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# Obama urges 'soul-searching' after Florida teen's death

'If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon,' president tells reporters

CBC News Posted: Mar 23, 2012 1:26 PM ET | Last Updated: Mar 23, 2012 5:59 PM ET



Trayvon Martin was walking home from a convenience store when he was shot and killed. Neighbourhood Watch volunteer George Zimmerman said he shot the teen in self-defence and has not been charged. (Handout/Reuters)

U.S. President Barack Obama on Friday called the shooting death of Florida teenager Trayvon Martin a tragedy and said the boy's parents are right to expect Americans will be looking at the incident "with the seriousness it deserves."

Answering a question from a reporter following announcement at the White House on another matter, Obama urged authorities to fully investigate what happened Feb. 26 in Sanford, a community north of Orlando, Fla., when the unarmed black teen was shot by a neighbourhood watch leader who has told police he fired in self-defence.

"What happened to Trayvon Martin is a tragedy. There needs to be a thorough investigation that reassures the public that justice is carried out with impartiality and integrity," Obama said.



U.S. President Barack Obama pledged to get to the bottom of the shooting death of Florida teenager Trayvon Martin. (Jonathan Ernst/Reuters)

He also alluded to Florida's so-called "Stand Your Ground" law, which allows people to defend themselves with deadly force and does not require a retreat in the face of danger.

"I think all of us have to do some soul-searching to figure out how something like this happens, and that means we examine the laws — the context for what happened — as well as the specifics of the incident," the nation's first black president said.

Obama expressed sympathy for the teen's parents and said every American should look at the incident "with the seriousness it deserves,"

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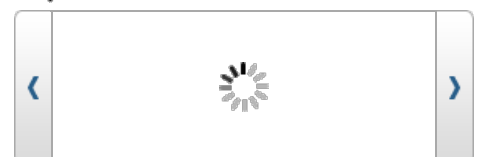
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adding "we're going to get to the bottom of what happened."

## 'I think about my own kids'

"I can only imagine what these parents are going through," Obama said. "And when I think about this boy, I think about my own kids. And I think every parent in America should be able to understand why it is absolutely imperative that we investigate every aspect of this."

"But my main message is to the parents of Trayvon Martin. You know, if I had a son he'd look like Trayvon. And I think they are right to expect that all of us as Americans are going to take this with the seriousness it deserves, and we're going to get to the bottom of exactly what happened."

The teen's parents Tracy Martin and Sybrina Fulton, civil rights activists and others who have rallied in protest say they won't be satisfied until the admitted shooter George Zimmerman, 28, is arrested.

At a rally in Sanford on Thursday night, protesters including civil rights leader Al Sharpton called for Zimmerman to be prosecuted.

"We cannot allow a precedent when a man can just kill one of us, and then walk out with the murder weapon," said Sharpton, flanked by Martin's parents and a stage full of supporters.

The U.S. Justice Department and FBI have opened a civil rights investigation, and the [local prosecutor before he quit](#) the case convened a grand jury April 10 to determine whether to charge Zimmerman.



George Zimmerman, a Sanford, Fla., neighbourhood watch captain, insists he shot unarmed teenager Trayvon Martin in self-defence. (Orange County Jail via Miami Herald/Associated Press)

Martin was returning from a trip to a convenience store when Zimmerman started following him, telling police dispatchers he looked suspicious. At some point, the two got into a fight and Zimmerman pulled out his gun.

Zimmerman told police Martin attacked him after he had given up on chasing the teenager and was returning to his sport utility vehicle.

With files from The Associated Press

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