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**March 17, 2013**

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“Walter D. Palmer Winter Classic Championship”

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**July 16, 2013**

**Philadelphia Tribune**

“Activists, organizations call for massive Florida boycott”

By Wilford Shamlin III

A day after a Florida jury cleared a neighborhood watch captain of all charges in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, local Black activists say they are hardly surprised by the verdict, saying it only highlighted that institutional racism still exists in American in spite of advances in civil rights for Blacks and other minorities.

"It simply points out that America is still not free from its institutional practices," said Dr. **Walter Palmer**, of the **Palmer** Leadership Learning Partners Charter School. "The white-Black binary, the struggle between whites and Blacks, is still alive."

Chad Lassiter, co-founder and president of Black Men at University of Pennsylvania's Center for Social Policy and Practice, had stronger words, "It's an American tragedy wrought with the grippings of a white supremacy, white privilege and continue to dehumanization of Black male humanity."

"I understand that you can never get justice for the most part on stolen lands," Lassiter said, adding that he believes the all-women jury bought into the racial stereotypes and myth of Black males portrayed as "monsters."

Lassiter said the verdict sends a loud and clear message that "you can kill someone and get away with it."

"Even in his death, he (Martin) was accused of being the aggressor. People of color and good decent people with a moral compass will recognize America is racist. Always has been, always will be. As a prisoner of hope, we should want to uproot American racism and all forms of oppression and marginalization daily," Lassiter said.

He called on President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder to stand united with the Black grassroots movement and others who support the ideals of social justice and fairness in trials.

"The monsters aren't people of color. I have never seen ... a Tray von Martin, Rodney King or Emmitt Till on the other side of the color line. Racism is permanent. It's time for us to call Zimmerman for what he is: a white supremacist," Lassiter said.

A Black activist called on solidarity among Black people and Black organizations in joining a national boycott of Florida, refusing to vacation or travel to the Sunshine State as part of a national boycott intended to pressure state lawmakers in Florida to repeal a Stand Your Ground law on self-defense.

The statute gives wide latitude in the use of deadly force if they fear death or bodily harm, and investigators say that statute prevented additional charges being brought against Zimmerman. More than 30 other states have similar laws on the books, said Bilah Quayyum who asked for support from major political organizations like the NAACP, and fraternities and sororities.

"We need to take action as an African-American community in this country. The economic impact would have a tremendous impact on the economy of Florida," said Quayyum, who is executive director of Father's Day Rally Committee.

He also wants Black people to avoid planning vacations to popular travel destinations including Disney World and refuse travel to the Sunshine State for conference trips, going so far as to cancel booked reservations and holding off on any planning future travel to the state.

"That's action. That's direct action that can have impact on the issue," said Quayyum. "I'm very disappointed at the outcome of the trial. I don't know how you have a trial, where the persecutor turns out to be the victim and the victim turns out to be the persecutor. The logic of this whole trial is crazy to me."

Palmer agreed for the need to challenge existing laws.

"A lot of these law have to be challenged - and it will only be challenged when people rise up. And their voices shouldn't be quieted," Palmer said.

"White people look at it completely different than Black people. I see it as a travesty and a tragedy, the killing of a boy. What blows a lot of people's minds is that Zimmerman was told to stand down,

but instead he pursued Trayvon. Most people, common-sense people, would say he was the aggressor."

Anthony Romero, executive director of American Civil Liberties Union, called on the Department of Justice to examine whether the fatal shooting was a federal civil rights violation or hate crime and for stronger guidelines on use of race in federal law enforcement. The ACLU is also urging Congress to pass the End Racial Profiling Act.

"These specific actions would go a long way to ameliorate the widespread problem of racial profiling. We need solutions not only in Trayvon Martin's case, but also systemic reform," Romero stated.

Obama released a statement Sunday following the announcement of the verdict. "I now ask every American to respect the call for calm reflection from two parents who lost their young son. And as we do, we should ask ourselves if we're doing all we can to widen the circle of compassion and understanding in our own communities."

He urged more people to address ways to stop gun violence and how to prevent future tragedies from happening again. "As citizens, that's a job for all of us. That's the way to honor Trayvon Martin," Obama said in prepared remarks.

Mayor Michael Nutter also called for calm reflection, stating: "A young Black man is dead without any real explanation. Trayvon Martin, who at trial was made to appear threatening when all he had was a bag of Skittles and an ice tea, should not have died at Zimmerman's hands and I believe the jury should have exacted a penalty."

"We must all commit ourselves to eliminating the conditions in our community that cause too many people to see young African American males as 'threats' instead of seeing the promise within each child," Nutter stated.

#### Sidebar

A woman who refused to be identified carries a young boy on her shoulders as she participates in a protest the day after a jury found George Zimmerman not guilty in the Florida shooting death of teenager Trayvon Martin on Sunday in Baltimore.

#### Sidebar