

BUILDING A MOVEMENT TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS AND WOMEN

Build a Movement 201: An Intersectional Movement

#BlackLivesMatter Statement

As movement leaders, activists, and community organizers deeply dedicated to ending gender based violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, state-sanctioned systemic violence and community violence, we are joining voices to express our collective outrage at the failure of accountability for the deaths of Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice and many others killed at the hands of police. Our hearts are with their families and communities, from whom they have been taken far too soon. We write to uplift the names and lost lives of black cisgender and transgender women – including Tanisha Anderson, Islan Nettles, and 7-year-old Aiyana StanleyJones. These women and girls, just a few of many who are also killed by police or other representatives of the state, leave behind bereaved children, parents, friends, and community. **Black lives matter.**

We know that violence in the street is linked to violence in the home, in the school, in the shops, in the military. We know that systems of domination and violence must be upended together and that where Black lives are denigrated, exploited, violated and detained by the state with impunity there can be no true safety and justice for the documented and undocumented women and girls in our communities. The same systems and institutions that failed Mike Brown and Eric Garner have also failed Marissa Alexander, a survivor of domestic violence who harmed no one, yet continues to serve time in prison. **Black lives matter.**

Together we add our voices to the chorus of hundreds of thousands in our country, and millions around the world to assert: our lives and our liberation are connected and inextricable. Black women and girls, alongside the black men and boys in their communities, deserve safety, security and visibility. **Black lives matter.**

We, women and men of the movement to end violence, write to lift up the fact that it has been and continues to be the work of black women leaders who make these connections, started and lead the movement to assert that “Black Lives Matter.” They are the ones who have refused to let the world sleep. These are the leaders that remind us that justice will never be won; it must be fought for. We stand with these leaders and ask you to join us in advancing inclusive racial and gender justice movements now. **Black lives matter.**

Justice for Trayvon Martin & Marissa Alexander Statement

We write today with broken hearts and tenacious resolve in the wake of the not-guilty verdict in the George Zimmerman murder trial of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed teenager gunned down on his way home from the store. We first want to reach out to Trayvon's family and loved ones and offer our deepest condolences. No one should ever have to go through what you have endured. We hope that in the midst of your incalculable grief that you might find a measure of comfort in knowing that you are not alone in your horror, heartbreak or relentless pursuit of justice.

This tragedy is a clarion call for a reinvigorated movement to end violence in our homes and our communities. Because Trayvon Martin's senseless murder has captured our collective consciousness, we join you, our colleagues and friends to change our national conversation, sharpen our goals, work across movements and say aloud: **ENOUGH**. Enough violence aimed at youth of color, women, LGBTQ identified and men of color. Enough devaluing of Black and brown communities. Enough of the regressive laws that place the burden on the victim to prove the crime. Enough silence from our leaders and lawmakers on the unyielding scourge of race and gender-based violence that occurs in homes and on our neighborhood streets each day.

As allies in the movement to end violence against girls and women, we find it our responsibility to acknowledge the social and political implications of the George Zimmerman trial and the spotlight it has shone on the issues of violence, race, gender and over policing of communities of color. We have fought collectively as our rights have been under attack by the appalling Supreme Court ruling on the Voting Rights Act, Affirmative Action, Native Sovereignty, and by policy makers on Immigration Reform, Women's Reproductive Health and the numerous and ongoing attacks on our human rights in America.

It is incumbent upon us to name the intersections at which the most vulnerable members of our communities live and work. It is how we will create a world that is safe, loving and respectful of everyone's inherent human dignity.

We call for systemic change in our criminal justice system. The Zimmerman verdict has illuminated several fault lines in our legal system. We believe that our justice system must provide equal protection under the laws to everyone regardless of race or ethnicity. Under its purview, we call for the Department of Justice to thoroughly examine whether the Martin shooting was a federal civil rights violation or a hate crime. Additionally, we ask for legislation to proactively address the well-documented problem of racial profiling and urge Congress to take up the End Racial Profiling Act and examine the troubling impacts of Stand Your Ground Laws throughout the country.

Additionally, we call for a renewed commitment from local, state and federal legislatures to address violence against girls and women. Before his encounter with Trayvon Martin, George Zimmerman was repeatedly accused of violence against girls and women in his life. During the investigation, Zimmerman's cousin told investigators that Zimmerman sexually molested her from age 6 to 16. Though Zimmerman's attorneys were successfully able to argue this part of his history was inadmissible or irrelevant to his murder trial, we know that such violence serves an indicator of future violence.

In addition, police records indicate that Zimmerman's former fiancé sought a restraining order against him because of domestic violence. Zimmerman's defense against these particular accusations mirrors exactly the argument his attorneys made in regards to the murder of Trayvon Martin: follow and confront the other person, and argue afterward that they were the original threat, the original aggressor. This story is not unique to George Zimmerman; it parallels the challenge we face in ending domestic and intimate partner violence throughout the country. The burden of proof, heavy and almost unbearable, too often, falls on the woman, the girl, the survivor or victim. Take for example the recent conviction in Florida of domestic violence victim, Marissa Alexander. In 2010 Alexander, a young African-American mother, fired a warning shot to deter her husband, who was threatening her. The Florida court sentenced Marissa Alexander to twenty years in prison, despite her claim of self-defense under the same "stand your ground" law invoked by George Zimmerman. Nevertheless, the jury found her guilty of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

We join together with communities across the country to take action to end the race and gender based violence in our lives and on our streets. Many things could have happened to intervene, stop and prevent Zimmerman's violence and the violence of Alexander's husband before it led to problematic and ineffective state involvement. Right now we can – as family, friends and neighbors:

- 1.** Listen, believe and support those experiencing violence and support those doing harm to change their behavior.
- 2.** Connect with one another to have the courageous conversations about the violence that happens in public and private spaces and join the many communities across the country working together to address poverty, racial inequities, and the violence in their communities.
- 3.** Support the leadership and activism of black and brown youth as they help us understand their experience of racial inequities and a legal system that does not keep them safe. Together we must create a just system for all people.

Those of us working on gender-based violence are working for the same thing as those who fight violence in our most marginalized communities. Until we make this connection and work together in strategic alliance, our power will remain fractured and our vision incomplete. We, leaders in the movement to end violence in our homes and on our streets, join you leaders as we stand together to fight injustice, even in the face of resistance. We will move forward together in common cause: the ability to live free from violence, safe and valued, and where everyone can reach their full potential.

Move to End Violence

As an anti-violence [activist, organization, movement], #blacklivesmatter because...

Envision: If #blacklivesmatter was seen as anti-violence issue, what would the movement do differently? What changes and shifts does the movement need to make (strategies/approaches)? What would our

Applied Practice: How can you (or have you) brought #blacklivesmatter home (within your family, community, and work)? What kind of actions can you integrate back into your personal and professional life? What do you foresee as potential barriers to your action?
