

Pastors Preach With Trayvon Martin-Style Hoodies After Zimmerman Verdict

On the Sunday following George Zimmerman's not guilty verdict, many churches across the country declared the day "Hoodie Sunday" in honor of Trayvon Martin, the 17-year-old who died last February.

Martin was wearing a hoodie on the night of his death, and many believe the garment raised Zimmerman's suspicions.

The six women of the jury at the Seminole County Courthouse in Sanford, Fla., decided Zimmerman acted in self-defense when he shot Martin, but members of Community of Hope . Church in Temple Hills, Md., are not convinced.

According to , Community of Hope's pastor, the Rev. Tony Lee, delivered his sermon on Sunday while wearing a hooded sweatshirt.

"We have to hold the nation accountable, but we also have to hold accountable the people who are shaping culture and shaping the atmosphere in which a young man could be dehumanized," Lee said. "Some of that comes from outside, but some comes from our own community."

Lee held a recruiting drive for the church's social justice ministry following his sermon.

The Rev. Errol Thompson of New Life Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla., also wore a hoodie during his sermon on Sunday.

"I wore it to honor the fallen young man and his family," the *Orlando Sentinel* reported Thompson saying.

Though she did not sport the meaningful garment, the Rev. Valarie Houston of Allen Chapel . Church in Sanford, Fla., discussed the case in her sermon Sunday.

"I am hurt," she said. "I am sad. I am shocked, but I shouldn't be."

The *Orlando Sentinel* reports that Houston's words brought church members to their feet several times.

"We are African-Americans. We are people. We are allowed to go the store and buy Arizona Ice Tea and a package of Skittles and go home," she said, referring to Martin's trip to a convenience store before his death.

"Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity," she added.

The Rev. John Murphy also dedicated much of his sermon at True Church in Winter Garden, Fla., to discussing the lessons of the shooting and trial. Murphy is part of a coalition of pastors that has come together to spark racial reconciliation in central Florida.

"As pastors, we hated the fact that this incident happened. You never want to see a young man lose his life," said Murphy, a pastor for the global mission center Harvest Time International.

"We've come together as pastors and government and community leaders as never before," the *Sentinel* reported him saying. "We have met together and experienced the grief of Trayvon being killed, and the discrimination coming alive, and used that as a platform for more civil rights and more nondiscrimination."

"We have felt a whole new realm of purpose and direction," Murphy continued. "This has given us an opportunity to get

more involved in our communities, to know people and have a protest and have a grieving so we can talk and learn where the problems are.”