

MOBB United Outreach

By [Tiffany Bargeman](#), [Vanessa McCullers](#),
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When a Black son is victimized, his mother suffers unimaginable grief, along with others in his immediate family. Moms of Black Boys United, Inc. (MOBB United), as his extended family, grieves as well. We grieve with the mother whose son was taken from her. We grieve with his children who will grow up without their father. We grieve for his community that will miss out on his talent and positive contributions. We grieve for this country, which suffers from the chronic sickness of fear that led to the untimely death of this son.

How important is sisterhood in the time of tragedy? It is paramount. MOBB United knows this and takes action. We reach out by getting out of our routines and on the road, attending the memorials, funerals, and protests. We reach out and touch those families with physical presence, hugs and words of encouragement. Their loved ones' lives mattered. Outreach and love matter once their lives have been lost, and that's what MOBB United does. We don't just talk about it. We do it. MOBB United actively supports victims' families.

Below are some personal accounts from MOBB United moms who reached out to the families of victims Reginald Thomas Jr., Terence Crutcher, and Alfred Olango during these trying times. **Get ready because they're about to take you with them to the scenes.**

by [Vanessa McCullers](#)

Reginald Thomas, Jr. killed in Pasadena, CA by Pasadena officers

Reginald Thomas, Jr. died on September 30, 2016 in front of his home. Excessive use of force with a stun gun by officers from the Pasadena police department was the result of what started as a call from the victim's family. Thomas was a father of six with a son on the way.

That night, my husband got a call from a friend who was Reginald's cousin. She knew I was involved in MOBB United, and she had one question, "Will MOBB go and visit this Mom?" At the time, I was preparing for a trip to San Diego to rally on behalf of Alfred Olango, who had been killed days before.

What started as a call for help to 911 from Reggie turned into tragedy when he was tasered to death. While driving to San Diego we made plans to head to Pasadena the next day. Unbeknownst to all, before the day was over, we would be discussing plans to meet with yet another family whose son was gunned down by the LAPD as he was being pursued.

Back from the road trip, we used ribbon that remained from the Alfred Olango rally and memorial site visit in El Cajon, CA the day before to dress the memorial site for Reggie Thomas. Neighbors shared that his wife was out gathering cleaning supplies to clean up before family members arrived. To help lessen the load a bit more, we did a quick grocery run to ensure she would have easy prep foods during the week. By the time we got back with the groceries, Reggie's wife had returned. Shainie was stoic in her appearance, never wavering in her stance. She intended to be the strong one for the family. She accepted our assistance on that day and followed gracefully. The only moment we saw a break in her demeanor was when her baby girl started to cry at the funeral. She could hold on to her own pain, but to see her children break down was too much for her to bear.

Shainie and I continued our communication in the following months. As the birth of her little one neared, we talked more and more. Her kids had just lost their Dad but were gaining a new sibling. She wondered if she could get through this, how she would continue to provide for her children and the new one on the way, and how she would raise her new son without a father? We encouraged her to write down her memories of Reggie as a way to help with her grief while preparing stories she could share with her son in the future. On December 27, 2016, 3-months after his father's death, Eli Thomas made an early arrival.

On May 13, 2017, MOBB United met Shainie and other moms on the [#PamperPatio](#) with information on how to support our movement and also on the Red Carpet, asking questions and getting insight on the tough job of [#Motherhood](#) and raising our Black sons.

Scandal-less Mother's Day Brunch

On Mother's Day this past May, MOBB United treated two very special moms -- Carlina Smith and Shainie Lindsay -- to a [celebrity-filled Mother's Day Brunch](#). For these women, this Mother's Day was met with the pain of remembering their loved ones, who died last year 1 day apart due to excessive violence by law enforcement officers.

Shainie was 7 months pregnant with her son Eli when her husband Reggie was shot by police with tasers so severely that he suffered a heart attack and died. The next day, on October 1, steps away from his home and about 15 miles from where Reggie was killed, Carnell Snell, Jr. was hit with three bullets in the back of his body as he tried to escape the police in a foot chase. Days after their loved ones were killed, Shainie and Carlina were surrounded by love when Los Angeles members of MOBB United appeared at their doors with gifts of love and support. The group has since stayed in touch with the women and provided continued support.

