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LUME 92 - NUMBER 30

**DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA - SATURDAY, JULY 27, 2013** 

**TELEPHONE (919) 682-2913** PRICE: 30

# Obama opens up about race, Trayvon Martin trial

By Darlene Superville

WASHINGTON (AP) \_ President Barack Obama kept his own counsel after the six women deciding whether eorge Zimmerman deserved prison time for the shooting death of Trayvon Martin delivered their verdict. releasg just a written statement appealing for calm the day after the ex-neighborhood watchman had been cleared of

But the president was quietly keeping tabs on the country's response to the outcome of the racially charged trial. articularly in the black community. He discussed it with his family. He was ready to address it during a series of terviews with Spanish-language TV stations earlier in the week. if asked. He wasn't.

By July 18, aides said Obama was telling top advisers the country needed to hear from him, not in a way the hite House would script it but in a frank discussion of his views and experiences as a black man in America. On July 19, he stepped up to the podium in the White House briefing room and delivered a rare and extensive flection on race by a president who has shied away from the issue even as he is constantly dogged by it.

"When Trayvon Martin was first shot, I said that this could have been my son," Obama said. "Another way of ying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago."

For Obama, the product of black-white parentage who has written about his own struggles with racial identity it has kept the subject at arm's length in office, his remarks represented an unusual embrace of his standing as e nation's first black president and of the longing by many black Americans for him to give voice to their experi-

"When you think about why, in the African-American community at least, there's a lot of pain around what ppened here. I think it's important to recognize that the African-American community is looking at this issue rough a set of experiences and a history that ... doesn't go away." he said.

"There are very few African-American men in this country who haven't had the experience of being followed hen they were shopping in a department store. That includes me." Obama said. (Continued On Page 3)



PRESIDENT OBAMA

### Blacks Who Stand Their round Often Imprisoned

By Zenitha Prince

Special to the NNPA from the AFRO he recent acquittal of neighborhood watchman George Zimmer-

in the shooting death of 17-year-old unarmed Trayvon Martin led to intense scrutiny of Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law and lar "no retreat" self-defense laws and their impact on people of

I think the Trayvon Martin case highlighted the racial inequalithat exist in American society," said Brendan Fischer, general nsel of the Center for Media and Democracy. "It is a symbol of the American justice system devalues the lives of people of col-And], 'Stand Your Ground' has embedded a lot of these injustices the system. Statistics have shown its application has been any-

upported by the National Rifle Association, "Stand Your and" was passed by the Florida legislature in 2005. The measure ed age-old self-defense principle on its head by allowing persons se deadly force to defend themselves, without first trying to re-, if they have what they consider a reasonable belief that they

he law's template was then adopted by the American Legislative nange Council, a nonprofit organization made up of corporations, dations and legislators that advance federalist and conservative ic policies, authorities said. Since Florida passed the law, similar sures have been introduced in one form or another in about 30 s, usually those with state legislatures dominated by Republi-

That law gives law-and-order activists, right-wingers and vigies an arguable basis for defense and opens up a pathway for undispositions of justice because it allows civilians to shoot first make certain determinations later," said Dwight Pettit, 67, a re-

ned black attorney in Baltimore. ettit drew comparisons to police-involved shootings of African ericans when the officers make claims such as "I was in fear for ife," or "I thought he was reaching for his gun," and are exoner-He discusses the phenomenon in his soon-to-be-released book

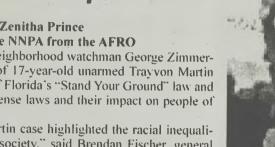
Blacks don't fare well with these laws at all," Pettit said. "It's her lessening of protection for African Americans.

n analysis conducted by the Tampa Bay Times last year showed defendants in Florida who employ the "Stand Your Ground" deare more successful when the victim is black. In its examinaof 200 applicable cases, the Times found that 73 percent of those killed a black person were acquitted, compared to 59 percent of who killed a white.

imilarly, an analysis of Supplemental Homicide Reports subed by local law enforcement to the FBI between 2005 and 2010 onstrates that in cases with a black shooter and a white victim, ate of justifiable homicide rulings is about 1 percent. However, shooter is white and the victim is black, it is ruled justified in ercent of cases in non-Stand Your Ground states. In Stand Your and states, the rate is even higher - almost 17 percent, according hn Roman of the Urban Institute.

he trends could partly explain Zimmerman's verdict, some legal rts said. While his defense team did not invoke the law, Circuit t Judge Debra Nelson introduced the principle in her instruc-

f George Zimmerman was not engaged in an unlawful activity was attacked in any place where he had a right to be, he had no to retreat and had the right to stand his ground and meet force force, including deadly force, if he reasonably believed that it necessaryto do so to prevent death or great bodily harm to himor another or to prevent the commission of a forcible felony," aid in her instructions to the jury of one Hispanic and five white



Tampa, Fla. Attorney Kamilah Perry points out unfairness of Florida laws (Photo courtesy of Florida Courier).

# Pitt schools segregation lawsuit in federal court

By The Associated Press

GREENVILLE (AP) - Nearly 60 years after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down racial segregation in public schools, lawyers are set to square off in a federal courtroom in eastern North Carolina over whether the effects of that Jim Crow past still persist.

A trial was to begin July 22 in U.S. District Court in Greenville in the case of Everett v. Pitt County Board of Education.

A group of black parents represented by the UNC Center for Civil Rights will ask the court to reverse a 2011 student assignment plan they say effectively resegregated several schools in the district.

Lawyers for the Pitt schools will ask a judge to rule that the district has achieved "unitary status," meaning the "vestiges of past discrimination have been eliminated to the extent practicable." The designation would end federal oversight of the Pitt schools, in place

This case is the first of its kind brought in North Carolina since 1999. More than 100 school districts across the South are still under federal court supervision. The decision in the Pitt case is expected to be widely followed by those other school systems.

Mark Dorosin, the managing attorney for the UNC Center for Civil Rights, said the case is a critical test of the continued viability of one of the most fundamental principles of school desegregation: That school districts still under court order must remedy the lasting vestiges of racial discrimination.

"These districts can't just rely on the passage of time and wait out these orders, they must develop and implement policies that remedy the continuing legacy of racial disparities in all aspects of their schools," Dorosin said last week. "Once a district is declared unitary and the desegregation order is lifted, although school administrators can still utilize race conscious measures to ensure diverse schools, few are willing to do so. The sad reality is that, as a result, many districts quickly resegregate."

Nearly half of the more than 23,000 students in the Pitt County schools are black, while about 38 percent are white, according to statistics from the N.C. Department of Public Instruction. In late 2010.

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# Trayvon Martin's friend gets scholarship offer

**By Suzanne Gamboa** 

WASHINGTON (AP) - While some looked at murder trial witness Rachel Jeantel and saw either a defiant young woman or a victim, Tom Joyner looked at her and

The nationally syndicated radio personality and philanthropist says he was touched by Jeantel, who spent two days testifying in the trial of George Zimmerman about her last conversation with her friend Trayvon



Miss Rachel Jeantel

In fact, Joyner was so moved that he has offered to pay for Jeantel to attend the historically black college of her choice. And she's accepted.

Joyner explained the offer in an open letter to Jeantel and "all the young people in this country who, through no fault of their own, find yourself living in underserved communities and not yet figuring out your way in this world."



TOM JOYNER

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