder person or council member in Minneapolis, who is a member of the Our Names network who was at our founding meeting at the Allied media conference, whose name is Andrea and her last name I'm forgetting. Even though she was the first political candidate I ever gave money to ever in life. And for her council member campaign as a black trans woman, and she spoke up today talking about that there is a public health crisis of racism in this country that's 400 years old, of anti black racism that city council in Minneapolis needs to confront. And so, thank you, Andrea Jenkins hallelujah oh my gosh I just is it gonna get worse as I get older, I just. But, but yes, so I'm grateful for black leaders like Andrea Jenkins, who, you know, is speaking truth to power every day I'm grateful for black leaders in New York City who are speaking truth to power every day, and as Barron, Charles Barron, we're on city council hearing last week talking about, you know, police involvement in courtroom social distancing orders that led to the violent arrest of a



black mom on a Brooklyn subway in front of her five year old kid again like how? another question of like what moms are doing to explain to their children when they're experiencing police violence and I've talked to moms who have talked about being sexually harassed by cops when they're walking their kids to and from school and saying I don't know how to explain to my kid. What you know the officer is trying to do right now and, and why I have to kind of act in a way that's going to get us to your school safely and why am I letting him disrespect me that way when I don't let anybody else's record that way you know like that's a complicated conversation with five year old daughter, or an eight year old son who's ready to fight about how his mom is being disrespected right now.

And so, you know folks are speaking out about that in New York City, about that arrest about, you know, also what happens to kids when moms are arrested and how to explain to your kid the trauma that I mean, when you saw that video she was led upstairs the kid was left behind with a cop who had been not protecting the child in any way from seeing what was happening but also was touching the child in a way that could have transmitted the virus like there was just so much about that interaction that was dangerous for all the kids and moms involved and, you know, there are black council members who speak up so I think the key that we've all learned, you know, over the past 10 years or 20 years or 500 years is that representation is not everything right not all black women are for black women, some black women lock up other black women and make a career out of it. And, and those so we need to think about like black leaders or represent people like Andrea Jenkins who are going to represent us in ways that are about really standing up for us and our communities. And for moms and caretakers out the way I just want to lift up, we're talking about black mothers for me I take the position that national bailout organization, takes in the black mamas bailout that when we're talking about moms we're talking about other mothers that Dani talks about in her book and the culture of black mothering that involves many of us, including those of us who have not given birth, and includes mothering in queer and trans communities, often by older black trans women like Andrea Jenkins who are mothering a whole host of folks in addition to being a parent herself so just really want to lift up, how we need to be supporting those folks who are doing that in roles where they have policy making decisions and calling into question those folks who are doing that in roles where they're not standing up for black folks.



Scheherazade: Absolutely.

Dani: So, I'm gonna say, just one thing. In response to that question. I mean I think the thing that stood out to me from the question was, like, maybe I'm just hearing what I want to hear but like how do we end up with Biden as a Democratic nominee? which was fun to like sit with that because of all the things that are perplexing in this moment, it's like, wow, here we are. And, and I, I don't have an answer. I don't know what to do. I don't know what to say about that.

Um, but it is making me. It's something else that is making me just like lean so heavily into communities where I feel like I can be affirmed and I can make sense of this moment with people, wrap my mind around what's going on. And so, like, Andrea just talked about connecting with Andrea Jenkins at AMC. I can't wait to get myself to AMC off, like, I can't wait to get myself to AMC I know that it's going to be virtual it's going to be something different from what we had in the previous 20 years and I trust that that magics gonna be there. I can't wait to get myself to black love convergence. I'm doing the movement generation online course correction transition in the age of COVID-19, like I am so hungry for spaces where I can escape from the crazy making nature of this moment. That may not have been the best word choice but the the like this moment is so disorienting and I'm so hungry for places where I feel like I can find a way forward. representation is not everything electoral politics is not everything. And so, This is a moment where at least on the kind of national playing ground. I feel very lost in terms of where we are in electoral politics and so I'm turning as frequently as possible to spaces where I can make trying to make sense of this world. And some of that is happening through reporting and storytelling which is my job and what I do. And to be honest, a lot of it is just about study. Like, I'm just trying to understand, and some of that is going to end up in a story and some of it is so that I can orient myself in a way just to walk another step to make it into the next day without feeling like I've completely lost my way.

