

Ericka Huggins: "Black Lives Matter"

Black Lives Matter gives me hope. They are speaking like we did in the 60's, no, you can't kill us without a response. Isn't that what they're really saying.

Their movement is battling the same centuries old beast--systemic racism. It is no joke. I read that Black Lives Matter is being surveilled by the FBI I sat there and wondered: Will we take them seriously? In 1968-69 when I told my friends and family that the FBI is after the Black Panther Party and all movements, they thought we were paranoid.

Then the FBI Counterintelligence Program, COINTELPRO, killed my husband John Huggins. He was 23. They killed a kind, compassionate, feminist man. That day in January 1969, on the UCLA Campus, they killed my friend Bunchy Carter. I had to convince my MOTHER who loved me dearly she said "aw sugar no, no, the FBI's got our best at heart; they protect us." Then they incarcerated me and, the next year they killed my comrade Fred Hampton.

She saw it with her own eyes when she came to be a character witness at my trial. She was so pissed off that her sisters couldn't even talk to her "Cozette!! We can't be on the phone with you, 'cause you just too angry" It was all so new---it turned upside down everything she believed. I don't know if you have an idea of the push back the government gives.

Young black and brown children, boys and girls; women and men...their lives are in danger. WE need to do more.

My heart breaks for Tamir Rice's mother--for all the mothers. Oh shit, each time I look at Tamir's little face. How does she sleep? How does she eat? What does she do on his birthday?

And then I think about Black Lives Matter. I'm grateful to them for speaking the truth. I'm so grateful.

I believe you can't have social justice action without a spiritual practice. You'll burn out, you'll be snarky and ugly to the people you love, the people you serve! Or, you become jaded and closed. Or all of the above.

Every one of the women (in Black Lives Matter) I have talked to says that they believe in caring for each other, grounding each other. Talking about their sorrows and challenges. They do their best to be honest in their communications with each other.

I'm not talking about public stuff. This is the behind the scenes. They are being real.

We didn't know how to do that. Many of us died on the inside. BLM is doing it. We need to say to ourselves what we can do. Maybe I don't want to shut down a bridge. Maybe I want to recreate the bussing to Prisons program. I can do something else. The question is, "what can I do, within my own life."

Ericka Huggins: "Meditation & Mothering"

I taught myself to meditate when I was incarcerated, before I was moved to solitary confinement. I was in administrative segregation. They thought, "Let's isolate the women of the Black Panther party from everybody else and put them in, what the guards called, the Panther Wing. You could hear them yelling outside the wing, "I'm feeding the Panthers!"

It was when I was in that cell that I thought, I cannot do this. I had not healed from the assassination of my husband not to mention all the other deaths I had experienced. I was separated from my three-month-old baby daughter. I was 21 when my daughter was born.

And so I felt like an old lady in my being. And I didn't wanna feel like that. I didn't want to have my heart shrivel up and my mind become small. So I asked one of my lawyers, Charlie Garry--who did a headstand before he entered the courtroom every day—to get me a book on yoga. So he found this little book for me. As I began to practice the yoga postures, I noticed what the woman who wrote the book said,

When you finish the postures, "sit quietly for meditation".

Just notice your breath and sit. And I did. And it saved me.

See, I didn't think I was going to get out of prison. I thought I would spend the rest of my life incarcerated. Because of the heinous FBI Cointelpro.

I knew I had to make the best of it. I knew I couldn't go the route of the other women, doing whatever the guards told them so they could have an extra hour out of their cells. Giving up their spirit. I wasn't going to do that. I was NOT going to do that.

And so meditation helped me in every nook and cranny of my life and, I knew then that should I ever leave there--it was a faraway wish that I would ever be out of there--meditation would stay with me.

Meditation made it so that I was able to be with my daughter once a week for an hour. She was three months old when I was incarcerated, I had to stop breastfeeding--- that broke my heart and it broke our bond. If you understand what breastfeeding is all about. It's not just nourishment—it is nurture.

I can still see those little red pills they gave me, those red pills to dry my milk, that's when I knew- I can't, I can't do this. Without something, and, what is that something? My mother-in-law would come every week and bring my daughter. Sometimes I could hold her. When she was able to walk I was able to be really present with her and have fun with her for that hour...I just was very present. That was the result of meditation.

And then when my daughter was able to talk and converse with me I was able to really talk with her. I'd bawl my eyes out when I'd go back to that cell, but I was able to be with her so that she wasn't leaving absolutely sad.

Although I'm sure she was sad, because she was a brilliant little girl without her mother or her father.

Ericka Huggins: "It Does Need to Be a Story"

Have you seen the photographs of enslaved and free women who were lynched during American slavery--in their little cotton dresses? Did the people who benefitted from slavery care?

And I'll tell you when I was in the Black Panther Party, they did not care that we were women when they beat and jailed us.

We have to care, Instead of waiting for someone else to care. And care about the stream of Latinas who have been killed. Black Lives Matter speaks about all people of color who have been killed by government-approved violence.

I think we all need to spell it out. Think about how many of the names of black women killed by police you can name. How many? So it's up to us to name them.

I have a long list of black women killed by police, the oldest of which, Ms Pearlle Golden, was ninety-three years old. She opened her door, cause someone had called the police about a domestic dispute, she came out with some object in her hand. They shot and killed her.

The youngest woman killed was 14. What is her name?

Of course we know the names Sandra Bland and Korryn Gaines. But what do we really know about them?

The reason we don't know isn't because of Black Lives Matter, is it? It's because mass media gives us misinformation. So~ it's up to us to love our communities and, ourselves.