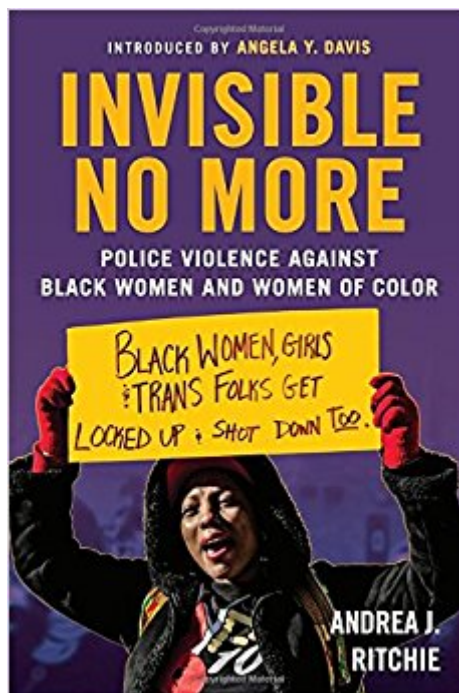




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# Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women And Women Of Color



## Synopsis

A timely examination of the ways Black women, Indigenous women, and other women of color are uniquely affected by racial profiling, police brutality, and immigration enforcement. *Invisible No More* is a timely examination of how Black women, Indigenous women, and women of color experience racial profiling, police brutality, and immigration enforcement. Placing stories of individual women—such as Sandra Bland, Rekia Boyd, Dajerria Becton, Monica Jones, and Mya Hall—in the broader context of the twin epidemics of police violence and mass incarceration, it documents the evolution of movements centering women's experiences of policing and demands a radical rethinking of our visions of safety and the means we devote to achieving it.

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## Customer Reviews

“In clear, urgent prose, police-misconduct attorney Ritchie (*Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women*, 2015, etc.) shines an eye-opening spotlight on women of color targeted by police violence, a demographic that is not often well-represented in the media. She begins her discourse with history, discussing the controlling dynamic of slavery and colonization. The author then addresses more contemporary and vexing issues involving the aggressive enforcement of minor offenses and the rogue street policing of young women, disabled people, and gender-nonconforming people of color...She shares her impressions of the abuses of Native women protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline as well as...of Sandra Bland, Eleanor Bumpurs, and Kayla

Moore, a black trans woman who died at the hands of transphobic police officers. Ritchie further details more personal stories of women affected by racial profiling, unsubstantiated criminalization, and rampant abuse...Dense, comprehensive arguments certain to bring awareness to the epidemic of police brutality against historically vulnerable...groups. — Kirkus

Reviews — “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 — “Invisible No More deserves a standing ovation. It’s a passionate, incisive critique of the many ways in which women and girls of color are systematically erased or marginalized in discussions of police violence. The stories told here will haunt, inspire, and challenge you to reimagine justice by moving the experience of Black women and girls from the margins to the center. — Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow* — “Invisible No More is a necessary intervention in the literature on policing. Ritchie moved me from page one with layered, thoughtful, and well-researched storytelling describing the multiple ways women of color are impacted by criminalization, begging the question of how their stories have been neglected and calling on all of us to make them visible. The insights revealed by these experiences, if heeded, will undoubtedly transform the course of history. — Opal Tometi, cofounder of Black Lives Matter and executive director of Black Alliance for Just Immigration — “With a profound sense of urgency and deep compassion, combining her keen instincts as a legal scholar and her work as an antiviolenace activist, Andrea Ritchie brings long overdue attention to the policing of Black women and other women of color such that their stories are indeed invisible no more. All of us must recalibrate our activist responses to the pernicious state violence used to maintain structural racism, heteropatriarchy, transphobia, class oppression, and other manifestations of injustice in ways that reflect our now deepened understanding of how police violence affects Black women and women of color. — Beth E. Richie, author of *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America’s Prison Nation* — “Invisible No More is a pathbreaking, timely, and powerful exposé of police violence against Black women and women of color written by a leading advocate for race, gender, and queer justice. Andrea Ritchie not only explains with clarity why this policing constitutes systemic and structural violence that is at once racialized and gendered but also shows that resisting it requires centering the experiences of marginalized women. Essential reading for everyone committed to working for a world free of state violence. — Dorothy

Roberts, author of *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*

“Invisible No More is the most recent book by the brilliant Black feminist legal scholar, writer, and activist Andrea Ritchie, in which she maps the brutal history of police violence against Black, Indigenous, and other women of color in what is now the United States, countering the erroneous notion that men are the only or primary victims of such violence. From settler-colonial atrocities and the school-to-prison pipeline to the experiences of transgender women, Ritchie confronts us with a set of realities too vivid to ignore. Invisible No More is a hard book to read, but it is a necessary read, combining cutting-edge analyses with stories, including the author’s, that will anger, educate, and inspire you to act.”

