

Fighting Intersectional Injustice

On August 18, 2006, seven young African American lesbians traveled to New York City from their homes in Newark for a regular night out. When walking down the street, a male bystander sexually propositioned one of the women. After refusing to take no for an answer, he physically assaulted them. The women tried to defend themselves, and a fight broke out. The women were charged with Gang Assault in the 2nd degree, a Class C Felony with a mandatory minimum of 3.5 years. Patreese Johnson was additionally charged with 1st Degree Assault. Three of the women accepted plea offers. On June 14th, 2007 Venice Brown (19), Terrain Dandridge (20), Patreese Johnson (20), and Renata Hill (24) received sentences ranging from 3 1/2 to 11 years in prison.



Street Harassment

Dwayne Buckle, who attacked the women, sexually propositioned Patreese and followed them down the street, insulting and threatening them: “I’ll f**k you straight, sweetheart!” In 2005, Sakia Gunn, a 15 year old black lesbian from Newark was stabbed to death on a street corner after rejecting the advances of two men.

Gentrification

Imani Henry explains in “Lesbians sentenced for self-defense”: “For trans people and LGBT youth of color, who statistically experience higher amounts of bigoted violence, the impact of the gentrification [in Greenwich Village] has been severe. As their once-safe haven is encroached on by real estate developers, the new white and majority heterosexual residents of the West Village then call in the state to brutalize them.” (*Workers World*, 6/21/07)

Pathologizing Women of Color

According to the New York Times, “Justice Edward J. McLaughlin of State Supreme Court in Manhattan, showed little sympathy for the women’s contention that taunts from the filmmaker, Dwayne Buckle, had left them no choice but to defend themselves.” He quoted the nursery rhyme, “Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me.” (6/15/07)

Legal Lynching

Lynching has been used to repress communities and normalize violence against women of color. Charges such as “Gang Assault” with mandatory minimum jail sentences function in the same way. Judges and State’s Attornies use these laws discriminately to inscribe deviancy onto particular people. Thus, it comes as no surprise that women of color continue to be the fastest growing prison population. (www.sentencingproject.org)

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What You Can Do To Bring Venice, Terrain, Patreese and Renata Home:

1. Urge Governor David Paterson to grant clemency to the four women remaining in prison. Visit <http://www.justice4nj4.com> for a sample letter.

Address Letters to:
David A. Paterson
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Call the Governor's Office:
1-518-474-8390

2. Contact the Four

Send a card, a letter or book. Your support matters to these women.

Patreese Johnson #07-G-0635
Bedford Hills Correctional Facility
P.O. Box 1000
Bedford Hills, NY 10507

Renata Hill #07-G-0636
Building 112A2
Bedford Hills Correctional Facility
P.O. Box 1000
Bedford Hills, NY 10507

Terrain Dandridge #07-G-0637 and Venice Brown #07-G-0640
Albion Correctional Facility
3595 State School Road
Albion, NY 14411-939

3. Organize in Your Community

Visit the following websites for more information and info on how to get involved. Or email freenj4@yahoo.com for specific questions about how to get involved.

Visit: <http://freenj4.wordpress.com/>

4. Educate Yourself

Check out the following books and media about the Prison Industrial Complex

Are Prisons Obsolete? by Angela Davis

Color of Violence: the INCITE! Anthology by INCITE!

visit <http://www.prisonradio.org/> to listen to radio essays from prison

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