



[June 17, 2002](#)

## **After the Brutal Murder of Maria Teresa Macias By Her Husband, Her Groundbreaking Case Challenges Law Enforcement's Right to Ignore Domestic Violence with Impunity**

For months, 36-year-old Maria Teresa Macias begged sheriff's deputies in the rural town of Sonoma, California for protection from her estranged husband, Avelino Macias. He had been stalking, threatening, and beating Teresa Macias for years. For years, she had taken out restraining orders against him. She had made more than 20 calls to the county sheriff reporting his violence and sexual assaults. But Avelino Macias was never cited or arrested.

On April 15, 1996, Avelino appeared again at the house where Maria Macias lived with her mother. Maria told her mother, "Go inside. You know what you have to do." Her mother, Sara Rubio Hernandez, dialed 911 but hung up when she heard a gunshot outside. She rushed to lock the door but not before Avelino shot her twice in the legs. When police arrived, they found Avelino slumped across his wife's lifeless body, both of them shot through the head.

Three days after Avelino killed his wife and turned the gun on himself, the local newspaper ran an article buried on the inside pages, "Cops Wrap Up Investigation." That was intended to be the last anyone ever heard of Teresa Macias. But instead, six years later, her murder has become a touchstone case in the fight to end violence against women.

Today is the opening day of a landmark \$15 million civil rights lawsuit brought by the family of Maria Teresa Macias against then-Sheriff of Sonoma County, Mark Ihde. The case puts the Sheriff's Department on trial for what they say is law enforcement's denial of equal protection to women.

Today we are going to look at a kind of domestic terrorism that has gone ignored by law enforcement for years. Nationwide, up to 40% of calls to police are related to domestic violence. 40% of all emergency room visits by women are related to domestic violence. 1.5 million women are raped or physically assaulted by an intimate partner in the US.

60% of women killed in California in 1998 were murdered by a spouse, ex-boyfriend or acquaintance.

Today, we will look at the case of Macias with two women's rights advocates and case investigators. *Democracy Now!* repeatedly called the lawyer for the county, but our calls were not returned.

We begin with two 911 calls Macias made to police. The calls are hard to make out. In the first, the responding deputy Mark Lopez refuses to take her reports of restraining order violations as she is being stalked.

Tape:

- Maria Teresa Macias 9-11 calls to police

Guest:

- **Tanya Brannan**, investigator and advocate with Purple Berets, a grassroots group that provides help and counseling for sexual assault and domestic violence victims

Contact:

- [www.purpleberets.org](http://www.purpleberets.org)

Guest:

- **Marie De Santis**, investigator and advocate with the Women's Justice Center, an advocacy organization for victims of rape, domestic violence, and child abuse

Contact:

- [www.justicewomen.org](http://www.justicewomen.org)



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