

May 5, 2018 14:47 EDT

To: **We Have Voice,**

As most, if not all, of you know, Maria Grand, a founding member of your *We Have Voice* organization, has publicly accused me of sexual harassment. I am writing this letter to categorically denounce this accusation as false, and to appeal to you to hear both sides of the story before reflexively rushing to judgment. Your organization has put forward both an open letter and a code of conduct, which I support. However, if one of your founding members is allowed to make false accusations, and these assertions are taken as fact without any attempt at getting to the underlying truth, then the credibility of the organization and its entire premise should be called into question.

It is always easier to tear down the reputation of others than it is to investigate the truth. I would hope that we use this opportunity as a learning moment for future possible conflicts within our community, as this is not a hypothetical event, but rather ongoing misrepresentation and slandering of my reputation. I would hope that We Have Voice has an emphasis on the "We" and seek to improve the environment for all people.

I am finally emboldened to write this now because of an incident that happened at Maria's concert at Roulette on Tuesday, which I attended. I went because I, perhaps foolishly, thought that maybe our issues were behind us and that this was my extension of an olive branch. As you might know, I was asked to leave the premises by Maria (Imani Uzuri told me that Maria wanted me to leave), and it was clear that all who tried to remove me believed that I had indeed sexually harassed Maria. At least three men jumped into my face as if they wanted to fight me. This was the last straw for me to try to handle this quietly. Until now, I have hesitated in publicly telling my side of the story. But now that I see the extent of the damage she is causing to my reputation, I must speak up now or forever allow hers to be the only on-the-record narrative.

I want to state this simply: I was involved in a six-year on-off relationship with Maria, from 2011 through 2016. Our relationship was unusual, intense, argumentative, and passionate, but it was also completely consensual and should have been private. Sometimes I pursued Maria but *often* she pursued me. No one was forced to do anything. I never threatened to fire Maria from work if she did not have sex with me. The relationship did not end well, as many do. Unfortunately, this should be our private business, not the business of our entire musical community.

"*Sexual Harassment*" is about "*unwanted*" sexual advances and attention. The person who is claiming **to be the victim of** sexual harassment cannot at the same time be **aggressively pursuing the person that she is accusing of harassment**. I have spent months going back through past email and text exchanges and they document the complex nature of our relationship. They also show, again and again, that the pursuit went both ways, which thoroughly refutes Maria's accusations of sexual harassment. I have collected these exchanges in a master document, completely unexpurgated, and not cherry-picked only to prove my point, something that Maria did in the letter she sent out to the public. In order to defend myself, I am willing to share this with any interested parties, despite the embarrassment, because being falsely accused of sexual harassment is even worse.

I am aware that there are people who will not believe my denials of sexual harassment. And Maria will present her own documentation to support her narrative (as she should).

However I have all of the same or similar documentation, so I can counter any evidence that is cherry picked and taken out of context. I welcome the fair vetting of both of our stories. The bottom line is this, in all of Maria's narrative, she has never once mentioned or shown that there was sexual aggression on her part, in all of the years that she is claiming harassment. Had she mentioned this, no one would have believed her accusations, and Maria knows this, so she deliberately left this out. *There is no hint of Maria's sexual aggression in her accusation letter.* This is disingenuous and misleading at the least, and demonstrates that Maria was consciously trying to manipulate emotions of sympathy from the recipients of her letter.

I've already tried to get several individuals in our community to mediate this issue, but these efforts were rejected. I then sent a formal invitation to Maria requesting professional mediation, which I would have thought that Maria would eagerly participate in, given she is telling everyone that she is convinced of the veracity of her accusations. Maria received my letter and has ignored it. I continue to welcome the opportunity to do this in any forum, including with members of We Have Voice, in order to help get to the objective truth. I am aware that We Have Voice is not a policing organization, but through your Open Letter, Code of Conduct and various interviews, you urge ***all of us*** to be vigilant in ferreting out bullying of any member of our musical community, regardless of sex, age and position.

I applaud your efforts in requesting that the music community hold itself and others responsible for reporting and stopping abuse, harassment and bullying. But there is no mention in your code of conduct of the rights of individuals being accused. No mention of properly vetting accusations, hopefully before they become public, but if not afterwards. If the energy can be generated to support an accuser (i.e., repost their statements, praise their bravery, etc.) then we should also be willing to approach those accused and vet and repost their statements. This is only fair. No individual's narratives should be believed without looking at the other side and at least asking for the different narrative. If you advise people to freely call out people who are accused of being sexual abusers/harassers, but stay silent for those who are falsely accused, aren't you just creating another problem that will ultimately delegitimize your work?

