

July 15, 2013

Statement from the Free Marissa Now Campaign

The political climate created by the George Zimmerman trial has shed light on the opaque imaginations of what some think is a post-racial nation. We are heartbroken for Trayvon Martin's family, who have demonstrated brave resolve throughout this ordeal and we hold them in our thoughts as we move forward. We send strength to the family of Jordan Davis, another unarmed Black male Florida teen murdered by a white male who claimed Stand Your Ground, and many others who are gearing up for their journey through these same halls of due process. As long as the Florida justice system has a double standard for identifying criminal behavior, it breaches our core right to safety.



The Zimmerman case is about the freedom to safely walk the streets without being profiled and pursued as a criminal based on reemerging Jim Crow codes, especially in the south. Paradoxically, this trial has been juxtaposed to the Marissa Alexander case; a black woman who stood her ground in her home to defend herself from domestic violence and was consequently sentenced to twenty years in prison when no one was physically injured by her actions. The dramatically different outcomes of these cases is a lesson in how the criminal justice system routinely fails to support black people who defend themselves from violence on the streets, in their homes, and from institutions.

The Free Marissa Now Campaign is organizing to win freedom for Marissa Alexander, a proud African American mother of three with an MBA and a survivor of domestic violence. In August 2010, Marissa fired a single warning shot in the ceiling to halt her abusive partner during a life-threatening beating in her home. Marissa's husband, who has previously landed Marissa in the hospital after beating her, admitted in a sworn statement that he was the aggressor, threatened her life and was so enraged that he did not know what he would do. Despite the fact that Marissa caused no injuries and has

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no previous criminal record, and despite the fact that Florida's self-defense law includes the right to Stand Your Ground, she was arrested by Jacksonville police, charged with aggravated assault, and sentenced to twenty years in the Florida criminal correctional system.

We must take a stand against the criminalization of all survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Marissa's case is one of many that shows us how Black women and other marginalized people are especially likely to be criminalized, prosecuted, and incarcerated while trying to navigate and survive the conditions of violence in their lives. Freeing Marissa is a social justice action against intimate partner and systemic violence against all women, and an urgent call for the end of mass incarceration and support for truly transformative solutions to violence.

The Free Marissa Now Campaign is calling for the grassroots community to stand your ground about your right to give voice to this situation and not be complacent. Our hope was to see justice done for the death of young Brother Trayvon Martin, who couldn't tell his side of the story, and for his family. We grieve deeply with them and for others whose lives have been impacted by violence with no opportunity for redress. We will continue to support survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault to defend themselves without fear of criminalization and to tell their stories. We see this as another defining moment for racial and gender justice that comes on the heels of the rollback in voting rights.

There is justifiable cause for rage and protest of the violence of racism embedded in the Florida criminal justice system. This is not the time to shut down but show up and turn rage into resistance through organized and peaceful protests. We need to build a movement to stop racist murder and race, sex and class bias in the courts. We encourage people to use their resources to organize and voices to speak truth to power to create change.

We are standing our ground for peace and justice. We encourage organizers and survivors to share in our collective power and take action to Free Marissa Alexander!

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Join the international **Free Marissa Now** campaign online at [facebook.com/freemariissanow](https://www.facebook.com/freemariissanow) and [freemariissanow.tumblr.com](https://www.tumblr.com/freemariissanow).
Contact the campaign at freemariissanow@gmail.com

Donate to Marissa Alexander's legal defense fund at www.justice4marissa.com

Sign the petition at <http://www.change.org/petitions/florida-governor-rick-scott-free-marissa-alexander>

More ways to take action: <http://freemariissanow.tumblr.com/action>