

MOURNING ON MOTHER'S DAY

by China Martens

I want to send my sympathy this Mother's Day, for the lives lost during the pandemic this last year, as well as in earlier years. I cannot see this Mother's Day as anything but a day of mourning. The fact that I was able to share air with my only daughter, just last week, after so many months of socially distancing, now seems the greatest privilege of all. My heart goes out, as a single mother of one child, to all those who have lost loved ones.

We have been separated from each other. There is so little middle ground. Sheltering in place alone, I have seen racist killings by the police occur in the news, on social media, coming up often with great shock and emotion, over and over. I have also known of five deaths of grown adult children in my circle of friends, three of them in the *Hip Mama* community. These are mothers that I have known through our writing for many years—I read stories about their children in *Breeder*, *Mamaphonic*, *Mamaphiles*, *Don't Leave Your Friends Behind*, and *Revolutionary Mothering*. As an editor, I have never gotten through a large collective project without personal tragedy striking at least one member along the way. But it's been an extraordinary year of grief, and I wanted to send out an acknowledgement.

May we hold together, as much as we are able. We, your friends, acknowledge this year, as all years, was difficult. We know that loss will come for us all, this ordinary thing, death and birth. And we, your friends, acknowledge that as marginalized mothers, you have shouldered more than your share of the griefwork of motherhood.

May we be able to hold space for each other's grieving and acknowledge the work of mourning, as well as accountability, healing, and the fight for justice.

Society makes me so damn tired and I don't even know if I'm actually a part of it. Maybe something in these words connects or helps. I hope so.

MOTHERING AS GRIEF WORK. MOTHERING IS GRIEF WORK.
MOTHERING IS WORK AND MOTHERING IS ALSO GRIEF WORK. THIS
UNDERCLASS I REMAIN DEVOTED TO. INDIVIDUAL TEARS MAKE UP
THE OCEAN.

This Mother's Day feels so somber.

I want to honor those we have lost too soon; as well as to honor of the work of living after loss. It seems to me that mourning the loss of a child, while certainly a worst nightmare, is also the work of mothering; and of caring for ourselves and each other. Death is always a scepter lurking—it comes to us through happenchance or the intersection of injustice and violence, racism and economics, war and disease, accidents and intent. To speak of such a loss I am out of my depths. One death connects to another, at least in a certain way. It's all unfair, and unequal. Reparations are long overdue in the never-ending struggle for a more just world.

It seems that grief and mothering are bound together. Yet I have white mother guilt for sure, in this last year where Black Lives Matter finally blossomed all over mainstream media, into white arenas formerly silent, into signs on porches, and whether sincere or not (from those who are newly acknowledging this slogan) has, in some ways, pushed forward civil rights. How will we further prison abolition work? How will we support Black mothers? How will we better listen to their leadership to transform this world? How will we hold all the grieving mothers? (These are personal questions to ask oneself and discuss with multiple answers all around us, if the commitment is real.) I think so many treatises could be written if not also for so much tiredness. A world of peace means racial justice and that is the only way.

I personally am so bad at loss. I haven't a clue what to say. I think I'm so bad at so many things, and so I turn to writing, to reading, to books, to zines. This is my book and zine review list on this important topic, of child loss and grief. It's not in any order, and not all the publications are on child loss, and these are just the ones I came across, that touched me, as grief is something I need to know how to work through as well, having lost my only sibling almost three years ago.

THE MOURNING ON MOTHER'S DAY BOOK & ZINE LIST:

[FULL ESSAY HERE: <http://hipmamazine.com/china-martens-mourning-on-mothers-day/>]

In isolation this last year, I feel I have gotten physically and mentally weaker, yet emotionally even more sensitive. It's been a year of death notices and sudden news while disconnected from seeing people in the flesh. How can this not be perhaps the hardest Mother's Day, a holiday that often rubs people the wrong way, as mother is a charged word and not the same for everyone. And for some friends, this will be their first Mother's Day without their children or parent living. I hope this list of extraordinary books and zines can contribute something worthwhile to your day.