The blowback from Maria sending her letter to fellow musicians, concert promoters, journalists, professors, publicists, etc., has definitely affected my everyday existence. Negative vibes have increasingly been directed my way from some members of our music community. Therefore, this current email is also going out to all of the people that I know Maria sent her email to, and to others that I know received forwarded copies of Maria's email. Surely my email will also spread beyond the original recipients. I am also aware that some of you are close friends of Maria's and will stand by her at all costs. I cannot control what each of you will think about this, I only am concerned with getting out the truth, and to stop the bullying, intimidation, black-balling and lying from continuing.

Please respond to me at your earliest convenience. I am always open to dialogue on this particular issue, as well as all of your larger concerns. I will also attend your opening meeting on May 7th, 2018, as this meeting is about *promoting the code and fostering further conversations.*



Peace, Steve Coleman

## **Addendum 1: explanation of evidence of communications between Maria and myself**

**Anyone who does not need to see my evidence in the addendum can stop reading now.**

As I am unfortunately well aware that no one will believe a person in my position proclaiming innocence, I will let you see for yourself from Maria and my own words, starting with the **September 2013** time period that Maria claims I began sexually harassing her. According to your own definition on your website, sexual harassment is first of all *“any unwelcome behavior of a sexual kind”*. A person cannot be inviting sexual behavior, and still claim sexual harassment during the same time period. There were times when Maria rejected my sexual advances, and there were times when I rejected the sexual advances of Maria, as in any ongoing on-off relationship. I have evidence for all of this as well. But as you can see, Maria’s sexual aggression continued throughout all of the years that she claimed that I was the sole sexual aggressor. It is not my desire to attack Maria personally, but I see no other way to prove my claims. As I was told at Roulette, *“no one believes you, everyone believes that you are a sexual harasser.”*

I really cringe having to do this, as it is indeed embarrassing to both of us. However I did not choose to make this a public fight. And as the false accusations have still continued - with very negative results, I agonized over this, and sought out a lot of advice. But at this point, I don’t know what else I can do but defend myself, since the bullying and accusations are ongoing.

I will add that there has not been one case in the entire group of #metoo accusations that is even remotely like this situation between Maria and I. Not one of those #metoo cases involved an ongoing long term (6-year) intimate relationship. There is a reason for this, and this alone should give any fair-thinking person pause as to the veracity of Maria’s allegations. But some have chosen to ignore this, so I must give examples of Maria’s sexual aggression. And Maria’s more recent claims of sexual intimidation are even more ridiculous.

If not for Maria’s decision to disseminate these accusations of sexual harassment accusations against me to the public, in a clandestine manner in November 2017, none of this would be happening. I derive no joy out of doing this, as people will be hurt, including myself. But I am still being accused, bullied and vilified, so I must set the record straight.

It is my hope that some of the experienced creators in our music community can find a way to resolve and mediate this issue, and the rift that has formed between some of us can be at least partially healed (many people have taken different sides, people have left ensembles, stopped talking to each other, etc.). We are all here to create, not tear down.

## **Addendum 2: small examples of evidence - communications between Maria and myself**

**2013**

Steve 10/20/2013 12:39:12 PM

What is it with you?

Steve 10/20/2013 12:39:20 PM

You just want to devour me?

Steve 10/20/2013 12:39:36 PM

All the knowledge, all the sex, everything?

Maria Grand 10/20/2013 12:39:41 PM

**You come, take what you want, make me fall in love with you, and then you've had enough, so you just leave me. And I'm supposed to relax?**

Maria Grand 10/20/2013 12:39:50 PM

**Yea, I already told you, I wanted to be with you.**

Steve 10/20/2013 12:39:56 PM

"make you fall in love"?

Steve 10/20/2013 12:40:03 PM

Nigga Please.

Maria Grand 10/20/2013 12:40:12 PM

Yea. Treat me nice, have lots of sex, talk about music, spend all this time.

[12/24/13, 1:11 AM] Maria Grand : I might be fickle with times and things like that. But you are the one who changed your whole behavior with me. You are the one who decided you did not want to be with me, not me.

[12/24/13, 1:12 AM] Steve Coleman : What happened to not complaining?

