

Obama Justice Department: No Federal Charges to be Filed in Trayvon Martin Slaying

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The Obama Justice Department announced Tuesday that it will not press federal civil rights charges against George Zimmerman for the February 2012 slaying of unarmed African-American teenager Trayvon Martin.

Attorney General Eric Holder released a statement declaring that “a comprehensive investigation found that the high standard for a federal hate crime prosecution cannot be met under the circumstances here.”

Martin’s mother, Sybrina Fulton, criticized the decision in comments to reporters following the announcement, which came on the eve of the third anniversary of the killing of the 17-year old in the Retreat at Twin Lakes gated community in Sanford, Florida.

“[Zimmerman] took a life, carelessly and recklessly, and he shouldn’t deserve to have his entire life walking around on the street free. I just believe that he should be held accountable for what he’s done,” Fulton said.

Pointing to the recent exoneration of police officers who killed unarmed youth and workers in Ferguson, Missouri and New York City, Fulton said, “We have grand juries and special grand juries; they’re making a decision to not even arrest a person.”

Zimmerman, a self-appointed vigilante with aspirations to join the police or the military, stalked Martin as he returned from purchasing snacks at a nearby convenience store before shooting the youth less than 100 yards from the home where Martin’s father was staying.

“This guy looks like he is up to no good or he is on drugs or something... these assholes, they always get away,” Zimmerman can be heard to say on a recording of a phone call to police taken just prior to the killing.

Police arrived on the scene just minutes after the call ended, where they found Martin lying unresponsive on the ground near Zimmerman, who was still holding the weapon used to kill the youth.

Police and local prosecutors initially refused to arrest or charge Zimmerman. After widespread protests, Zimmerman was eventually charged with manslaughter and second-degree murder.

Among the issues raised in the case was Florida’s reactionary “stand your ground” law, one of a raft of measures across the US aimed at promoting law-and-order vigilantism. The law

was initially cited by prosecutors in justifying their decision not to bring charges against Zimmerman, and was later referred to by the judge in his trial.

Despite the overwhelming evidence against him, Zimmerman was acquitted of both charges after a month-long trial. Prosecutors conducted the trial in an ineffectual manner, with police officers called by the prosecution barely concealing their sympathy for the killer.

Race was likely a factor in the killing of Martin. However, in an effort to obscure the social and class dynamics underlying the events in Ferguson, the Democratic Party and Obama administration have worked aggressively to frame the incident entirely in racial terms.

The federal civil rights investigation terminated this week was announced as part of these political maneuvers by the White House, which aimed to dissipate popular anger and channel the protest movement behind the Democratic Party.

This political operation was aided by the professional practitioners of identity politics, including Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, along with the various "left" groups that orbit around the Democratic Party. Obama's race was cited as part of efforts to present the federal government as an instrument for achieving justice in the Zimmerman case.

While the decision not to charge Zimmerman for violating Martin's civil rights does not come as a surprise, it is clearly a calculated political move on the part of the Obama administration. The announcement means an end to any possibility of holding Zimmerman criminally accountable, thus encouraging the type of vigilantism that led to Martin's death.

The announcement also comes in the wake of media reports that the administration will not bring civil rights charges against Darren Wilson, the officer who shot Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. An official announcement on that investigation is expected soon.

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