Both women were invited to the Scandal-less Mother's Day Brunch, hosted by Cario Events and others, for a chance to meet with fellow moms and enjoy a day when they should feel honor instead of pain. They were treated to massages, manicures, and mimosas for an afternoon, while celebrity moms, [Melanie Fiona](#) and Kristina Kusmic also were honored. "Moms of Black Boys United wants these moms to know that we understand and feel their pain and are here to support them," said Founder Depelsha McGruder.

The brunch was the first time Carlina and Shainie had met. Their stories are different, but there is one common thread: Their loved ones are gone, and no one is answering for it. "My children no longer have a father. I'm now a single parent, and it's just so hard to carry on. I'm grateful for the support from this sisterhood of women fighting to protect our sons," said Shainie.

Check out these photos from the Scandal-less brunch.

by [Kimberley Robinson Alexander](#)

Terence Crutcher, killed in Tulsa, OK by Officer Betty Shelby

I remember the moment that silence overtook the car in which we rode. The laughter and smiles were replaced with the reality of our purpose in Tulsa, OK. The five of us had talked about it not being the first time that profound tragedy had added the stench of death to the air. I was thinking, "it is like a desert town." And almost as quickly, someone remarked that it was so quiet and barren. The contrast from what appeared to be affluent neighborhoods and what was clearly considered "hood" was strikingly delineated from one sidewalk to the next. We arrived at

the hotel and checked in wearing our MOBB United t-shirts and jeans, carrying the clothes we would wear as we represented an organization mourning with the Terence Crutcher family.

We drove in echoing silence as night draped over us. In an instant, we were in a caravan of cars being directed through a dirt parking lot filled with rows and rows of vehicles. We parked and began walking. The closer we got, the more we were amazed. It was as if the whole town was where we were. There were Blacks and Whites, old and young, women and men, strangers and family, dignitaries and lay folk. There were license plates from all over the country...east coast met west coast and everything in between; together, on this night, under one roof, with one purpose, to say good-bye, in small town Tulsa.

We followed the family in passing life size pictures of Terence. They were displayed on easels. In each, his eyes were alive, bright. He posed with loved ones and the warmth jumped off the canvas. As we shuffled closer to the sanctuary doors, I knew the life I saw in the vestibule would not be present once I passed the threshold.

It took us a while to get in, capacity had been met, and the fire marshals were prepared to shut it down. I leaned over and asked, "What is capacity?" An usher replied, "1200!" In awe I thought, 'truly death has brought life to this town.' I sat and watched, at times, with tears streaming down my face. I openly mourned for a man I had never met, in a place I had never been, with people I didn't know; and yet, I felt as connected to them in grief as I have to others for those close to me. A life's promise had been extinguished.

When the service ended, we were greeted by members of the Crutcher family who were moved by our travel and what MOBB United represented. We talked for a while as people filed out of the church. These women were in their Sunday best -- women whom we would call seasoned saints. They stood tall in their grief and their voices would not shake. They took our hands and in loud, strong voices, they petitioned God on our behalf. My knees were weak; I was overwhelmed at the care and the concern that those we came to service for had for us. I was moved.

The first night was done. As the adrenaline rush subsided, we all realized we were famished. Returning to the hotel and changing, we found we shared purpose with many staying where we were, making small talk as we walked. We recapped over dinner and each shared thoughts and feelings on what we had just witnessed. Strangers engaged us in conversation expressing the hurt that the town was feeling behind this tragedy. We were prepared to leave when our waitress came over and said, "I applied a 40-dollar gift card [that] I received as a tip to your bill. I overheard why you are here; thank you!"

The next day we would attend church with the Crutcher family, his dad, wife, children and other relatives. Again, we were greeted with love as we sat and listened to Terence's father play pain through the piano keys. His wife sat quiet, exchanging hugs with each person who passed her.

After service, we went to the place where Terence died. Instantly, the air got thick as we left the car. We were anxious to get there but moved in slow motion once we arrived. There was a makeshift memorial at the site where he took his last breath. This day, the air was damp, rain was coming. There was a ditch on either side of the road; the street was black top. It was a place you would drive by and would see road kill. His life was taken like an animal wandering in

the middle of the road. Police markings remained on the ground where he laid dead. We laid pink and black ribbon next to other memorials and prepared to make our final stop.

Meeting Terence's wife at her attorney's office, we presented her with a token of love from MOBB United: a photo album of past memories because with Terence, there would be no future to share.

by [Munirah Smalls](#): I remember driving into Tulsa feeling a numbness. I'd been to funerals before, but this was different, very different. I'd never come to support anyone in this light before. I did not know Terence Crutcher. He was not a part of my family. We were not friends. Truthfully, until September 16, 2016, I and a world full of strangers would probably have never known who he was. He was a Black man murdered. Simply and truthfully.