•Barbara Ransby, historian, activist, author of *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*, and president of the National Women’s Studies Association

“This is a terrifying book, not only because it exposes the startling number of Black women whose lives were cut short by state-sanctioned violence or the fatal consequences of policing Black women’s bodies. What is most disturbing is how little we know about these women and their stories. It is astounding how quickly women of color disappear when we memorialize the many thousands gone. But thanks to Andrea Ritchie’s thorough research and raw storytelling—capturing both the horrors and the resistance—we can finally begin to #sayhername and end the state’s war on women of color once and for all.”

•Robin D. G. Kelley, author of *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

“This long-awaited book from Andrea Ritchie, the leading expert on police violence against women of color, is well worth the wait. This book is quite simply stunning. Ritchie’s analysis deeply challenges both antipolicing and antiviolence movements to expand the scope of their work to address how policing operates through gender, race, disability, and colonialism. Offering a rich genealogy of police violence, Ritchie demonstrates that, both historically and today, gender violence is central to policing. Her attention to the myriad ways policing impacts Black women and women of color is brilliant. A crucial and paradigm-shifting book.”

•Andrea Smith, author of *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*

“With Invisible No More, Andrea Ritchie has produced a work of great scope and depth, tightly documented and deeply moving. Ritchie spans multiple centuries, nations, issues, and identity lenses to lay bare the effects of violent policing on women of color. She authentically and skillfully centers Black women while seeding the ground for alliances among women of color, and she gives us a thorough consideration of the experiences of women with disabilities. Most importantly, she introduces us to a generation of fighters we can follow, support, and lift up.”

•Rinku Sen, executive director of Race Forward

“Andrea

Ritchie's *Invisible No More* is a powerful affirmation of why our movement has to be rooted in exposing and advocating for Black women and girls who experience state brutality. We saw with cases such as those of Sandra Bland, Gynnya McMillen, Kayla Moore, and Joyce Curnell how mainstream media and policymakers ignore police brutality against Black women. *Invisible No More* is a powerful tool that analyzes our criminal justice system's practices and patterns that maintain this problem. Through her writing, Ritchie has created the opportunity to do more than amplify police violence against Black women and to enable Color of Change and other movement organizations to also identify the intervention points where we can make real change happen in order to create a just and safe society for all Black people, especially cis and trans women and girls.

•Rashad Robinson, executive director of Color of Change

“Andrea Ritchie's work is a vital contribution to our understanding of policing and criminalization, exposing how women, trans, and gender-nonconforming people are targeted. Ritchie's intersectional analysis exposes how policing operates off racialized-gendered structures that target people with disabilities, Black mothers, Indigenous women, and others made hypervisible and/or invisible by white gender norms. This is the tool we need in this exact moment, as grassroots resistance to police violence grows alongside an increasing emboldenment of racist law enforcement.”

•Dean Spade, author of *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*

“*Invisible No More* is more than a book about police accountability; it is an important read that interrogates policing practices at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and ability. By examining how culpability has been constructed to facilitate the dehumanization and criminalization of women and girls of color, Ritchie skillfully presents the transgenerational trauma produced by centuries of overt and covert state violence against cis and transgender women and girls of color in the United States.”

•Monique W. Morris, author of *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*

“*Invisible No More* is not only a hard testament to the true nature of policing in the United States upon Black, Indigenous, and other women of color but also to our foremothers' relentless resistance; to their gifts of truth, kinship, and radical love; and to their will to see us and our own freedom dreams come to fruition.”

•Paulina Helm-Hernandez, former codirector of Southerners on New Ground

“*Invisible No More* is a thorough and compelling documentation of police abuses against and human rights violations experienced by Black, Latinx, and Indigenous women, other women of color, and trans women and men that should pierce the conscience of even those most resistant to calls for police accountability. Most importantly, it serves as a powerful call to action to all who care about women—that we must demand a complete rethinking of what justice is for

those who have been denied, and that we must commit to fighting for that vision together.

I'm grateful to Andrea Ritchie for her personal courage in telling the stories of these women and her own story, and assuring that none will be forgotten.

