

My name is Keoni Young. I am 26 years old, and I am currently incarcerated in Columbia Rivers Correctional Institute. When I was 21, I was charged with Assault II, a Measure 11 crime with a 70-month minimum sentence. I was convicted by a non-unanimous jury verdict of 10-2. The conviction resulted from an incident when I was 20 years old involving my abusive ex-girlfriend, whom I was living with at the time. She was 13 years older than me, 50 pounds heavier and she was violent. She had attacked me before. Once, she even pushed me down the stairs in front of my cousin, who testified about the incident at trial. My girlfriend's ex got a restraining order against her in 2012, because he said she was "mentally unstable" and "attacks people like a wild dog." He was subpoenaed for trial, but he refused to testify because he was scared of my girlfriend. I believe I acted in self-defense, but the jury voted to convict me 10-2.

I have now served 69 months of my sentence, and I am looking forward to my release. I remember I was in the law library when I heard about the Supreme Court's decision in *Ramos*. I was ecstatic when I found out that the Supreme Court ruled that a non-unanimous jury conviction violated the constitution. I hoped the decision would allow me to be released early, but I am grateful to have the opportunity to overturn my non-unanimous conviction. For me, the decision represents an opportunity to educate under-privileged communities, which I hope will prevent other young victims of domestic abuse from making the same mistakes I did.

Before I was convicted, I was working hard to improve my life and the lives of my two minor daughters. I took out student loans so that I could attend community college and become a massage therapist. Being unconstitutionally convicted destroyed my dream of becoming a massage therapist unless I am successful in overturning my conviction. I still have to pay off my outstanding student loans when I leave prison and my driver's license has been suspended. Even though I completed a construction program in prison, it will be hard to get a job when I am released.

Words cannot describe the trauma and detriment being convicted and incarcerated for 69-months has had on me and on my family. Not only has it impacted my future career goals and employment prospects, but it has robbed me of the opportunity to have a relationship with my biological daughter, with whom I have no contact. It has strained my relationship with my step-daughter who I can only talk to once a week if her guardian has time to schedule a call. I am grateful I now have these weekly calls because there was an entire year when I was unable to schedule a single call with her. Moving forward, I want to create a stable environment to raise my children so that they can look forward to a better life. I will have to work on myself before I can help others, but it is a goal of mine to be a someone that people can come to when they need help.

At this point my greatest fear is being let down by the system again. It is traumatizing for me and my family. When my grandmother got sick, I was beside myself with worry, but I could not visit her. All I could do was wait for updates from my family. I have missed time with my daughters I can never get back. It is an impossible situation. At this point if I go back to trial, I will have to take any deal that is offered, because I cannot afford to risk being let down again.

There is no way to reclaim the last 69 months of my life. However, I hope the legislature acts to support those of us who have lost our freedom and livelihoods by passing Senate Bill 1511, and by creating programs for further education.