**[12/24/13, 1:13 AM] Maria Grand : Ok. I would love to be married to you, but unfortunately I am sure it will not happen.**

**[12/24/13, 1:14 AM] Maria Grand : I'm in love with you, it just is what it is.**

[12/24/13, 1:19 AM] Maria Grand : I'd like to go to the movies with you on Christmas Day.

**2014**

[1/9/14, 9:22 PM] Maria Grand : I really miss you tonight.

[1/9/14, 9:23 PM] Maria Grand : I wish we could've been together.

**2015**

@ 8/30/15, 4:30 AM

Steve: Why do u keep fucking with me? What do u want from me? I don't get it. You've had plenty of opportunity to get away, but u keep coming back and teasing me. Then u complain when I hit on u. It's like some kind of macabre game.

@ 8/30/15, 4:30 AM

Maria: Macabre! Ha that's a pretty harsh word.

@ 8/30/15, 4:30 AM

Steve: French word

@ 8/30/15, 4:30 AM

Steve: This relationship is harsh.

@ 8/30/15, 4:32 AM

Maria: True.

@ 8/30/15, 4:32 AM

Steve: Answer my questions.

@ 8/30/15, 4:32 AM

**Maria: Because I like it.**

@ 8/30/15, 4:32 AM

**Steve: You r killing me.**

@ 8/30/15, 4:32 AM

**Maria: Yea.**

@ 8/30/15, 4:32 AM

**Steve: U have everyone thinking that it's me that won't leave u alone. Nobody suspects that little nice innocent young-looking Maria could be initiating anything.**

@ 8/30/15, 4:36 AM

**Maria: Initiating...**

*Maria propositions me for sex in France, while we are on the road for a gig:*

Maria: hello

@ 9/3/15, 7:24 PM

Steve: ??

@ 9/3/15, 7:26 PM

**Maria: What are you going to do tomorrow night?**

@ 9/3/15, 7:26 PM

Maria: I'm horny.

@ 9/3/15, 7:26 PM

Steve: What are u talking about, tomorrow night?

(...)

@ 9/3/15, 7:32 PM

**Maria: No... I really am just horny.**

@ 9/3/15, 7:32 PM

**Maria: Not expecting anything.**

@ 9/3/15, 7:32 PM

**Maria: But I could use a licking.**

@ 9/3/15, 7:32 PM

Maria: yea

@ 9/3/15, 7:34 PM

Steve: Hahahaha!!!! YOU can use a licking????

(...)

@ 9/4/15, 2:08 AM

**Maria: If you promise to treat me really nicely and that I'll only do what I want to do, I'll come to your room now.**

**@ 9/4/15, 7:46 AM**

**Maria: So we can get some stress relief.**

@ 9/4/15, 7:46 AM

Maria: Hum, I just got your email. Maybe we can just be nice to each other now...

@ 9/4/15, 7:46 AM

Steve: OK, but the problem before was always that you didn't want to do anything! Hahaha! I'm in 801.

@ 9/8/15, 2:53 PM

Maria: Before you cut me off, you still will have to fedex me the final response the USCIS gives you.

@ 9/8/15, 3:12 PM

Maria: Now as far as everything else. You went through it extensively in Chicago. You told me you didn't want me around or needed me around for anything because I didn't want to be intimate with you anymore (never mind my reasons). So why does what I think matter?

@ 9/8/15, 3:16 PM

Maria: You're the one who's established and who can decide what to do. I just have to go on with my life and my work.

@ 9/8/15, 3:16 PM

Maria: I guess now you won't even respond to me anymore. It's like I thought it was - the only reason I was ever around you is for you to get laid. Nothing else. That's the only thing that mattered to you.

@ 9/8/15, 3:22 PM

Maria: It's fine. We'll see in the end.

@ 9/8/15, 3:22 PM

Maria: You said you couldn't take it!

**@ 9/8/15, 4:03 PM**

**Steve: I NEVER told you that I didn't want me around or needed me around for anything because I didn't want to be intimate with you anymore. This is what you assumed!**

**@ 9/8/15, 4:04 PM**

**Steve: Quit saying this.**

**@ 9/8/15, 4:04 PM**

**Maria: You even wrote it!**

**@ 9/8/15, 4:04 PM**

**Steve: this is different than what you are saying.**

**@ 9/8/15, 4:05 PM**

**Steve: I never said that you will not work with me based on having sex with me.**

**@ 9/8/15, 4:05 PM**

**Steve: this is what I am saying.**

*At my home:*

[11/16/15, 3:20 AM] Steve Coleman : Can I take your fine ass somewhere and go to bed with you? Your outfit is killing me!

