



Fact Sheet

Justice for MARISSA ALEXANDER

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www.justice4marissa.com

Write to Marissa Alexander

Marissa Alexander
c/o P. O. Box 23872
Jacksonville, FL 32257

Partial list of endorsers

African-American/Black Women's Cultural Alliance
Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective
California Coalition for Women Prisoners
Community Based DV Support Group
Comunidad Liberación/Liberation Community
Critical Resistance
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin
FaithTrust Institute
Families Against Mandatory Minimums
Florida New Majority
Freedom Socialist Party
Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Green Party of Seattle
HAVEN of Tioga County Pennsylvania
Idle No More, Minneapolis/St. Paul
INCITE!
Justice for My Sister Collective
Justice for Trayvon Martin Los Angeles
Justice Now!
Justice Works
LAGAI - Queer Insurrection
LEMS Bookstore, Seattle
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Conference of Black Lawyers
National Congress of Black Women
New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women
New Jim Crow Movement
One in Three Women
Organized Workers for Labor Solidarity (OWLS)
People's Organization for Progress
Radical Women
San Francisco Women Against Rape
Seattle Women In Black
Sisters Empowerment Network, Inc.
Southern Freedom Movement
Toronto Activists for Social Change
VT Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
Voice of the Ex-Offender
WV Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Women Helping Others Resist Exploitation & Sexism
Women's Health & Justice Initiative
Women With A Vision, Inc.

Stop the legal lynching by Florida's mandatory minimum sentencing laws of an African American domestic violence survivor.

Who is Marissa Alexander?

Marissa Alexander, an African American mother from Jacksonville, Florida, was sentenced to 20 years in prison on May 11, 2012 for firing a warning shot to halt an attack by her abusive husband, Rico Gray. Alexander had no prior arrests, was licensed to carry a gun, and had a restraining order against her husband. No one was injured by her action. She was denied a self-defense plea under Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law. Her outrageous sentence is a result of Florida's mandatory minimum sentencing law and of racist/sexist stereotypes that paint African American women as aggressors and deny sympathy to women who stand up to their abusers.

At the time of the incident in August 2010, Marissa Alexander was 31 years old, employed at a software firm, with two 9-year-old twins and a nine-day-old daughter. She had been repeatedly abused by her husband, with injuries that put her in the hospital. Alexander had moved out of the house she shared with Gray, but returned to retrieve some belongings, believing Gray was not present.

Unfortunately, Gray was home with his two young sons. He attacked Alexander, choked her and threw her against the wall. Alexander tried to get away, but was trapped in the garage. She retrieved a gun for protection. Gray said he was going to kill her and charged at her. She fired one shot in an upward direction. Though no one was hurt, Alexander was charged with three counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. A Florida appeals court overturned her conviction in September 2013 due to a fundamental error by the prosecution. In November 2013, Alexander was released on bond until her new trial begins at the end of March 2014. She is under house detention.

Case websites

Updates and discussion from the national campaign

www.facebook.com/FreeMarissaNow

Information and downloadable resources

freemarissanow.tumblr.com/action

Website and donation links - managed by Marissa's family

www.justice4marissa.com

Updates and information from the Seattle-based committee

www.facebook.com/PacificNorthwestAllianceToFreeMarissaAlexander

Information

"You call this justice? Not if it's the victim who goes to prison"

www.miamiherald.com/2012/05/28/2821403/you-call-this-justice-not-if-its.html

"Marissa Alexander is Free but Not Yet in the Clear"

<http://thegrio.com/2013/12/02/marissa-alexander-is-free-but-not-yet-in-the-clear/>

"To the woman who put Marissa Alexander in jail: Open letter by Melissa Harris-Perry,"

<http://www.msnbc.com/melissa-harris-perry/the-woman-who-jailed-marissa-alexander>

"Radical Women denounces race and sex bias in Marissa Alexander case"

www.radicalwomen.org/MarissaAlexander.shtml



How have the laws been used unfairly in this case?

Rico Gray initially admitted in a sworn statement, "The way I was with women...they never knew what I was thinking or what I might do. Hit them, push them. ...I honestly think [Marissa] just didn't want me to put my hands on her anymore, so she did what she feel like she have to do to make sure she wouldn't get hurt, you know. ...The gun was never actually pointed at me."

Despite this, a judge denied Alexander's plea that she was "standing her ground" under a Florida law that supposedly protects people acting in self-defense. This law was infamously used to shield the killer of Black teenager Trayvon Martin until a national movement forced an arrest. As long as the law is on the books, it should not be used in a discriminatory fashion.

Mandatory minimum sentences are unconstitutional in the federal courts. But Florida's harsh "10-20-Life" law requires that people who commit a crime in which a gun is fired are given a mandatory 20 year sentence. The laws have been massively used against Black youth. Judges have no sentencing discretion based on the specifics of the case. Instead, prosecutors have all the power in determining the charges and the associated sentences.

Other people in Florida have also been wrongly sentenced and the system is beginning to be challenged. Recently, a 65-year-old man serving 20 years in a case very similar to Marissa Alexander's had his sentence reversed. This must also happen in the Alexander case.

What can people can do to free Marissa Alexander?

Get connected to the national Free Marissa Now campaign or local supporters. Organize actions in defense of Marissa Alexander and all victims of domestic violence.

Call on civil rights organizations, feminists, anti-domestic violence advocates, churches, and prisoner rights groups to add their support.

Donate to help with Marissa Alexander's legal expenses at <http://www.justice4marissa.com/>

Publicize the case to the press and on social media. Write letters to public officials and newspapers demanding freedom for Marissa Alexander and an end to mandatory minimums.

Visit tinyurl.com/freemarissatakeaction for more ideas!

To get involved, contact FreeMarissaNow@gmail.com. Visit facebook.com/FreeMarissaNow and freemarissanow.tumblr.com

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