

LAW & JUSTICE

Trail Opens in Trayvon Martin Death

Prosecutor says neighborhood watchman wanted to shoot teen

(AP) — A prosecutor told jurors in opening statements Monday that George Zimmerman fatally shot Trayvon Martin "because he wanted to," not because he had to, while the neighborhood watch volunteer's attorney said the deadly shooting of the Miami-area teen was carried out in self-defense.

The opposing attorneys squared off on the first day of testimony in a trial that has attracted international attention and prompted nationwide debates about gun control, race, and equal justice under the law.

Included among the millions likely to be following the case are civil rights leaders the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, who joined national protests in the weeks before prosecutors filed second-degree murder charges against

Zimmerman 44 days after the shooting.

Zimmerman, who identifies himself as Hispanic, has denied that the shooting had anything to do with race. His mother was born in Peru. His father is a white American. Martin was black.

Prosecutor John Guy's first words to jurors recounted what Zimmerman told a police dispatcher in a call shortly before the fatal confrontation with Martin: "F----- punks. These a-----. They always get away."

Zimmerman was profiling Martin as he followed him through the gated community where Zimmerman lived and Martin was visiting, Guy said. He said Zimmerman viewed the teen "as someone about to a commit a crime in his neighborhood."

"And he acted on it. That's why we're here," the prosecutor said.

Zimmerman didn't have to shoot Martin, Guy said.

"He shot him for the worst of all reasons: because he wanted to," he said.

Defense attorney Don West told jurors that Zimmerman was being viciously attacked when he shot Martin. Zimmerman was sucker-punched by Martin, who then pounded Zimmerman's head into the concrete sidewalk, West said. He played for jurors the call to a police dispatcher in which Zimmerman used the obscenities.

Martin had opportunities to go home after Zimmerman followed him and then lost track of him, West said, but instead the teen confronted the neighborhood watch volunteer.

"I think the evidence will show that this is a sad case," West said. "There are no monsters here."

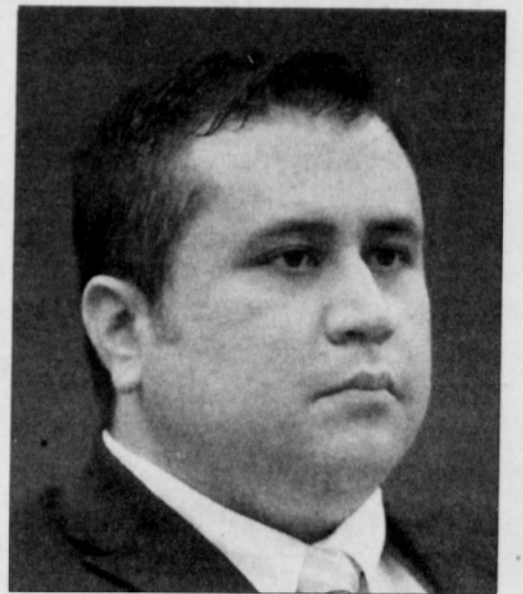
The prosecutor described

Zimmerman as someone who wanted to be a police officer, and he dismantled the story Zimmerman has told investigators about what happened during the fight between the neighborhood watch volunteer and the Miami-area teen that left Martin dead from a bullet to his chest.

Zimmerman's claim that Martin had his hands over the neighborhood watch volunteer's mouth is false since none of Zimmerman's DNA was found on Martin's body, Guy said. The prosecutor also said Zimmerman's claim that he had to fire because Martin was reaching for his firearm is false since none of Martin's DNA was on the gun or holster.

Zimmerman is pleading not guilty to second-degree murder, claiming self-defense.

On Feb. 26, 2012, Zimmerman spotted Martin, whom he did not recognize, walking in the gated townhome community where



George Zimmerman stands trial in the death of Trayvon Martin.

Zimmerman and the fiancée of Martin's father lived. There had been a rash of recent break-ins and Zimmerman was wary of strangers walking through the complex.

The two eventually got into a struggle and Zimmerman shot Martin in the chest with his 9mm handgun. He was charged 44 days after the shooting, only after a special prosecutor was appointed to review the case and after protests. The delay in the arrest prompted protests nationwide.

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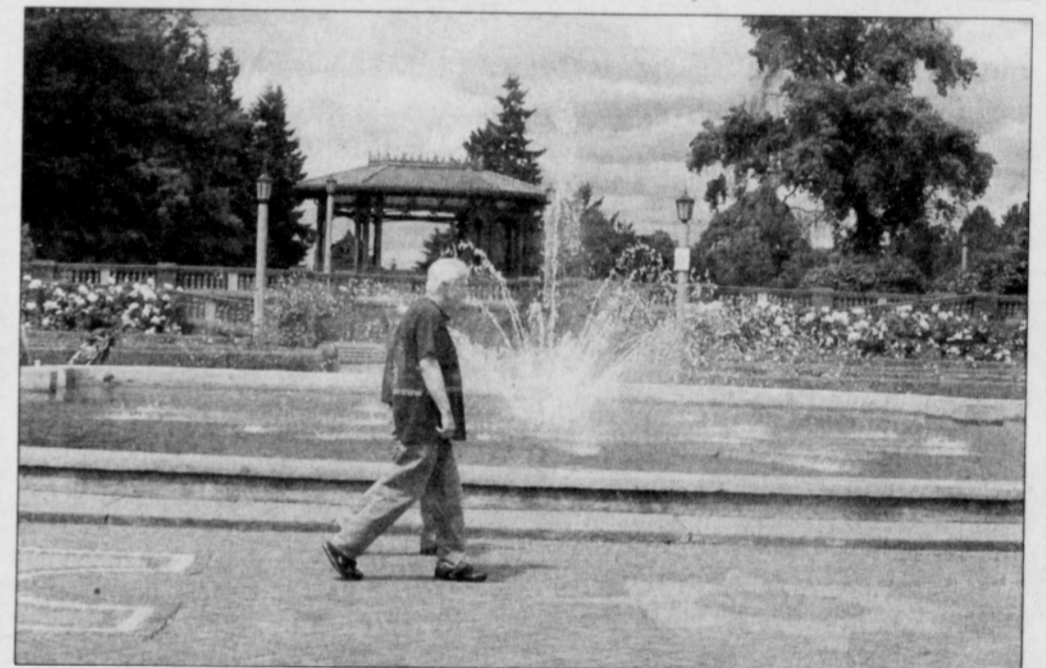


PHOTO BY DONOVAN M. SMITH/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Peninsula Park and Community Center was the first such facility in Portland's public parks system when it opened in 1913. A centennial celebration on Thursday will bring a day and evening of family-friendly events that will range from an ice-cream social, circus performances, rock climbing, and music by both Portland Teen Idols and local blues legend Norman Sylvester.

Showcase

continued ▲ from front

land Teen Idols and local blues legend Norman Sylvester.

Portland Parks and Recreation Coordinator Debbi Harris has spent a majority of her life residing in the adjacent neighborhoods to the landmark park. Excited to see the park turn 100, she says of the festivities, "This is going to be great for the community; it's going to be a place where everybody of all cultures are welcome."

The day will also include a documentary showcasing Peninsula Park's legacy throughout the years, and a movie at dusk.

The park has a lush history;

not only is it home to the city's first public rose garden it also continues the city's first community center. Open throughout the year, the community center maintains an important link to the people of Portland.

Though the neighborhoods surrounding the lush green landscapes of Peninsula Park has had noticeable demographic shifts since its inception, Harris says the celebration is a good opportunity for all these diverse cultures to unify under the fact that they have all shared memories in the same venue.

She said the centennial celebration is about being together and supporting each other.

More information on Thursday's festivities can be found by visiting portlandoregon.gov/parks.

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