

Democrats seek to channel mass anger over killing of Trayvon Martin

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The killing of 17-year old Florida youth Trayvon Martin has sparked widespread popular anger throughout the country and internationally, becoming a focal point for broader social grievances. Over the weekend and on Monday, tens of thousands of people participated in demonstrations in cities across the US to demand the arrest of Martin's killer.

On Tuesday, the parents of Trayvon Martin, Tracy Martin and Sybrina Fulton, attended a Washington DC forum organized by Congressional Democrats.

Various politicians, both Democrat and Republican—including president Obama—have sought to express sympathy for Martin. Their aim is to forestall any discussion of the more basic social questions behind the killing, and to divert popular anger into safe political channels.

At the forum, Trayvon's father, Tracy Martin, made a statement thanking supporters: "Thank you to everyone who is supportive of our family, everyone who has helped us stand tall in this matter, everyone who is holding the legacy of Trayvon and making sure that he did not, indeed, die in vain."

Sybrina Fulton, Trayvon's mother said, "I'd like to say thank you, thank you for your support, and I said it before and I'll say it again: Trayvon was our son, but Trayvon is your son."

The demonstrations and vigils have given voice to public anger over Martin's killing and the refusal of Florida authorities to arrest his killer, George Zimmerman. Outrage is aimed at law enforcement agencies and legislation, like Florida's "Stand Your Ground Law," that encourages and protects vigilantism.

In addition to the protests held in Sanford, Florida, where Martin was killed, rallies were held in New

York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Detroit, Cincinnati, Houston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Denver, New Orleans and many other cities. Thousands participated in a demonstration at the state capital in Atlanta, including hundreds of students.

Politically, the demonstrations have been dominated by supporters of the Democratic Party and officials in the Democratic Party. Typical was Detroit, where several thousand gathered on Monday. Reverend Horace Sheffield II spoke before the event at Detroit's Hart Plaza. He told the crowd, "If you look behind any incident like this, there is someone who someone did vote for or someone who someone didn't vote for." Several speakers openly called for what the rest implied—a vote for Obama.

The rally was sponsored by United Auto Workers Local 600, the Black Caucus Foundation of Michigan and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. It was hosted by a representative of the NAACP, who introduced speakers like Sheffield, Reverend Wendell Anthony, and Detroit Police Chief Ralph Godbee.

World Socialist Web Site reporters interviewed some of those in attendance at the Detroit rally.

Terrell, a worker at the Detroit Hamtramck GM assembly plant, said, "It is tragic to think that that is still going on down in the South with minimal repercussions. A young black man is slain for no reason. I can't understand that. It could happen here also.

"It doesn't matter if it was a black or a white child, no one should be slain without a reason.

Terrell added, "It seems like they are building places

to put people who commit a crime rather than providing them a way to make a living.”

Ajane Johnson, who is in the eleventh grade at Romulus High School, said, “I feel like Zimmerman should be arrested and prosecuted because of the crime he committed. It is murder premeditated. He was not a legal cop, not an officer, he was a watch guard. I feel he committed a crime, and he should be charged for it.

“I think everyone who is out here is standing up for something, saying it’s time to take a stand.”

Takeya Johnson, her mother, said “I am here on behalf of my children. I want them to witness something positive. A lot of people are trying to take matters into their own hands, and there is a lot of racism out here that people are not aware of. And that is on both sides, black and white.

“There are a lot of other murders that have not been recognized. It is not just Trayvon. They need to pay attention and look at all the other cases. If we are going to do it for one, we should be doing it for all causes.”



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