

Prosecutor waives grand jury as defense team quits in Trayvon Martin case

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Florida State Attorney Angela Corey announced yesterday that “new information regarding the Trayvon Martin shooting death investigation” will be released within three days. Defense attorneys for the killer, George Zimmerman, announced that they were quitting the case on the same day, citing non-communication from their client.

On Monday, Corey said that she was not sending the case to a grand jury, leaving the final decision on whether or not to prosecute Zimmerman in her hands. Under Florida law, a grand jury is required in order to press charges of first degree murder.

Corey said that foregoing a grand jury will have no bearing on whether or not she decides to charge Zimmerman. While there is speculation that Zimmerman could be charged, he has not yet been arrested. Corey was named prosecutor of the case after the original prosecutor, Norman Wolfinger, recused himself on March 22.

The day after the murder, Wolfinger overrode the recommendation of investigator Chris Serino to arrest Zimmerman on a manslaughter charge. Serino’s affidavit recommending the arrest stated that he did not believe Zimmerman’s claims to self-defense. Wolfinger ordered charges not be pressed because he said there was not enough evidence to lead to a conviction.

Florida’s reactionary “Stand Your Ground” law, which extends legal protection to those who use deadly force, is one reason why even at this late date, Zimmerman hasn’t been arrested. Zimmerman himself is evidently a disturbed individual who was obsessed with a career in law enforcement. He set up the neighborhood watch organization in the gated “Retreat at Twin Lakes” neighborhood in Sanford, Florida and made himself president, with the cooperation of the

Sanford Police Department. He was issued a license to carry a concealed weapon.

Public outrage over the shooting and the failure of Florida authorities to arrest Zimmerman has spread throughout the country. The killing has struck a chord with broader popular anger. Individuals and groups aligned with the Democratic Party, including Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, have also intervened in the effort to direct the protests back behind the political establishment.

“Stand Your Ground” laws, like the one in Florida, have been legislated in ten states so far. A right-wing lobbying organization calling itself ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council) has been behind the push for these laws, which have been supported by both Democrats and Republicans. ALEC’s website states that its aims include “limited government [and] federalism.”

ALEC, which has many corporate donors, has also been involved with passing laws restricting voter access for minority and poor populations. Seven states have passed laws requiring voters to show a valid photo ID in order to cast a ballot. (See The 2012 elections and the assault on voting rights in the US.)

Within the last several days, Zimmerman set up a web site called “The Real George Zimmerman,” which seeks to gather support for legal defense.

Zimmerman’s lawyers, Craig Sonner and Hal Uhrig, called a press conference in Sanford this afternoon to announce that they were withdrawing as Zimmerman’s attorneys. In a highly unusual move, they announced that they had lost contact with their client, who they said had contacted the special prosecutor’s office without consulting with them and had spoken to right-wing television commentator Sean Hannity. They said their calls were not answered for the last several days.

Sonner also revealed that Zimmerman is hiding out “far from Florida” and that “He is well hidden.”

Martin’s parents expressed concern that he might flee if charged. Family spokesman Ryan Julison said in a statement, “The family is deeply concerned that George Zimmerman could pose a flight risk if he does indeed face charges in the murder of Trayvon Martin.”



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