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## **SUPREME COURT TO HEAR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASE**

To the surprise of most legal observers, the U.S. Supreme Court announced in January that it will hear the case of a Dallas woman who contends that pressure from her violent boyfriend caused her to purchase guns illegally.

Keshia Cherie Ashford Dixon alleges that, in 2003, she bought seven guns at two Dallas gun shows because she feared that her boyfriend would kill her and her two daughters if she did not. A felon, her boyfriend could not purchase the guns himself. Dixon was able to buy the guns only after providing an incorrect address and falsely claiming that she was not facing criminal charges; this was untrue, as she had been arrested and was under indictment for a check-cashing “scheme” at the time.

Dixon was convicted of lying to buy a firearm and receiving guns while under indictment, and sent to prison.

She appealed, claiming that she was a victim of battered women’s syndrome whose rights were violated when the judge in the case would not allow jurors to consider expert testimony on the effects of domestic violence.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against her. Dixon then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, filing a “pauper” appeal, meaning the Supreme Court waived the costs of filing the case because she could not afford to pay them.

The Bush Administration urged the Supreme Court not to consider Dixon’s case, but the Justices have chosen to hear it. They will consider whether a defendant must prove that she or he was under duress, or whether it is the responsibility of the prosecution to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that a defendant was *not* under duress.

Dixon's attorney, J. Craig Jett, told the *Dallas Morning News* that he is disappointed that the Supreme Court will not address the question of whether expert testimony should be allowed in cases involving women who experience battered women's syndrome. "It's really a legal issue, unfortunately, and that's too bad because they had the opportunity to really make a statement about the law and how the law is going to treat what it is to be battered," he said.

Dixon completed her sentence and left her abusive boyfriend, and today is supporting her family – but the case may affect other women who face similar circumstances in the future.

Oral arguments in *Dixon v. United States* are scheduled for April, with a ruling likely a few months later.