Scheherazade: Thank you, Dani. Um, and I want to bring it back to, I want to bring this back starting with you, Dani. One of the comments was like. So to bring it back to like to come back to a political lens like how do mothers get political, how do we get, political,



and I'm going to like stagger one to that and this is for the participants. The people in the room like what are that, what are things What are action items What are like doable things that can happen that you think are necessary to uplift mothers, um, you know, I, not to diminish any mother's loss. Yes.

What happens when the mother is watching her seven year old, I think it was her seven year old son be accused of sexual assault in a mall. By a woman. And I was so pleased with him that he was like no I don't accept your apology. But my question is, like, what, what are the action items, what are we doing what can we do what are the ideas that we're having for the supporting mothers like, what are we thinking about, Andrea audience, Dani.

Andrea: I mean, so many things I want to talk about the article she wrote about supporting mothers in the time of COVID. And, and I think supporting mothers, both in their grieving resisting police violence and organizing around police violence and making sure that when we tell stories we don't just tell the stories we're used to hearing and telling of men who are not imagined to be trans or not imagined to be queer, but then we tell the stories of mothers who are experienced like the grandmother who was taken down trying to protect the person we're all talking about Ty Anderson right and we should be talking about both of them so I think that's one way to support mothers, I think another way is to recognize how mothers are being impacted in this particular moment.

And, you know, mothers are essential workers mothers are healthcare workers mothers are also essential workers in grocery stores and service industries and other places that are being lifted up and celebrated the same way men are facing the same questions every day about should I go to work and put my kids at risk or should I stay home and starve and then maybe have to shoplift and then now we're all arrested by the police like you know how because I'm not getting or I'm working in informal economy as a hair braider, or as or trading sex or doing something else I'm not getting a stimulus check and that's also required me to go out into the world of ways that are not necessarily safe. You know, it's hard to be in a sex trade and stay home depending on what branch of the trade you're in and so it's really about figuring out how to support black mothers



who are doing everything they can in this moment to keep their families going and finances and the ways that they're trying to stay safe and offering childcare and respite, not just to healthcare worker moms but to all moms in this moment, frankly, particularly single moms.

And then also recognizing the conditions for folks who are in prison right now we're all fighting to get everyone out of prison, that we can in this moment because prisons is your public health risk right now, I'm here in New York we're fighting to get pregnant people out of prison. And it's really an incredibly arduous fight. So Cuomo said he would let pregnant people out, and yet pregnant people are not coming out and they're describing horrifying conditions inside. There's a, an article in the cut from someone who was in bed for seven months pregnant, describing her experience horrifying and obviously we know and thank you, Kay McCoy for raising the story of Andrea Circle ZBear who died of Colvin 19 in prison after giving birth and, and just it her sisters, Sara Lee Circle Bear story is told an invisible no more she died in police custody by people who didn't care about her her health her pain. We didn't believe she was in pain, who was refusing her medical attention, and here's her sister dying in prison giving birth. Again, people didn't care about her pain, didn't care about her medical condition as a as an indigenous person who was incarcerated for a minor offense I, and people should be incarcerated period.

So I think we just need to be fighting for moms, wherever they are in this moment, including moms in cages in this moment, or who are worried about their children in cages were literally I mean talking about not also be able to imagine what it's like to be a mom, knowing that your loved one your child is locked in a cage they can't get out of they can't social distance they have no sanitizer they have no mask and the guards are coming in every day refusing to wear masks and infecting them, and you literally can't get out like I don't know what it's like to be a mom who can't get information that situation or mom who's incarcerated and get find out what's happening with their kids in that situation so decarceration is a way to support moms this woman support moms resisting police violence and the love and support moms or social workers with real like a real people's bailout that is centering the needs of black moms particularly who were an indigenous way along with indigenous moms are the lowest income people in this country springs have the highest rates of poverty. That's why I noticed that like we're



