



PRESS RELEASE — MARCH 3, 2022
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**UCLA AND SURVIVED & PUNISHED JOINT REPORT FINDS COURTS PUNISH
SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

VIRTUAL EVENT TO LAUNCH REPORT

MEDIA CONTACT:

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WHAT: An event to launch *Defending Self-Defense*, a community-based, survivor-centered research report that identifies key patterns in the criminalization of self-defense and recommendations to transform the conditions of criminalized survival.

WHO:

- **Mariame Kaba**, Co-Founder, Survived & Punished
- **Colby Lenz**, CSW Deputy Director of Policy and Community Research, UCLA; Defending Self-Defense Research Team
- **Alisa Bierria**, Co-Founder, Survived & Punished; Assistant Professor, Gender Studies, UCLA; Defending Self-Defense Research Team
- **Sydney Moon**, Defending Self-Defense Research Team
- **Liyah Birru**, Survivor Advisory Council
- **Robbie Hall**, Survivor Advisory Council
- **Wendy Howard**, Survivor Advisory Council
- **Roshawn Knight**, Survivor Advisory Council
- **Ky Peterson**, Survivor Advisory Council
- **Anastazia Schmid**, Survivor Advisory Council
- **Grace Kyungwon Hong**, host; Director, UCLA Center for the Study of Women

WHEN & WHERE:

LOS ANGELES, March 3, 2022, 3:00–4:30 p.m. PST on Zoom. [Register online.](#)

UCLA's Center for the Study of Women (CSW) and the community-based organization Survived & Punished will launch the groundbreaking research report *Defending Self-Defense*, which examines the abuse-to-prison pipeline for survivors of domestic and sexual violence who are

prosecuted when they act in self-defense. The report shares research findings and recommendations from interviews with survivor defendants, including the conditions of gender-based violence which led them to act in self-defense, reasons why they were targeted for prosecution despite acting in self-defense, and their experiences with attorneys, police, courts, and systems of incarceration. The report also analyzes national trends in self-defense law and legal defense outcomes for survivor defendants.

The panel of speakers will feature members of the Survivor Advisory Council, an advisory group of survivor defendants who acted in self-defense and who contributed to the findings of this report. These speakers will be joined by the research team.

Dr. Alisa Bierria, Assistant Professor of Gender Studies at UCLA, co-led the research team. She states: "We've heard their names. Cyntoia Brown, Marissa Alexander, Cece McDonald, Nikki Addimondo, and so many more survivors of sexual and domestic violence who acted in self-defense, only to be punished by the US legal system. Again and again, courts have told survivors that they have only two options: risk their lives or lose their freedom. This report foregrounds survivors' voices—not only their experiences of multiple forms of violence, but their insights on what is needed to support the lives of all survivors of gender-based violence. Survivors' lives are essential and it's time we listened to them."

Survivor Liyah Birru said, "I have been a victim of crime and abuse, but I have also been doubly, triply criminalized by the state and federal government. I acted to save my own life and instead of getting crisis support or any kind of services, I was arrested and sentenced to prison for many years and then further imprisoned in ICE detention. This research, including our recommendations for supporting survivors, is incredibly important to me."

CSW Director Grace Kyungwon Hong said "*Defending Self-Defense* exemplifies the kind of community-based research that we prioritize at CSW and highlights the importance of feminist frameworks for critiquing criminalization and incarceration."

This event is produced by the UCLA Center for the Study of Women (CSW), Project NIA, and Survived & Punished, and co-sponsored by the Criminal Justice Program, the Critical Race Studies Program, and the Williams Institute, all at UCLA School of Law, and the UCLA Department of Gender Studies.

The [UCLA Center for the Study of Women](#) is an internationally recognized center for research on gender, sexuality, and women's issues and the first organized research unit of its kind in the University of California system. Its mission is to work towards a world in which education and scholarship are tools for social justice feminism, improving the lives of people of all genders.

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