[11/16/15, 3:21 AM] Steve Coleman : I'm in the kitchen

[11/16/15, 5:51 AM] **Maria Grand : No you can't. But I guess I'll let you go down on me in LA. You do it so well.**

## 2016

in September 2016, Maria, unsolicited, offered sex to me as a birthday present (see below), despite the fact that we were both dealing with other people at this time. And Maria told me that she wanted me to keep this quiet, as she did not want her then current boyfriend to find out.

Our text exchanges during this time period prove that our mood towards each other was generally good, by our normal argumentative standards. We were in fairly good personal relations at the time, and we were also in the middle **of** a period of a lot of work with special ensembles of mine. Maria **offered** me sex voluntarily, and it was unsolicited. She told me that if I was “*nice to her*” that I would then receive my birthday present. Yes, this was manipulative on Maria’s part, but this was also very common in our relationship since 2011.

**[9/16/16, 1:52 PM] Maria Grand : I love you, also.**

**[9/16/16, 2:35 PM] Maria Grand : It's too bad. I had a surprise for you, but...**

**[9/16/16, 5:48 PM] Steve Coleman : What surprise? You are an expert teaser.**

**[9/16/16, 9:58 PM] Maria Grand : well I was gonna tell you, but then you weren't nice.**

**[9/20/16, 5:06 PM] Steve Coleman : Birthday Surprise? (*Maria had offered, unsolicited, to give me a sexual birthday present*)**

**[9/20/16, 5:18 PM] Maria Grand : sorry i was practicing morphing**

**[9/20/16, 5:18 PM] Maria Grand : it takes a long time**

**[9/20/16, 5:18 PM] Maria Grand : hmm tonight is not so great i was gonna go get some stuff uptown during the night**

**[9/20/16, 5:19 PM] Maria Grand : why can't you hang out in the daytime?**

**[9/20/16, 5:20 PM] Steve Coleman : I was here all fuckin day, and you waited till now to call me. Just forget it. You keep changing.**

**[9/20/16, 5:20 PM] Maria Grand : you told me yesterday night that daytime was the worse time!**

**[9/20/16, 5:20 PM] Maria Grand : i'm down to come in the day**

**[9/20/16, 5:20 PM] Maria Grand : tomorrow for example**

**[9/21/16, 1:43 AM] Steve Coleman : !!!!!!!**

(...)

**9/21/16, 2:18 PM] Steve Coleman : You see? This is why I didn't want to do this in the daytime! Salman Rushdie! (*meaning we are rushing*)**

**[9/21/16, 2:47 PM] Maria Grand : Coming at 330**

**[9/21/16, 2:48 PM] Steve Coleman : OK Salman. Where are you now?**

**[9/21/16, 2:50 PM] Steve Coleman : xxx (*here I give Maria the address of where I am in Brooklyn, not far from where she was living*)**

**[9/21/16, 3:00 PM] Maria Grand : Ok perfect**

**[9/21/16, 3:00 PM] Maria Grand : I'm in cobble hill**

**[9/21/16, 3:52 PM] Maria Grand : Running late, I'll take a taxi over**

**[9/21/16, 4:11 PM] Maria Grand : I'm in the car.**

(...)

*consensual sex occurred after Maria arrived*

[9/26/16, 3:48 PM] Maria Grand : I was saying that I was thinking about you

[9/26/16, 3:51 PM] Steve Coleman : Thinking about what exactly?

.....

[9/26/16, 4:08 PM] Maria Grand : I was thinking about how a complex person you are, and how I'll miss seeing you in the next month

[9/26/16, 4:09 PM] Steve Coleman : Hahahaha! You will miss telling me NO all the time?

[9/26/16, 4:10 PM] Maria Grand : Yes :) I've grown quite endeared by it.

[9/26/16, 4:10 PM] Steve Coleman : Well, I'll miss you too. And it's long been obvious that you are completely out of your mind.

[9/26/16, 4:10 PM] Maria Grand : Hahaha

=====

There were many more volumes of very explicit advances that Maria made that I will not reproduce now, as they would only serve to *further* embarrass both of us. Maria has chosen not to share any of the above communications, as this would have made her accusations unbelievable. I only revealed these few examples from each year because I have discovered that – otherwise, no one will believe me. But I did not want to go this far.

As any non-biased person can see, the above text directly contradicts the narrative of Maria's letter, that I was chasing her around for years with *unwanted* sexual advances and attention. Our relationship was on-off, but it was at all times consensual.



Steve Coleman