•Margaret Huang, executive director of Amnesty International

“Invisible No More thoroughly demonstrates why we must radically reframe the criminal justice stories that too often present the myopic view that the torture and inhumane deprivation of life of men of color are the only pressing issues in the criminal (in)justice system and prison industrial complex. Andrea Ritchie's meticulous documentation and masterful writing emphasize why it is imperative that we examine the roles of race, gender, gender identity, and sexuality when we talk about and work on eradicating racial profiling, police brutality, mass incarceration, and other forms of state-sanctioned violence in the United States. Invisible No More is an invaluable organizing resource that is required reading for anyone interested in violence against women, criminal justice, and radical social change.”

•Aishah Shahidah Simmons, producer/writer/director of NO! The Rape Documentary

“This compelling, essential, and deeply informed book exposes the impact of policing, criminalization, and violence on the lives of Black women and women of color in the United States. Ritchie is at once eloquent and forensic in centering the experience of Black women of all genders and colors to build an urgent argument to reconstitute the policing function itself.”

•Urvashi Vaid, attorney and author of Irresistible Revolution: Confronting Race, Class, and the Assumptions of LGBT Politics

“Reading this book is hard but critically important and essential for our political education. The stories and timeline are both well researched and needed, and they taught me things I wasn't aware of and am grateful to learn. If Andrea Ritchie hadn't documented these histories, I'm afraid no one else would have.”

•Coya White-Hat Artichoker (Lakota), founding member of the First Nations Two Spirit Collective

“In Invisible No More, Andrea Ritchie draws from her experiences as an organizer, researcher, activist, agitator, immigrant, and survivor to paint a tear- and blood-splattered portrait that illustrates with depth and clarity the shared struggles of women of color in the United States of America. Ritchie, however, doesn't rest on that commonality. With painstaking care, she explores difference, privilege, and the layers of oppression that often mask the specific struggles of Indigenous, immigrant, and Black women in a country that hates us for our freedom. Ritchie speaks unapologetically from the margins, tackling white supremacy, police brutality, gender, and class with a deft hand and a full heart. She makes it abundantly clear that women of color are under constant threat of violence from all corners and always have been. Ritchie's work is invaluable to me as a journalist, and with this book, she continues to show

that writing is resistance and that if liberation is our true goal, then Black women and girls can be invisible no more. — Kirsten West Savali, senior writer and editor at TheRoot.com

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*” by Andrea J. Ritchie is a highly intelligent, courageous and timely discussion of gendered police violence in America. Ms. Ritchie is an attorney, activist and educator on behalf of women’s rights. This excellent book deserves to be read by everyone struggling for a more just, inclusive and peaceful society. More than anything else, Ms. Ritchie helps us understand that policing is rooted in a history of colonial domination over women, gender non-conforming and non-white peoples. Ms. Ritchie knowledgeably discusses a range of policing issues including the policing of girls, disability, sexual violence, gender expression, sex work, motherhood and more. Importantly, she draws from her experiences representing victims and working through various support networks to bring dozens of underreported stories to our attention. Ms. Ritchie’s work is deeply affecting, sobering and empowering. Clearly, the time has come to scale back the divisive policing practices that give too many of us a false sense of security. In fact, reallocating resources to rebuild our society in a way that empowers local communities including women and their families is an essential task — both for today and for the post-capitalist future that surely awaits us. I highly recommend this outstanding book to everyone.

\*\* Trigger warning for violence against women and children, including sexual assault and rape, as well as racism, ableism, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. \*\* “At the 2004 National Coalition on Police Accountability conference, a man who identified himself as a former member of the Black Panther Party approached me at the end of the workshop. He said that his sister had been raped by a police officer — back in the day, — but he had never understood what happened to her as police brutality until he had heard it framed that way

