

A break for Buju?

Dancehall/Reggae legend, Buju Banton might have a break finally go his way in his ongoing drug case as a juror is alleged of having violated a court order during his trial in February 2011.

As hope dwindles away for embattled Dancehall/Reggae superstar, Buju Banton, the prominent singjay could finally catch a break in his ongoing drug case, thanks to a juror. Buju Banton is currently serving a 10-year sentence on drug-related charges and awaits sentencing on a gun charge in the matter on October 30. Constant appeals made on the artiste's behalf have been shut down by the United States judicial system as Buju languishes in a Tampa-based federal facility, causing his fans worldwide to lose hope. However, Buju's seemingly unsuccessful campaign for freedom may have one more shot at being fruitful as reports have suggested that a juror in the entertainer's drug trial last February may have compromised the eventual outcome of his case. The New Times Broward - Palm Beach published an interview on Thursday that they conducted with Terri Wright, one of the jurors in said trial, who admits that she researched aspects of Buju Banton's case to gauge a greater understanding of the matter before deliberation began. "I would get in the car, just write my notes down so I could remember, and I would come home and do the research," Wright's quoted as saying. "They give you the instructions not to go online and, you know, make an opinion. I tried to follow that as close as possible...I don't think what I found out would have changed how I thought."

Wright even cited the Pinkerton Rule, a law that the federal government used to slap a gun charge on Buju Banton despite the fact he never possessed or had any connection to a firearm. Though Wright's intentions seemed in good faith, the New Times Broward reports that researching facts for federal trials constitutes a violation of court orders and, as a result, could spark a mistrial and possible appeals of a conviction. Standard jury instructions for federal trials tell jurors to "not attempt to research any fact, issue or law related to this case, whether by discussion with others, by library or Internet research, or by any other means or source." Buju Banton's new lawyer, Chokwe Lumumba told New Times Broward that should Wright be guilty of this alleged violation, a new trial would be pursued. "If she's doing that, actually looking up things that concerned the case during the course of the case, that's in violation of court orders," he said. "That inappropriate behavior can certainly be basis for a new trial. If that's the case, we certainly will pursue it." Buju's former lawyer, David Oscar Markus echoed Lumumba's sentiments, insisting that this could be the break his former client has been praying for. "Jurors are given specific instructions not to do their own research for lots of good reasons," Markus said. "If they do, there is a strong likelihood of a new trial. A juror doing research may have had an effect on the ultimate verdict, so this has the possibility of being a game-changer for Buju." In the meantime, a fan-created campaign seeks to try and overturn Buju's conviction as it seeks 50,000 of the entertainer's adorers to contact the White House before October 30 in an effort to convince the U.S. Government that they should release him with immediate effect, citing entrapment by a government informant.