putting a lot of money now into public health interventions like contact tracing and hiring up people to do that and I don't know about y'all but my mom was the best contact tracer, she knew where I was, where even when I was being very good of concealing it, and even up until you know recently she recently joined the ancestor but she was contact tracing me at, you know, in her 90s being like, Where did you go today? What did you do? how are you feeling? And what do you need, you know, every time I talk to her. And so, let's pay moms to do what they're already doing which is Mommy, and, and, and taking care of their communities and taking care of their loved ones. Let's pay them to call everyone in their phone, and pay grandmothers to call everyone on their phone to be out on the stoop and caring for folks and reminding them to wear masks and saying this is not an order from a murderous state that you shouldn't trust with your life or any advice at all is is a request from your grandmother, because I love you and I, and I want you to love me to care of me like, That's what we need to be funding right now as opposed to creating other infrastructures to police black people and bodies and health that aren't, they're not calling saying what do you need they're calling to say you've been tested positive. Now you have to stay inside, and who have you been in contact with because we're going to make them stay inside, and none of that is, is the care taking that black bonds do and moms of all, you know, communities of color do that we need to be supporting them to do right now so if just a few thoughts.

Scheherazade: taking all the notes.

Dani: I love that frame of like let's not extend the surveillance, you know systems of surveillance let's happen to moms and families for contact tracing this here.

I mean I think that so that goes to one of the first points I would make which is like the, I think the initial question was like how do black moms get political like we're already politically been political. So all we do is politics right and the one of the ways as because politics is about power. So we're always like, we're always like, analyzing power like figuring out how to protect our children from illegitimate power, like, that's we're always, you know, have our eyes out to see, you know, we're watching we're making sense of things. Well the thing that's been on my mind a lot these days and Andrea mentioned that a piece that I wrote for the nation that was about being an unpopular parent in this moment, and the fact that there was no public health guidance around



like what you supposed to do like how are you supposed to get support, because all the health guidance is like go in your house and shut the door and don't come out well if you don't have another adult in your home and you have to work, how does that. Right, so. And so for the story I call it like do epidemiologists and different public health experts as well as just parents with black parents to see how they're managing. And I learned a lot and I'll paste a post a link to the story in the article. I'm sorry in the chat in case it's useful to anybody, but what that has gotten me thinking about was like, in this moment of chaos, where there's no coherent consistent, public health, guidance coming from the federal government, and we have to piece it together like, maybe you live in a state with a governor who's taking this seriously and it's like being informed by public health experts like maybe you can trust what you're hearing from your state government or your local government, maybe not. Maybe you're like, you have to read, you know, a million different news outlets and medical journals to try to make sense of what's going to keep your family safe, but I have talked to so many parents primarily mothers in this moment, who, a huge part of what they're doing is trying to understand how to keep their families safe, and often this is in families where there's like huge distrust of media for good reason. Right. It's not like we can always trust what corporate media is telling us. So a lot of us are holding like I do believe that this pathogen is dangerous. I do believe that, you know, we need to social distance we need to wear masks we need to do these things, but I'm one voice in a family where other people are saying. This is about Big Pharma moving toward making us all get vaccinations you know these competing narratives. Some, some of which are like justify like you can understand where people have these ideas, where these ideas are coming from. And I think that has been not frequently identified as political work that a lot of mothers are holding in this moment, the stakes are very high, and a lot of us are combating disinformation in our communities and in our homes and trying to weave together. Rules for our families that to keep us healthy and safe. Despite the current chaos where it's like, you don't know where to turn. So there's that. Um, what can we do to support black mothers there are so many things I mean this is basically I've just started getting a lot more money, you know, I haven't lost all my work yet. I say yet because, yeah, this is a mess right.