in the workshop. I asked him how he and his sister had described her experience. He answered, somewhat bewildered, that it was “just something bad that happened.” He then thanked me for opening his eyes as to how his sister’s experience fit into the work he had been doing all his life to challenge state violence against Black people. Chances are, when you hear the words “police brutality,” you picture a young black man armed with only a bag of Skittles or a cell phone killed in the streets, either by gunfire or a Taser or with an officer’s bare fists: Philando Castile. Eric Garner. Sean Bell. Mike Brown. Trayvon Martin. Tamir Rice. (Although, at just twelve years old, this last could hardly be described as a man, even a young one.) Yet black women and women of color including disabled women, trans women, and lesbian and bisexual women also suffer from racialized police violence, compounded by gender and other axes of oppression. Black women activists and scholars such as Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, the founders of #BlackLivesMatter have begun to shift the conversation in recent years. From the #SayHerName hashtag created in response to Sandra Bland’s death while in police custody to the groundbreaking AAPF report “Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected,” discussions of police violence are widening to include black women, people of color, people with physical and mental disabilities, LGBTQ and Two Spirit people, sex workers, children, and more. Andrea Ritchie’s *INVISIBLE NO MORE: POLICE VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK WOMEN AND WOMEN OF COLOR* is an invaluable contribution to the literature. She tackles a difficult and admittedly wide-ranging topic with passion, insight, and a boatload of receipts. Ritchie pinpoints seven sites in which black women and women of color are vulnerable to police violence: \* girlhood, e.g., as schools push to criminalize previously normal juvenile misbehavior, like talking back; \* disability, such as when police are called to perform a welfare check on someone who may be in mental distress and whom they are ill-equipped to deal with; or when trying to communicate with a deaf person; \* sexual violence, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape; \* gender, i.e. when police enforce gender norms in behavior and dress; this can range from hassling women with a more masculine gender presentation to disbelieving rape victims who were “asking for it” by their nonconformity to white ideals of womanhood; \* sex, such as targeting those engaged in sex work, or “gender checks” for trans or gender nonconforming folks; \* motherhood, which ranges from police violence against pregnant women and mothers on one end



of the spectrum (thus endangering children and fetuses), to criminalizing the parenting choices of black women and women of color, many of them a direct response to poverty and lack of resources (see, e.g., Laura Browder, a black woman who was arrested after leaving her children at a food court while she interviewed for a job<sup>1</sup> at the same food court); and\* police responses to violence against women, which can paradoxically result in additional violence against the victim, including physical assault, sexual assault, and murder. While each of these chapters could easily fill its own book (indeed, on the topic of girls, police, and education, I strongly recommend Monique W. Morris's<sup>2</sup> 2016 title, *PUSHOUT: THE CRIMINALIZATION OF BLACK GIRLS IN SCHOOLS*), Ritchie skillfully distills each topic into an engaging and informative look at one aspect of racialized and gendered police violence. Each chapter fits seamlessly with the others; indeed, there is quite a bit of overlap, and I often found myself nodding at how one thread circled back to touch many others. I especially appreciate her inclusion of strip and body cavity searches which, as state-sanctioned (and in prisons, required) forms of sexual assault and rape, are particularly unsettling. In addition to problems, Ritchie also examines solutions, with profiles of various activists and movements that have coalesced around different cases or sites of police violence. While, according to Ritchie, the ultimate solution lies in dismantling the police state (although, admittedly, it's difficult for me to imagine what this might look like), she primarily focuses on less radical measures. Specifically, she points to four measures that could have the greatest impact<sup>3</sup> in no small part because they have been the driving force between increased contact between marginalized communities and the police: ending the war on drugs, the war on terror, immigration enforcement by police, and broken windows policing. Thoroughly researched and documented, with the perfect marriage of reasoned arguments and righteous anger, *INVISIBLE NO MORE* is a must read<sup>4</sup> for everyone. By focusing solely on black men and men of color, we miss the myriad ways that police violence manifests in other communities. *INVISIBLE NO MORE* will teach you to widen your perspective<sup>5</sup> and, hopefully, your circle of compassion. TABLE OF CONTENTS foreword by Mariame Kaba x chapter 1 Introduction 1 chapter 2 Enduring Legacies 19 chapter 3 Policing Paradigms and Criminalizing Webs 43 chapter 4 Policing Girls 70 chapter 5 Policing (Dis)ability 88 chapter 6 Police Sexual Violence 104 chapter 7 Policing the Borders of Gender chapter 8 Policing Sex 144 chapter 9 Policing Motherhood 165 chapter 10 Police Responses to Violence 183 chapter 11 Resistance 203 chapter 12 Conclusion 233 afterword by Charlene Carruthers 342 acknowledgments 346 notes 352 index\*\* Full disclosure: I received a free electronic ARC for review through Edelweiss, as well as a finished copy through Library Thing's<sup>6</sup> Early Reviewers program. \*\*

This is a very good timely book about police violence against women of color. Many of the stories told in Ritchie's book never made the news. She points out that often, there aren't even police records since many stops which lead to violence aren't arrested and go unrecorded. She also makes it a point to point out that violence can include emotional abuse and sexual harassment-things that many don't often consider violence. My wish is that everyone who cares about issues of racism, justice and police brutality will read this book-black, white, gay, straight, trans or cisgender-these issues really do affect us all. This book is a rare one in that it can be enjoyed by academics and lay people alike. Most importantly, Ritchie calls for actual solutions to these problems.

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