That one specific point was the reason I and four other members of MOBB United were in Tulsa. We were there to support the family of the fallen and to let the world know, no longer as mothers of the fallen would we mourn in silence. I didn't feel like mourning. I was enraged. There was a gray feeling that consumed me. The town was quiet and almost desolate by the time we got there. It felt ghost like, until we pulled up to the church. There were cars and people from everywhere. People, like our delegation, had come from everywhere to pay their respects. I was proud and crushed at the same time. Why and how many more Black men would we have to do this for? Why in this day and age did we have to keep doing this? The emotions you uncover in those types of moments are full range. I kept a strong face to do my task at hand. But I was completely broken. I was screaming and crying within. I watched and listened as people scurried past me. Even once I made it into the sanctuary, the melancholy veil that was beginning to completely cloak me was not dissipating. I could hear the kind words, the prayer calls, the pulse of the crowd. But I was sitting there in this deafening silence within wanting to scream and shake something. I wanted this to begin to reverse itself like a virtual resin and undo that fateful September evening. But that was not to be the case. A life had been taken in cold blood and now we wanted justice.

Nothing prepared me for the crime scene visit. I remember us turning onto the street where Terence Crutcher was gunned down. The car went quiet as we slowly came to the actual spot. There was a small memorial alongside the road, some candles and flowers marking it. The tears began to swell in our eyes. We said nothing. I remember Kim and I tracing the steps to the exact spot in the road where his body would lay lifelessly. We stared at each other, tear stained faces. I closed my eyes and played back the viral video the world had seen over and over. And I finally broke. I cried out. I sobbed uncontrollably. The tears are falling again as I share this recount. It was too much. We could feel him. Terence Crutcher had died a senseless death, and we knew it. But more importantly, we felt it. With every fiber in our being, standing at the murder scene brought it full circle to each of us; our work was not only necessary. We were chosen. I bent down to touch the ground where he took his last breaths. All I kept saying to myself was that he was a few blocks from home. He was a few minutes away from his family. He was a few minutes away from this. A few minutes changed my life and took Terence Crutcher's. He was no longer a viral media sensation being shown in duplicity on my timeline. He was a real person. He was someone's son, father, brother and husband. He was a Black man. He was murdered. Not because he'd done anything wrong. He was a Black man on the wrong street at the wrong time. That moment changed my life forever.

Pamela Wood-Garcia

Alfred Olango, killed in El Cajon, CA

I saw media coverage of Alfred Olango's killing less than an hour after he he was shot .
"A Black man having an emotional breakdown was shot by the cops."

San Diego's African-American community was rocked by this senseless murder. How could something so sadistic happen in our community? Come to find out Alfred had very close ties to my family. Alfred spent lots of time with my brothers. They referred to him as "Snake". They were helping write a story about his life as a child soldier in Uganda. My nephews, Michael and Arthur were best friends with Alfred's younger brother, Tony. They all played high school football together. It was very painful to watch a family suffer that had such close ties to mine. A family who deserved so much more from a country that they came to seeking refuge had to suffer through such a tragic ordeal. It was painful to watch the way the El Cajon Police Department treated a man's life like it was limited to a few run-ins with the law. There was never any justice served in Alfred's killing despite the fact that the cop that shot him had a tainted past.

We, as a community, practically were told that what we saw was not real and that we had to deal with the officer's perception of the situation even though eye witnesses gave accounts of Alfred's murder. The entire incident was caught on video via camera phone. The video should have been released immediately, but the public didn't see it until after more than a week. As a MOBB United mom, I felt like marching and chanting cries of justice for our loved one was therapeutic. We expressed our hurt and anger, but it didn't bring Alfred back. It didn't mend his mother's broken heart, and it didn't serve up any justice. There was no accountability brought forth from marching. The frontlines are not out on the streets with cops. The frontlines are in townhalls, city councils, Congress, the Senate, and courthouses. Legislation is our greatest ally AND our greatest enemy. We have lots of work to do; those trenches are deep.

Unfortunately, MOBB United Outreach is not a finite work. We have to continue following current events and seeking ways to reach out to families of victims, those who are killed by law enforcement, but also those who are harassed or brutalized. It is important to let them know someone is in their corner and get them involved in the mission, fueled by their first-hand experiences.