

Not guilty verdict in George Zimmerman trial draws mixed reaction

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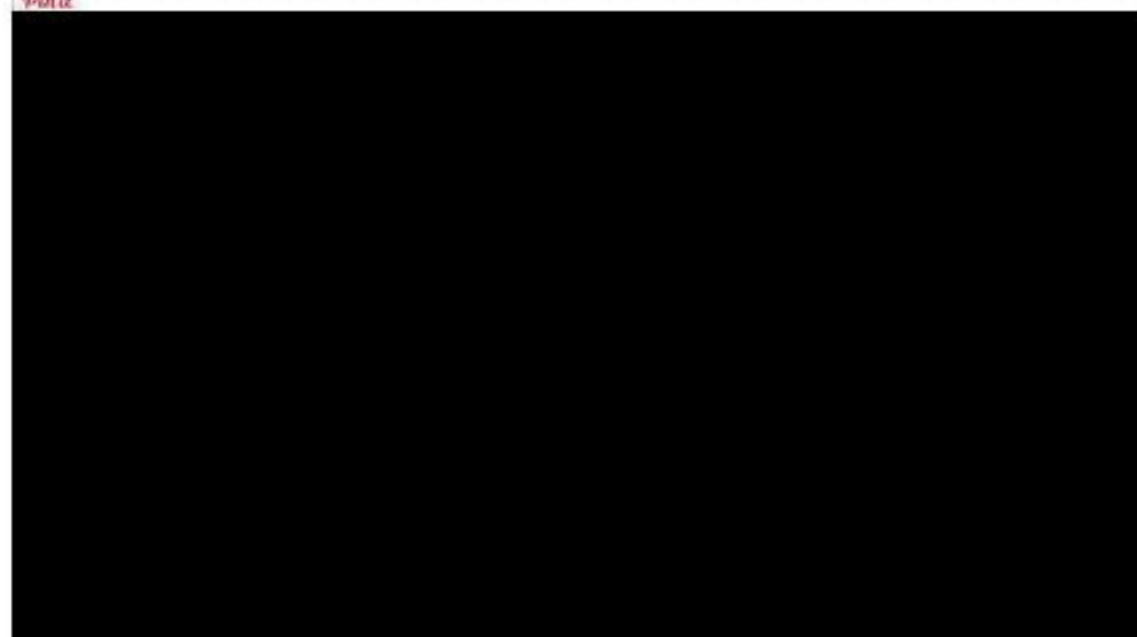
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George Zimmerman found not guilty: George Zimmerman, the man accused of murdering 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, has been found not guilty of second-degree murder and manslaughter in the case that has gripped the nation.

Written by Rick Nesbitt Florida Today

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SANFORD, FLA. — Demonstrators exclaimed disbelief, one by one, as they learned on Saturday night that George Zimmerman was found not guilty of murdering Trayvon Martin.

At 10:02 p.m. EST "Justice for Trayvon!" chants erupted from fist-waving people at the fountain across from the courthouse.

"The system has failed!" irate demonstrators chanted.

The waiting game under way for the hundreds of protesters anticipating a verdict outside the Seminole County Criminal Justice Center in Sanford, Fla., was finally over.

Nina Mays of Tulsa, Okla., was outraged by the verdict.

"This is going to impact a lot of people in a lot of different places," Mays said minutes after the announcement, standing a few yards from chanting protesters.

"How is the law different for one and not for the other? Trayvon was standing his ground when Zimmerman came and messed with him, a young man coming from the store," she said.

"When do you gun down people for no reason? And why don't you get locked up for it when you do it?" she demanded.

The majority of the more than 350 sign-waving demonstrators wanted George Zimmerman convicted.

Ramon Silvia, 27, had been waiting for the verdict.

"I think they are wrong," he said.

'Correct verdict'

William Memola, an Orlando flooring contractor, displayed signs supporting Zimmerman on Friday and Saturday.

"It was the correct verdict. There are no winners. It's just, the law was written, and they followed the law. They got this one right," Memola said, standing on a sidewalk near the courthouse.

"But there are no winners. It's terrible for the Martin family and everybody involved. There's a young boy who lost his life," he said.

"It's just tragic. You can't help the verdict. It is what it is. They wrote the law — they followed the law," he said.

The Melbourne resident believes the jury made the right decision, but he didn't say it very loudly.

The 49-year old declined to be interviewed on video, saying he was uncomfortable because of the "state of things."

A woman standing next to him, who also supported George Zimmerman, declined an interview entirely. "I want to make it back to the car," she said.

'Nobody wins tonight'

Tampa resident Craig Woodord brought his 13-year-old son, Dante, to the courthouse Saturday afternoon to watch history in the making.

Dante wore a blue hooded sweatshirt and carried a bag of Skittles and a can of watermelon Arizona Iced Tea, just as the slain teen had done.

"My son's 13. And it could have been him. And so my heart really, really goes out to the Martin family, who lost their son that was doing absolutely nothing wrong," Woodord said. "But nobody wins tonight. George Zimmerman is free, but he has to come out into society — living with a lot of people that don't like him."

Fifteen year old Tristan Bailey was stunned after hearing the verdict. "I don't know what to say," he said.

The teen identifies with Trayvon Martin. "He was just a teen, trying to live his dreams," Tristan said.

Shannon Mickey was also filled with disappointment.

"We were all nervous when we knew the verdict was coming down," the 41-year-old said. "It was a sense of shock. An unbelievable sadness."

Banner folded

For roughly 12 hours, Biko Misabiko stood at the courthouse fountain helping hold a large black-and-red banner that declared "End Racial Oppression: Justice 4 Trayvon."

At 10:55 p.m., the 21-year-old Florida State College at Jacksonville student folded up the banner — which had been prominently featured in newscasts around the world — and effectively ended Saturday's demonstration.

"I was blessed to be a part of this historic moment. The system just failed us again, as young black men," Misabiko said, tucking

"Oh man, this is a very hurtful day. Hurtful and disappointing," he said.

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