

Standing against an unjust system: Women's freedom requires a revolution by the grassroots

Cheers for all the activists gathered in Jacksonville to raise their voices to demand justice for Marissa Alexander and end mass incarceration. We echo the words of civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer in saying we're "sick and tired of being sick and tired, and we want a change!" Marissa Alexander's case shows why fundamental change is desperately needed.

A domestic violence survivor, Marissa faces a possible 60-year sentence for firing a warning shot to defend herself. She was twice denied a Stand Your Ground defense, in part because the judge did not think she was afraid for her life. This decision reflects tremendous bigotry. Racist stereotypes paint Black women as criminal, aggressive and unworthy, causing many judges and jurors to reject their pleas of self-defense.

As a founding member of the Free Marissa Now campaign, Radical Women was part of the national mobilization that won a new trial for Marissa and her release on bond. We are in Jacksonville to say Black people's lives matter, domestic violence survivors matter, and women have a fundamental right to defend themselves.

Frontlines of the war on women

The criminalization of Marissa reflects a broad assault on women. Democratic and Republican politicians are slashing crucial social services, leading to hunger, homelessness,

and death. Women's control over their own bodies is being decimated — a recent outrage is the Supreme Court ruling that some employers can deny women birth control coverage. Meanwhile, women prisoners and immigrant mothers are torn from their children.

Another woman who is fighting back and deserving of support is Nestora Salgado, an indigenous leader and political prisoner in Mexico. A naturalized U.S. citizen, Salgado



Street action in Harlem, September 2013

frequently visited her hometown of Olinalá, Guerrero to bring material aid. Eventually she was elected coordinator of an indigenous community police force, a legal and common measure of self-defense in the region. Nestora led the community in addressing domestic violence, encouraging women to defend themselves, and

mobilizing against government corruption and organized crime. Local officials retaliated by arresting her on trumped-up charges, denying her legal representation, and holding her in inhumane conditions.

Just as it will take massive pressure to win justice for Marissa, Nestora's freedom also depends on grassroots mobilization. The Libertad para Nestora/Free Nestora Salgado campaign has garnered over 120 endorsements and is planning an International Day of Action on August 21, the one-year anniversary of her arrest. To get involved, visit freenestora.org.

Rip out the roots of racism & sexism

Changing society so not one more woman is jailed for defending her life or her community means tackling the system that dehumanizes, harasses and impoverishes communities of color, women, LGBT people, and poor and working-class whites.

The fundamental issue is not just the Republican Party or a few officials who need to be ousted — such as Florida's notorious State Attorney Angela Corey. The problem is the capitalist economic system that is based on the exploitation of the majority—the working class—to make massive profits for a few. Women are viewed as a man's private property to provide free labor in the home and, hence, cheap labor on the job. Racism generates super-profits by justifying job discrimination and lower wages for women and men of color.

With the world economy disintegrating, governments and corporations are hunting for ways to increase profits and weaken resistance. They are rolling back workers' rights, smashing civil liberties, and waging endless wars.

One of the fastest-growing industries is the prison industrial complex. Wall Street investors make big bucks off the mass incarceration of Blacks, Latinos, poor people and undocumented immigrants. In 2011, the two largest private prison companies raked in over \$3.3 billion. The toxic poverty-to-prison pipeline delivers youth, primarily of color, directly to jail.

Setting our minds on freedom

There are much more humane and rational ways to organize society. To start, we must replace the profit system with a socialist framework, where human needs are the highest priority. As former political prisoner and Black Panther Assata Shakur wrote, "Anything that has any kind of value is made, mined, grown, produced, and processed by working people. So why shouldn't working people collectively own that wealth? Why shouldn't working people own and control their own resources?"

Winning a society with true justice for all

will take breaking with the Republican and Democratic parties. The Republican Party openly represents privileged and reactionary interests. But the Democratic Party establishment also fundamentally represents the capitalist system, which is why all efforts to get the party to "grow a backbone" have failed.

It's time to build a fighting grassroots feminist movement that prioritizes the needs of the most oppressed. It must be open to all who support its goals, democratic, and willing to debate ideas and strategies. It must fight beside those most in need — domestic violence survivors, single moms, immigrants, disenfranchised youth, transgender people of color. To win, this movement must aim for the revolutionary transformation that is women's only hope for real liberation. Our foremothers in the Southern freedom struggle laid their lives on the line to change the world. We owe it to them and to ourselves to take the change to the next level — socialism.

**Free Marissa Alexander — drop all charges!
Self-defense is not a crime.**

Increase services for everyone fleeing domestic violence, regardless of gender, sexual orientation or immigration status.

Free Nestora Salgado and all political prisoners.

End racial profiling, police violence and mandatory minimum sentencing.

Fund education, jobs, and social services by ending U.S. wars and eliminating corporate welfare and handouts to the rich.



Issued by: **Radical Women**

113 West 128th St., New York, NY 10027
212-222-0633 • nycradicalwomen@nyct.net

www.RadicalWomen.org