

PRESS ADVISORY – JULY 31, 2009

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Justice for Jason Re-Emerges August 6 for Public Demonstration Against Prosecution's Secrecy

Jason Vassell Status Hearing on August 6

On August 6, 2 PM, supporters of Jason Vassell will be gathering outside the Hampshire County Courthouse in Northampton to continue protesting Jason's racist prosecution. Pickets bearing the slogan "Justice for Jason" will be distributed by organizers of the Justice for Jason grassroots campaign, and supporters will march with the pickets along Gothic Street and Main Street.

The hearing taking place on August 6 is the first such hearing in Jason's case in the past few months. Jason's supporters are well known for showing up *en masse* at Jason's hearings to demonstrate their passionate commitment to the cause of justice, and to continue raising awareness about Jason's selective prosecution based on race.

The hearing itself is a status conference on an appeal filed in March by deputy first assistant district attorney Elizabeth Dunphy-Farris to a previous ruling by Judge Judd Carhart on a discovery motion filed by Jason's attorneys.

In February 2009, Judge Carhart granted Jason access "All police reports, witness statements and Grand Jury minutes in the Case of Commonwealth v. Damien Vennell", as well as "Any and all documentation showing the number of cases charged in Hampshire County, in the last five years, of assault and battery, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, or aggravated assault and battery with a dangerous weapon where the accused and named victim(s) were of different racial backgrounds" and "Any and all documentation concerning the number of cases reported to the Northwestern District Attorney in the last five years of civil rights violations or hate crimes, including where no formal charges resulted".¹

Dunphy-Farris's appeal first went to Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Justice Judith Cowin. After a phone conference with Dunphy-Farris and Jason's lawyers, Justice Cowin remanded the appeal back to Judge Carhart to "issue further findings."²

Reporter's Notes

1. Taken directly from Memorandum and Order on the Defendant's Motion for Discovery, Hampshire, §., Superior Court Criminal Action No. 08-56
2. Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts website, http://www.mass.gov/judicialcourts/1/appellatecourts.org/display_docket.php?dno=SJ-2009-0231