

Florida Teen's Death Triggers Federal Investigation

An unarmed black teenager was recently shot dead in a Sanford, Fla., neighborhood while walking home from the store.

Thousands are calling 17-year-old Trayvon Martin's death a hate crime, but opponents say it was simply self-defense.

Public protests are being held across the country as people unite, outraged over the teen's death.

Hate Crime or Self-Defense?

On the day Martin died, the Miami teen was in Sanford visiting family. He was returning from buying candy at a nearby convenience store when a man began to follow him.

That man was 28-year-old George Zimmerman, a local neighborhood watch captain. Zimmerman called 911 and told the dispatcher that Martin looked suspicious.

"Are you following him?" the dispatcher asked.

"Yes," Zimmerman replied.

"We don't need you to do that," the dispatcher said.

Though few details have been released about the case, audio from the 911 call reveals what sounded like a scuffle and then a gunshot.

Zimmerman said he opened fire in self-defense, a claim Martin's family said was false.

"We want an arrest," the teen's father, Tracy Martin, said. "We want a conviction; we want a sentence for the murder of our son."

So far, Zimmerman has not been charged with any crime and is

not currently in police custody.

Police Chief Steps Down

Meanwhile, Sanford's police chief, dogged by accusations of a police cover-up, has temporarily stepped down, saying he'd become a distraction to the case.

"I do this in the hopes of restoring a semblance of calm to the city, which has been in turmoil for several weeks," former Sanford Police Chief Bill Lee told reporters.

Lee is being accused of a number of apparent oversights in the initial investigation.

Some big names like Bishop T.D. Jakes are coming out in support of Martin and his family.

"All of us who believe in human life—both the protection of unborn life as well as born life—you can't fight for the unborn and then become passive for the born," Jakes told CBN News.

"This was somebody's child and the onus is upon us to stand up and demand that justice be allocated," he said.

Federal authorities are now looking into the teenager's death.

Florida's "Stand Your Ground Law" has been brought up to support his actions. It states that a person may use deadly force if he or she feels threatened.

However, the author of that law said it is being misused in this case.

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