

Trayvon Martin: beyond the speculation & towards the truth

By Kate Gibson
STAFF WRITER

Senators and Representatives donning hooded sweatshirts. Student protestors rattling bags of Skittles in unison. Social networks and blogospheres erupting with demands for action.

"We want arrests ... shot in the chest," chanted thousands of protestors on March 31 in Sanford, Fla., reported Reuters.

This group, along with countless others across the nation, cried out for justice in the name of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old boy who was shot in the chest and killed by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch captain, on Feb. 26 in Sanford.

The facts may easily lead to sensationalism — Martin was unarmed and black; Zimmerman is Hispanic and had previously faced assault and domestic abuse charges. In addition, the killing took place in Sanford, which has had a history of racial animosity. However, the criminal justice system does not allow room for speculation.

"The public will react first and then think when it comes to this case," said senior Casey Mann, a criminal studies and psychology double major. "The public wants to think what they want and ignore how the justice system works. You have to account for all of the facts of this case."

We may never know what happened on Feb. 26, but we can reveal the way that the law should have worked given the situation.

"It concerns me that the people of the

public are hollering for (Zimmerman's) arrest," said Jerry Joplin, professor of justice and policy studies. "That's just nonsense. Let's holler for an investigation."

The integrity of the initial investigation has come under fire. ABC News reported that an officer at the scene "corrected" an eye witness and that a narcotics detective,

no evidence of blood on Zimmerman's face or shirt.

Additionally, recordings of a neighbor's 911 call captured cries for help moments before the gunshot that took Martin's life. Zimmerman asserted that he was the one screaming; however, two independent forensic experts determined with

around so long that the FBI is moving in now."

Another problem made evident by this incident is the role of the Neighborhood Watch and similar types of "privatized police."

"A neighborhood watch program should be vetted by the police department, and then the police department should make it very clear: you do not carry weapons," said Joplin. He added that currently, "we don't know how to regulate those private organizations to make sure they would maintain standards of law enforcement that we would like to see in the public sector."

Even though the Neighborhood Watch does tell its members not to carry firearms, Zimmerman has a concealed carry permit and had his firearm when he spotted Martin.

"And the big thing that private police can do is that they can profile," added Sanjay Marwah, assistant professor of justice and policy studies. "And they assume that profiling is acceptable and legitimate, and that's the problem."

The federal government now leads the investigation, and a grand jury will convene on April 10 to determine if there is enough evidence to arrest Zimmerman. But, the outcome may not be the swift justice that the public demands.

"(With) the nature of the publicity that's being given to this case, it's going to be very difficult to see any outcome as being satisfactory," said Marwah. "It's going to be incomplete justice for most parties, if not all."



Within the Justice and Policy studies office, frustration with the Trayvon Martin case was shown in a productive fashion by calling out for justice. The justice skittles have remained on display for days.

not a homicide detective, first interviewed Zimmerman.

ABC News also released surveillance footage of Zimmerman exiting a squad car and entering the police station. Police reports and Zimmerman's testimony state that Zimmerman sustained a bloody or broken nose in addition to scrapes on the back of his head. On the footage, there is

"reasonable scientific certainty" that the voice on the tapes is not Zimmerman's, according to the Orlando Sentinel.

"The problem is that the police and the prosecutor have not been forthcoming," said Joplin. "They could solve this thing in a heartbeat — they could step in there and say, 'We have investigated this and this is our finding' ... but the police messed

Endangered island nations call for global action on climate change

By Linda Catoe
STAFF WRITER

On Wednesday, recently-ousted Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed appeared on CBS's "Late Show with David Letterman" to promote his film, "The Island President," and to send an important message to Americans.

"If carbon emissions were to stop today, the planet would not see a difference for 60 to 70 years," Nasheed said. "If carbon emissions continue at the rate they are climbing today, my country will be underwater in seven years."

Nasheed is an outspoken advocate in combating global warming and was the first democratically-elected president of Maldives. On the Late Show, Nasheed told Letterman that because his nation, located in the Indian Ocean, is a mere six and a half feet above sea level, speculative talks are underway to move the residents out of harm's way.

"The science is very sorted. If we are unable to do something during the next seven years, we will be in serious trouble," Nasheed said.

Nasheed's appearance on the late night show came on the heels of the BBC's report that temperatures could rise up to 3 C/5.4 F by 2050.

According to the BBC, a study of 10,000 climate simulations projected the rise in planet temperatures.

The Climateprediction.net study, part of the BBC's Climate Change Experiment, used a complex atmosphere-ocean model to run simulations. The projected rise in the planet temperature is significantly higher than those from other models.

To reflect uncertainties about the climate system, physical parameters were varied between runs of the model, with the forecast range coming from models "that accurately reproduced observed temperature changes over the last 50 years," the BBC said.

The University of Oxford's School of Geography and Environment and Department of Physics Professor and

Climateprediction.net's chief investigator Myles Allen said that the study was needed because other climate modeling studies did not explore the full range of uncertainty.

Other climate researchers weighed in saying the results were very promising.

"Better constrained climate projections are needed to help plan a wide range of adaptation measures, from sea defenses to water storage capacity and biodiversity conservation areas," said Professor Corinne Le Quere, director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of East Anglia.

"If carbon emissions continue at the rate they are climbing today, my country will be underwater in seven years."

Mohamed Nasheed, former Maldives President

"I have reservations about relying on a model that combines land temperatures — which are clearly rising — with sea temperatures which can be subject to big decadal fluctuations," said Julian Hunt, emeritus professor of climate modeling at University College London.

According to the BBC, Hunt did agree that the higher end of the temperature predictions looked increasingly likely, though he cited different specific causes. The causes he pointed to specified methane released from the seabed and land, "massive changes" in reflection of light at some places on the Earth's surface, and reduced air pollution in Asia that

will reflect less solar energy back into space.

But what can people do to save the planet? There are many groups dedicated to bringing people together in this fight to protect the environment.

"This year Earth Hour has launched 'I Will If You Will' on YouTube to showcase how everyone has the power to change the world we live in, bringing together the world's biggest social video platform with the 'world's largest action for the environment,'" said World Wildlife Fund's Earth Hour on its website. "The task is simple, head to YouTube to tell us what you are willing to do to save the planet or accept one of the challenges we've already received from our supporters."

In other climate change initiatives, the Telegraph recently reported that Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, was in negotiations to buy land in Fiji for Kiribati's 113,000 inhabitants. Kiribati — located in the South Pacific — is also expected to soon be submerged in water as a result of climate change.

"We don't want 100,000 people from Kiribati coming to Fiji in one go," he told the state-run Fiji One television channel.

"They need to find employment, not as refugees but as immigrant people with skills to offer, people who have a place in the community, people who will not be seen as second-class citizens."

"What we need is the international community to come up with an urgent funding package to deal with that ambition, and the needs of countries like Kiribati," said Tong.

Mohamed Nasheed concluded his appearance on Letterman with a cautionary remark to Americans.

"What happens to the Maldives today is going to happen to everyone else tomorrow," he said. "Manhattan is an island and I don't think that island is much different."

"I'm afraid the American people are not telling their leaders enough on what to do with climate change," Nasheed added.