

Tensions Rise in Sanford

Florida town awaits prosecutor's decision

(AP) — Tensions are rising in Sanford, Fla., as a special prosecutor nears a decision on whether to charge George Zimmerman with killing Trayvon Martin.

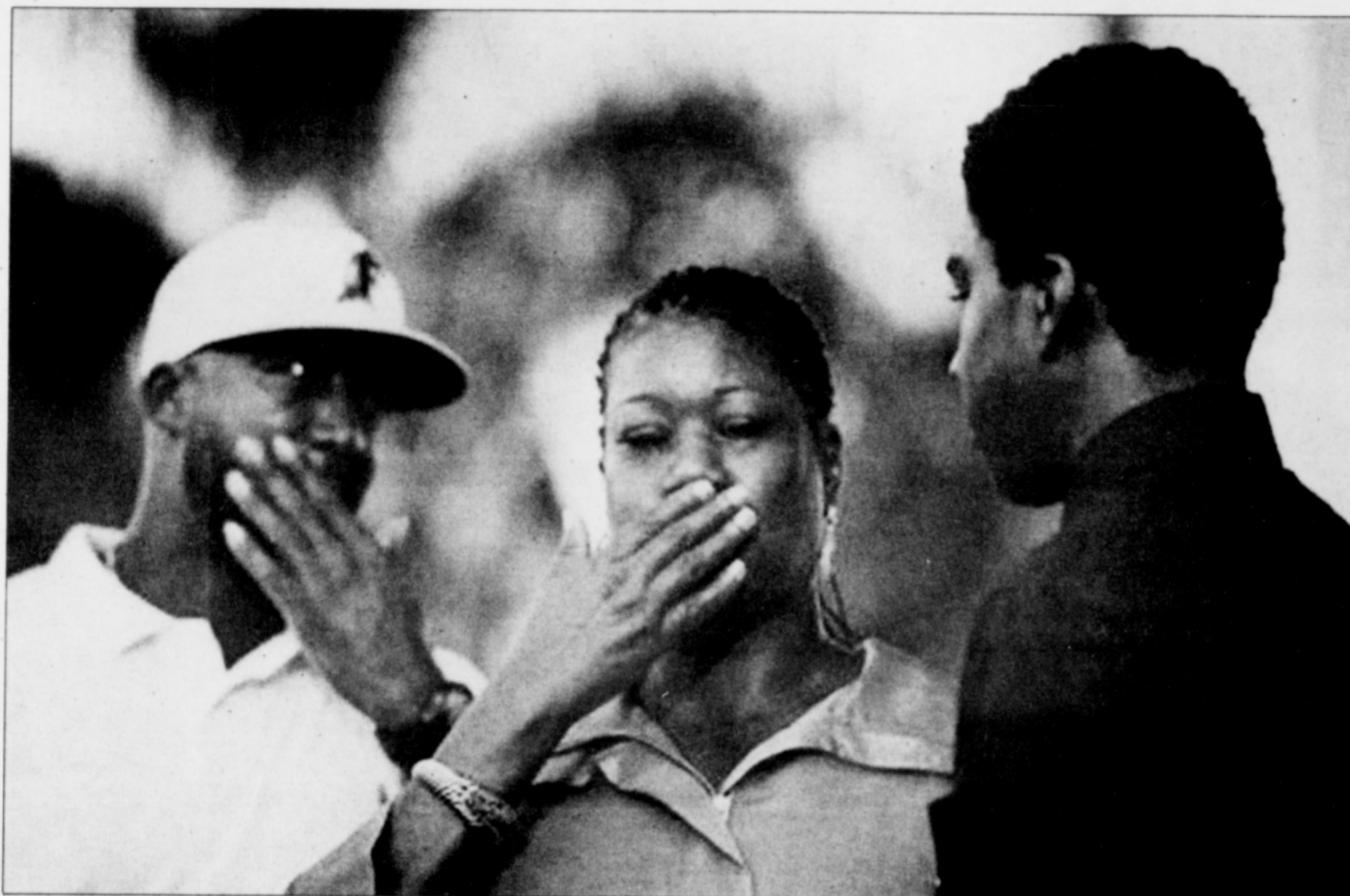
Someone shot up an unoccupied police car Monday night as it sat outside the neighborhood where Martin was killed. And a demonstration by college students closed the town's police station earlier in the day.

Some residents Tuesday said they worry there will be violence if prosecutor Angela Corey accepts Zimmerman's claim of self-defense and decides not to charge the neighborhood watch captain with a crime. Corey has not said when she will announce her decision, but many in town believe it will be soon.

Police aren't saying what, if any, precautions they are taking.

"We're just anxious to know what's going on," Tiffany Lawson said as she fished along the St. John's River, across the street from City Hall.

Martin's killing as the unarmed, black 17-year-old was walking back from a convenience store Feb. 26 has touched off protests around the country and stirred a debate over racial profiling and



Parents of slain Florida teen Trayvon Martin, Sybrina Fulton (C) and Tracy Martin weep after speaking with their other son Jahvaris Fulton during a rally to protest the reaction to their son's death.

self-defense that has reached all the way to the White House. Zimmerman's father is white, and his mother is Hispanic.

The case took a bizarre turn Tuesday as Zimmerman's attorneys stood outside the courthouse and announced they were dropping him as their client for ignoring their advice in contacting the prosecutor. But they said they still believe his claim of self-defense.

While tensions are high, some think this city of about 53,000 — around 57 percent white and 30 percent black — will come through

the crisis without violence, as it did during similar uproars.

Two years ago, after a black homeless man was beaten by the son of a Sanford policeman, passions soon cooled. The assailant, Justin Collison, initially wasn't charged but eventually was arrested after footage of the episode went viral on YouTube. He pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor and received probation.

James Carder, a mechanic at McRobert's Auto Center, put a message on his shop that was

readily visible to anyone driving down First Street: "Sanford is still a good little town."

Until the Martin shooting, Sanford was probably best known as the Florida stop for the Auto Train, the Amtrak line that carries tourists and their cars between suburban Washington and central Florida's theme parks.

"I put it up because I do care about my good little town," said Carder, who is white. "It has problems just like everywhere. But it's still a good little town. It always



George Zimmerman

has been and always will be."

Over the weekend, a group of students from across Florida marched 40 miles from Daytona Beach to the Sanford police station. Once the three-day march ended, a small group staged a mini-shutdown of the station by sitting in front of the main entrance.

Eddie Jones, a 58-year-old black man and lifelong resident of Sanford, said Zimmerman's arrest is paramount to keeping the protests peaceful.

"They need to go ahead and arrest this guy before something happens," he said. "Sanford is screwed up. This place just didn't get corrupt."

Eric Arzate, who is white, said he and others in Sanford just want things to go back to the way they were before the shooting.

"I think everybody's ready for it to be over," he said. "Everybody wants justice. But let the judicial system run its course."

Grand Jury Clears Portland Police

A grand jury has found no criminal wrongdoing by four Portland police officers who shot and wounded a man as they searched for a vehicle linked to a robbery.

In addition to that finding, the Multnomah County grand jury has indicted the wounded man, 31-year-old Jonah Potter, on two counts of second-degree robbery in a market

holdup and four counts of menacing in connection with his actions before he was shot on March 26. He remains hospitalized with multiple wounds.

Police say Potter was shot when he got out of a car carrying what looked like a large black handgun. It turned out to be a Daisy air pistol.

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For a full obituary and to sign the guest book go to terryfamilyfuneralhome.com.

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