

police brutality.

part one: a testimonial

julie matson

((Julie is a Vancouver-born, Montreal-based social justice activist, organizing around police impunity, police brutality and issues of class equality. She is also a hairdresser, and can be heard on the airwaves of CJLO 1690 AM, Concordia's campus radio station. Julie also performs musically, under the moniker Echo Beach.)))

My name is Julie Matson, and my dad, Ben Matson, was killed, without reason, by the Vancouver Police Department in May 2002. He was beaten and kicked to death, choking on his own vomit while being restrained in a prone position.

Losing a loved one is one of the hardest things to go through, but losing them in such a violent, surreal way is beyond imagination, especially at the hands of those we are led to believe are here to serve and protect.

Throughout the process of dealing with my dad's death, from the initial investigation, through to the public inquest, I couldn't ignore the blatant use of profiling, be it class, race or otherwise, and the continual upholding of systemic impunity and privilege that the police have.

I am fortunate enough to have found an amazing group of friends within the other families and supporters that have united to speak out against police violence and impunity. Together, we have organized memorial marches and vigils around October 22nd, a date that is recognized internationally as a day against police brutality and impunity.

Julie presented on related topics at Study in Action conference 2012, Montreal on behalf of the Justice for Victims of Police Killings Coalition. The Justice for Victims of Police Killings Coalition in Montreal brings together directly affected families and friends of police killings, as well as their allies.

One of our main focuses is to commemorate the lives of our loved ones, and demand an end to police violence. Whether the killings were a week ago, a year ago, a decade ago, or three decades ago, we are here to honour the memories of those that have been killed at the hands of the police

We are planning another march for this coming October 22nd, and welcome all to the processes of organizing and supporting our efforts. We have a website for more information at www.22octobre.net.

We need to find other strategies of harm reduction on our streets. We need better ways of dealing with people suffering from mental health issues other than the police. Our society needs a better way to care for vulnerable people with support and compassion, rather than with violence and weapons.

I've seen first-hand how proposed solutions become the next wave of tools of death and injury, such as the use of tasers. We need to identify that the problem is not crime; the problem is not violence. The problem is the police unjustly killing and injuring people.

We need radical solutions for radical problems - I am calling for the police to be disarmed, and for a ceasefire on our streets. We need less violence and more compassion on our streets.