Um, but I haven't I still have income and so I'm increasing my giving, and some of that is informal like hey I know this person who's really struggling. Yep, let me know below you and you get it to them or whatever. So that is through more formal means, so I'm not. I haven't donated to this place yet but I've been reading a lot about this new birth center fun so many of you might know that because, um, because it was really hard to give birth in hospitals and people were limiting like you can't have a you know a partner with you you can't have anybody with you when you give birth, many people were saying, I can't give birth in this hospital I got to figure out a way to do a home birth or something I gotta say, is there a birth center in my community and Leslie Welch of Birth Detroit and then somebody else who runs a US trying to put a birth center together or forming a birth center in the Boston area I believe started a fund to help increase access to birth centers to out of hospital births for low income, I'm not sure actually the framing if it's low income people people of color what but basically, acknowledging that not everybody has equal access to like home births and birth centers right and so they started this birth fund because COVID has presented this moment where even more people are turning to out of hospital births so there are so many ways to support us. To support families to support black people support black mothers, see if there's one other point to make, you know, just one of the thing I would say is like, um, you know I don't like mom how much am I trying to support myself I'm really trying to not squander this moment. That is what I keep turning to is like, This is a very difficult moment for many reasons. But like the economy just shut down for weeks.

Capitalism was on the ropes for real, it still is. And like the plane stopped basically it may not fully but like everything that has come to define contemporary life came to a halt. And that's a moment for us to really think about whether we want to get back to normal.

And even if we personally make decisions to not return to normal. Like To what degree can we scale those things so maybe it's not just our family but maybe there's a maybe we're getting together with a couple other families and trying to figure out how to divest from certain systems that don't serve us. So I think that's another way to think about how we can support ourselves in each other's like before they all kicked us out of our doors and say like go spend your money go make your money which is what they're



doing right now, the virus is still there, the hospitals might be able to help us if we get sick but like nothing has changed right, what's changed is that they're trying to make their money, right.

So while we still have this little bit of an opening. I'm really trying to make use of it. And, and some of that is about just getting really quiet, and it's about that study that I was talking about. It's about reading thinking being in communication with people I trust that I really don't want to squander this moment because it's a real opportunity to figure out what doesn't get left back into my life.

Scheherazade: Wow, that's. I'm gonna tuck that into my own file cabinet of things to do to stay sane. Um, I want to we've got about four minutes left.

And so, I want to thank you Andrea, so much. I want to thank you Dani so much for the conversation your viewpoints your suggestions your acknowledgments your expertise. It's amazing. I feel like this could go on for another you know maybe 30 or 45, minutes but I think zoom is going to shut us down if i. So, I want to say thank you for your time, I want to say thank you for your passion, and thank you so much for the good work that you are doing. You can find links to Andrea's books, and Dani's books, and their websites more information about them and the organizations that they work for in support in the chat. There will be a closed caption available transcript for this webinar. Tomorrow, and a couple of things before I cut out.

Our next virtual love healing session is in two weeks. June 11, and the topic will be better futures visioning a time of crisis. That will be a fiction writing workshop led by by Walidah Imarisha. As we all know, and we are all we might not all know but we're all very eager for it, the AMC allied media conference is just around the corner with new dates which are July 23 through 26th. To find out about the AMC please go to AMC dot allied media.org.

What else I want to leave you with this thought or, you know, something to think about. I'm not sure there's this a special on HBO was on HBO called Euphoria. And it was basically about these teenagers that were born in a crisis, it was 9/11 right when the towers dropped. And so you see how these children that were born and raised in this time of like crisis and fear, like, what their lives look like and what their coping



mechanisms are. And so today, so, you know, this thought to leave us, what, what do you think our children are going to grow our, children of this era like what are they going to grow up, what are their coping mechanisms gonna be what are their narratives gonna be. And, like, from there, what kind of things can we do to like Dani said curate the types of experiences that we want our kids to have.

I thank you so much for tuning in for joining us. I hope you show up in two weeks at the same time. If you have questions if you have suggestions. If you have resources if you have organizations and projects that are in the business of uplifting black mothers, please share them please share them with our network allied media projects. We can get these things out to our panelists as well as mothers in Detroit and abroad. And yeah, thank you so much for joining us. Thank you, Dani. Thank you, Andrea Thank you all 47 of you who came. Thank you Nandi Comer director of the speaker's bureau. Thanks Jon and it holding us together.

Andrea: Thank you Scheherazade for leaving us with a beautiful conversation we're so grateful to you all of your work.

Scheherazade: It was my pleasure.

Dani: Thank you so much Scheherazade and Nandi.

