

Organizers of Trayvon Martin rallies promote Democratic Party

Our reporters
22 July 2013

Demonstrations were held in cities throughout the United States over the weekend in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, who killed Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, last year.

There is popular anger over the acquittal, seen as a travesty of justice that also sets a dangerous precedent. Sections of the Democratic Party, however, have sought to exploit the tragic case for their own ends.

The demonstrations were relatively small, with the largest in New York attracting more than a thousand people. Several hundred gathered in other cities, including Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Miami, Detroit, and Pittsburgh.

The protests were organized by National Action Network (NAN), founded by Al Sharpton. Sharpton and the NAN are an integral component of the Democratic Party establishment, seeking to use racial politics to divert opposition over disastrous social and economic conditions back into the Democratic Party.

A primary demand promoted by the organizers, who cast the issues entirely in racial terms, was for Obama's Justice Department to bring charges against Zimmerman on civil rights grounds. Sharpton, who spoke at the New York event, praised Obama for his remarks at a press conference Friday, when the president equated himself with Trayvon Martin.

The lineup of Democratic politicians was so deep at the New York rally that the person introducing speakers felt compelled to state that it was not an election rally. In Detroit, mayoral candidate Krystal Crittendon took to the megaphone, saying, "One thing we can all do for Trayvon is show up at the ballot box and vote. We need to let them know that we will not stand for this. We can take control by voting."

While participants in the demonstrations included those who supported the politics of Sharpton, others

spoke of broader economic and social issues. Michael Williams, a filmmaker who joined the New York rally, explained, "I think this is a travesty. It is a travesty for African Americans to be told to have faith in this jury system. President Obama's comments were cookie cutter comments when he said we are a nation of laws and we must go along with them. Who do these laws apply to? Do they apply to Wall Street? No. Absolutely not."

"I am very dissatisfied with President Obama," Michael continued. "When he ran for president he was against the imprisonments at Guantanamo, and he was against the Patriot Act. Since he has been in office he has essentially duplicated George Bush's policies."

Cecelia Colman came to the Pittsburgh demonstration along with her friend Tiffany Pitts. "I am here for justice and equality for all people," she said. "This is not just about race, I think that poor people, whatever their race, get treated differently in this country. We have our soldiers going to fight in other countries, but we don't have democracy here."

"It is really sad when the rich put profits ahead of people. There is so much that needs to be done in this country to help the people and especially the children, and those programs are getting cut, like education and health care, instead being expanded."

"I really did think that the US was at a better place than this. But it looks like the government is trying to turn the clock back. Racism is used to keep the people divided. If we are fighting each other, we are not fighting for equality and our rights."

A man attending the Detroit demonstration, who asked to remain anonymous, said of the rally, "It's good that they're out here doing something, but really this kind of thing happens every day in Detroit." He took note of the number of reverends who addressed

the crowd, and said he thought the emphasis on faith and race was “a way to control the argument. The education system is crumbling, and that’s what they want, to keep us in the dark.”

A WSWS reporter drew connections between the bankruptcy of Detroit and the murder of Trayvon Martin, describing the relationship between the rise of social inequality and vigilantism. The man replied, “I like the way you talk, we need to talk more like this—‘ruling class’ and ‘working class’—because that’s the way it really is.”

Kristina added, “It’s not just race, it’s a power issue. If you have money you have power. If not, then you have nothing.” Nadia added, “I voted for Obama the first time, but I didn’t vote for anybody the second time around. We’re so focused on labels, but we all bleed the same.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact