



88 of 89 DOCUMENTS

Copyright 2012 National Broadcasting Co. Inc.
All Rights Reserved
NBC News Transcripts

SHOW: Today 7:00 AM EST NBC

March 22, 2012 Thursday

LENGTH: 1329 words

HEADLINE: Fallout from the Trayvon Martin shooting includes calls for Sanford police chief to resign; NBC's Savannah Guthrie and former prosecutor Star Jones discuss the case

ANCHORS: ANN CURRY, MATT LAUER

REPORTERS: LILIA LUCIANO, SAVANNAH GUTHRIE

BODY:

ANN CURRY, co-host:

As Natalie mentioned, there is new fallout from the deadly shooting of Trayvon Martin in Florida, including calls for the police chief to resign over his department's handling of the investigation. NBC's Lilia Luciano is in Sanford, Florida, with more on this story.

Hey, Lilia, good morning.

LILIA LUCIANO reporting:

Good morning, Ann. While state and federal authorities continue to probe the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, a more complete picture is emerging of the watchman as outrage about the case intensifies here in Sanford and across the country.

Group: (In unison) We want answers! We want it now!

LUCIANO: A thousand miles from Sanford...

Unidentified Woman: Tray...

Group: (In unison) ...von.

LUCIANO: ...a thousand hooded protesters marched the streets of New York in memory of Trayvon Martin...

Fallout from the Trayvon Martin shooting includes calls for Sanford police chief to resign; NBC's Savannah Guthrie and former prosecutor Star Jones discuss the case NBC News Transcripts March 22,

Ms. SYBRINA FULTON (Trayvon Martin's Mother): Our son is your son.

Group: (In unison) Yeah!

Ms. FULTON: I want you guys to stand up for justice...

Offscreen Voice: Yes!

Ms. FULTON: ...and stand up for what's right.

Group: (In unison) Yes!

Voice: And we will!

Ms. FULTON: And this is not about a black and white thing...

Voice: No!

Ms. FULTON: ...this is about a right and a wrong thing.

Group: (In unison) Yeah!

LUCIANO: ...the teen gunned down by Neighborhood Watchman George Zimmerman last month as he walked through this gated community wearing a hoodie.

(Clip from 911 call)

Mr. GEORGE ZIMMERMAN: This guy looks like he's up to no good. He looks black.

Unidentified 911 Operator: Did you see what he was wearing?

Mr. ZIMMERMAN: Yeah, a dark hoodie.

(End of clip)

LUCIANO: In Sanford Wednesday night, angry residents called for police Chief Bill Lee to step down.

Mr. TURNER CLAYTON (NAACP): There's no trust, there's no faith in this department. And the only way we going to be able to change that here, in the city of Sanford, is to start from the top all the way down to the bottom.

LUCIANO: At a city council meeting, commissioners passed a no-confidence vote 3-to-2 on Chief Lee.

Mr. MARK McCARTY (Sanford City Commissioner): I don't care to bring up anything that he's done wrong, but I believe at this point he really should tender his resignation.

LUCIANO: Zimmerman said he fired the fatal shot in self-defense, and in an open letter, Chief Lee says Zimmerman's account "was supported by physical evidence and testimony." Lee also revealed that Zimmerman told police "he had lost sight of Trayvon and was returning to his truck to meet the police officer when he says he was attacked by Trayvon."

(Clip from 911 call)

911 Operator: Are you following him?

Mr. ZIMMERMAN: Yeah.

Fallout from the Trayvon Martin shooting includes calls for Sanford police chief to resign; NBC's Savannah Guthrie and former prosecutor Star Jones discuss the case NBC News Transcripts March 22,

911 Operator: OK, we don't need you to do that.

(End of clip)

LUCIANO: In response to the uproar surrounding Zimmerman's 911 call, Chief Lee clarified, "The call taker's suggestion is not a lawful order that Mr. Zimmerman would be required to follow."

Meanwhile, court documents reveal Zimmerman was involved in a domestic violence dispute with his ex-fiancee, Veronica Zuazo, back in 2005. Injunctions were issued against both. Those who know Zimmerman growing up say they don't believe he could shoot someone in cold blood.

Mr. GEORGE HALL (Neighbor): He was a very positive guy in my eyes, and I'm shocked.

LUCIANO: Back at the scene of the shooting, authorities Wednesday combed the gated grounds for evidence. The case will be presented to a grand jury next month. As Trayvon's parents told Matt Wednesday on TODAY, they hope justice will be served.

Ms. FULTON: My heart hurts because this guy has not been arrested. And I just feel like the Sanford Police Department, they decided on the scene to be the judge and jury.

LUCIANO: An online petition to bring George Zimmerman to justice is very close to reaching the million-signature mark this morning as Sanford prepares for a massive rally today. George Zimmerman has yet to make a comment on the case. Matt:

MATT LAUER, co-host:

Lilia Luciano in Sanford this morning. Lilia, thank you very much.

Savannah Guthrie is TODAY's legal correspondent. Star Jones is a former prosecutor and a veteran legal commentator.

Ladies, good morning to both of you.

SAVANNAH GUTHRIE reporting:

Good morning.

Ms. STAR JONES (Attorney and Former Prosecutor): Good morning.

LAUER: Justice is supposed to be blind, but apparently it's not deaf. How much do you think public pressure and outcry are driving the justice system right now?

Ms. JONES: I think that public pressure has driven the investigation. The--I don't think that the federal government would be involved without the public pressure, without the outcry, without social media having really driven it. However, when it comes to court, when it comes to bringing the case, it will rely on evidence and it will rely on law. They have to find a federal question for them to even investigate.

GUTHRIE: I was going to pick up on that. So the pressure led to this federal investigation and now perhaps there's an expectation or a hope that there will be federal charges. This is an extremely hard row to hoe. It's hard to make a federal case here.

LAUER: Well, it's--just in going into court in the first place, I'm trying to imagine a prosecutor dealing with an incident that involved two people--one person can't tell his side of the story because he's dead; the other, George

Fallout from the Trayvon Martin shooting includes calls for Sanford police chief to resign; NBC's Savannah Guthrie and former prosecutor Star Jones discuss the case NBC News Transcripts March 22,

Zimmerman, maintains he acted in self-defense. How is a prosecutor, if charges are brought, going to prove this case beyond a reasonable doubt?

Ms. JONES: The big issue is how you investigate right when the incident occurred. Some of the reason that you don't have any more evidence is because local law enforcement fell down on their job. The ability to collect evidence right around the incident, to talk to witnesses, to get on the phone, to canvass the neighborhood, that's what you do.

LAUER: Yeah, but a smart defense attorney can stand up in court and raise all kinds of possible scenarios to raise that doubt.

GUTHRIE: There's no question about it. I don't think anybody who looks at these facts thinks, 'Oh, this is a slam dunk for prosecutors'...

Ms. JONES: Mm-hmm.

GUTHRIE: ...that they just decided not to charge. I think the real criticism here, though, is that we didn't even get to that point, that the police appear to have done a very cursory investigation, didn't do the bare minimum, didn't test, for example, the shooter for drugs or alcohol, didn't really press the witnesses, and therefore we haven't even gotten to the point of charges.

LAUER: We're learning some things about George Zimmerman. For example, that he called 911 46 times as a private citizen or Neighborhood Watch commander since 2004. Some people might look at that and say this is a law enforcement wannabe looking for trouble around every corner. Couldn't you flip that on the other side and say 46 calls to 911 and never before did he take out his weapon and injure someone and harm someone that he--that he called to report?

Ms. JONES: I don't bring a judgment on Mr. Zimmerman and what his motivation was at this point. I don't have enough evidence. But the big problem is his approach in demanding that this young man produce evidence of who he is. You don't get to come up to an American citizen and say, 'Identify yourself,' and 'Why are you here?' The Constitution does not allow for that.

GUTHRIE: I think--you point out why this is a difficult case, because you take that set of facts, the 46 calls to law enforcement, they can be argued either way. But never forget the standard is so high in criminal court. It's proof beyond a reasonable doubt. There are lots of questions about the evidence in this case. But people feel there should be more of a process and an arrest would start that process.

LAUER: Well, we're going to get that process, it seems, no question about it.

Ms. JONES: Mm-hmm.

LAUER: Maybe not an arrest, but we are going to get up to a full investigation.

Ms. JONES: Yes. Which is what they've asked for.

LAUER: Savannah and Star, thanks very much. Appreciate it, ladies.

It's now 14 after the hour. Here's Ann.

CURRY: Matt, thanks.

LOAD-DATE: March 23, 2012