



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on June 6, 2012

Zimmerman Prosecutor Threatens to Sue Harvard for Professor's Criticism

Florida State Attorney Angela Corey, who is prosecuting George Zimmerman for second-degree murder in the killing of Trayvon Martin, reportedly threatened to sue Harvard University over the barrage of [stinging criticism](#) made by law Professor Alan Dershowitz about the controversial prosecution. The well-known professor publicized the threats on Tuesday.



According to [Dershowitz's account](#), in a recent phone call to the Ivy League law school made by the special prosecutor, Corey said she would seek to have the Bar Association discipline him for his harsh comments about alleged prosecutorial misconduct. Corey also warned Harvard of potential legal action against Dershowitz for alleged libel and slander, the professor said.

But if the goal was to intimidate or silence Professor Dershowitz, Corey failed miserably. In his [widely published](#) statement about the threats, Dershowitz, citing the unalienable right to freedom of speech, continued to lambaste the special prosecutor for what he said was her deliberate effort to mislead the court by hiding the facts. And he promised to continue speaking out on this case and any others of his choosing.

"Even if Angela Corey's actions were debatable, which I believe they were not, I certainly have the right, as a professor who has taught and practiced criminal law nearly 50 years, to express a contrary view," wrote Dershowitz, probably the most outspoken and high-profile critic of the prosecution so far.

His public statements on the issue have been widely cited in media reports, and apparently the attacks infuriated Corey. But Dershowitz stood firm despite the threats, adding a new level of criticism against the prosecutor in a case that — due largely to overwhelming publicity and political opportunism — has divided much of the nation.

"The idea that a prosecutor would threaten to sue someone who disagrees with her for libel and slander, to sue the university for which he works, and to try to get him disbarred, is the epitome of unprofessionalism," Dershowitz added. "Fortunately, truth is a defense to such charges."

Special prosecutor Corey was appointed to lead the Zimmerman case by Florida Gov. Rick Scott after protests erupted over authorities' original decision not to file charges. Zimmerman, the former neighborhood watch captain in the residential community where the incident took place on the night of February 26, claims he fired in self-defense as Martin was pummeling him.

And evidence including photographs, witness statements, and medical reports would [tend to support his case](#), according to legal experts: His nose was broken and the back of his head had a large gash on it.



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When filing the probable-cause [affidavit charging](#) Zimmerman with murder, however, Corey omitted much of that crucial information despite swearing to tell the whole truth.

Dershowitz very publicly slammed what he called the prosecution's effort to mislead the court, saying it was improper, unethical, and possibly unlawful — with Corey singled out for much of the criticism. The law professor has also [stated repeatedly](#) that the charges against Zimmerman should be dropped immediately.

According to Dershowitz's summary of the prosecutor's threats, Corey recently called Harvard and engaged in "a 40-minute rant" during which she claimed that, because her nemesis works for the University and is identified as a law professor there, she had a right to sue the school as well. The communications official at Harvard, however, explained that "academic freedom" gave Dershowitz the right to express his opinion and that the University could not interfere.

"[Corey] did not seem to understand," Dershowitz wrote in his account of the ordeal, which was published by multiple news outlets on June 5. "She persisted in her nonstop whining, claiming that she is prohibited from responding to my attacks by the rules of professional responsibility — without mentioning that she has repeatedly held her own press conferences and made public statements throughout her career."

The liberal-leaning law professor also pointed out that, ironically, the prosecution had Zimmerman taken back into custody for [allegedly failing to tell the court](#) upfront that he had raised a significant amount of money online. Prosecutors said the defendant had misled the judge about his finances and should have his bond revoked. The judge agreed, giving Zimmerman 48 hours to surrender to authorities.

"In her motion to revoke his bail, Corey argued that Zimmerman 'intentionally deceived the court' by making 'false representations,'" explained Dershowitz. "The same can be said about prosecutor Corey. She too misled and deceived the court by submitting an affidavit that relied on a review of photographs and other reports that showed injuries to Zimmerman, without disclosing the existence of these highly relevant injuries."

Dershowitz ripped into Corey for the "misleading" omissions, saying the now-famous state prosecutor should go back to law school if she believed it was acceptable to submit affidavits that did not include the whole truth. Indeed, prisons are full of felons who submitted sworn statements containing half-truths, Dershowitz added — and Corey probably prosecuted some of them.

Despite the apparent attempts at intimidation, however, the outspoken law professor promised to keep offering his stance on important public matters. "I will continue to criticize prosecutors when their actions warrant criticism, to praise them when their actions deserve praise, and to comment on ongoing cases in the court of public opinion," he said in the statement.

American law and tradition have always had very strong protections for free speech — most notably the First Amendment to the Constitution, likely the strongest guarantee in the world. And as it relates to public officials, securing a victory for libel against a commentator is tough, according to experts. Corey would not only have to prove that Dershowitz's public statements about her actions were false, but that he made them with "actual malice."

"If Angela Corey doesn't like the way freedom of expression operates in the United States, there are plenty of countries where truthful criticism of prosecutors and other government officials result in disbarment, defamation suits and even criminal charges," Dershowitz concluded in his scathing attack.



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“We do not want to become such a country.”

Zimmerman is currently back in custody after the judge [agreed](#) with a motion filed by prosecutors seeking to have his bail revoked. During his initial bond hearing, both Zimmerman and his wife failed to disclose over \$130,000 raised from supporters over the internet. His attorney informed the court and prosecutors days after bail was set at \$150,000, but the state argued that Zimmerman had originally misled the court and should be apprehended or at least have his bond amount raised.

The defense attorney [decided](#) to delay a motion seeking another bond, but a hearing about the issue should be scheduled in the coming weeks. In the meantime, Zimmerman — who firmly maintains his innocence — will be held in jail, reportedly isolated from other inmates due to the high-profile nature of the case.

Numerous legal experts have [suggested](#) the chances of a murder conviction are very slim — especially considering the evidence that has emerged so far. However, at least three witnesses have [changed](#) their original stories in ways that could be damaging to Zimmerman. And analysts following the case believe that there is likely still some evidence that has not been publicly released.

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Photo: State Attorney Angela Corey, special prosecutor in the Trayvon Martin case, announces that George Zimmerman will be charged with second-degree murder in the shooting death of

Trayvon Martin during a news conference, Apr. 11, 2012, in Jacksonville, Fla. : AP Images



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