



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on June 13, 2012

Zimmerman's Wife Arrested for Alleged Perjury

After her husband George Zimmerman was charged with second-degree murder for the killing of Trayvon Martin, Shellie Zimmerman told a Florida court that she did not know how much money the couple had available for his bail. But according to prosecutors, who officially charged Mrs. Zimmerman and had her arrested Tuesday, that was perjury — a deliberate lie told while under oath.



According to state officials, the 25-year-old wife was taken into custody and booked into a local jail on the felony charge after prosecutors obtained a warrant for her arrest. She was released the same day on \$1,000 bond.

But Mr. Zimmerman — who maintains that he shot Martin in self-defense after being assaulted — remains back in custody. The Florida judge in the case [revoked his bond](#) earlier this month over alleged falsehoods about the family's financial situation.

During a bond hearing in late April, Seminole County Circuit Court Judge Kenneth Lester repeatedly asked Mrs. Zimmerman how much money the couple had available. They had already collected well over \$100,000 in donations from supporters through a website by that point.

In court, however, Mrs. Zimmerman said she did not know how much had been raised. "Um, not that I'm aware of," she responded when asked whether or not they had any money.

Mr. Zimmerman remained quiet throughout the questioning. And the judge, believing that the family was essentially destitute, set bail at a relatively modest \$150,000 considering the severity of the charges. Shortly thereafter, Zimmerman [was released](#) after posting the usual 10 percent and surrendering his passport.

A few days later, Zimmerman's defense attorney informed prosecutors and the court that the couple had raised a substantial amount of funds — more than \$200,000. However, according to an affidavit filed by the prosecution, Mrs. Zimmerman knew about that money all along. In fact, they allege, she had even been transferring large sums between bank accounts and discussing it over the phone with her husband while he was in jail.

Court documents cited in news reports claim that in the days prior to Zimmerman's bond hearing, his wife transferred almost \$75,000 — all in amounts under \$10,000, a figure that, if exceeded, would have triggered automatic federal reporting requirements. A separate transfer of \$47,000 was made into Zimmerman's sister's bank account the next day, according to the prosecution.

An earlier affidavit filed by prosecutors also [alleged](#) that the couple spoke in a crude "code" — referring to \$150,000 as \$150, for example — during phone calls recorded by jail officials. Mr. Zimmerman also allegedly gave his wife instructions about what to do with the money, the document states.

"This court was led to believe they didn't have a single penny," state prosecutor Bernie De la Rionda told Judge Lester when asking that Zimmerman's bond be revoked. "It was misleading, and I don't know what words to use other than it was a blatant lie."



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Authorities have refused to comment on Mrs. Zimmerman's arrest so far.

Defense attorney Mark O'Mara has stated repeatedly that there was never any intention to deceive the court, suggesting it was an innocent misunderstanding by confused and frightened people rather than a deliberate lie. But apparently authorities did not believe it: Zimmerman was ordered back to jail on June 1, and his wife was charged with perjury.

"Now that she's being charged with a crime [Mr. Zimmerman]'s worried about her," O'Mara was [quoted as saying](#) after Mrs. Zimmerman's arrest, noting that he was surprised by the development. "I didn't actually get a phone call until after the arrest, and I had asked for one before that."

If convicted of the state perjury charge, Mrs. Zimmerman could end up serving up to five years in prison and paying hefty fines. A former federal prosecutor [cited](#) by the Associated Press said she may have also run afoul of several federal statutes if she deliberately structured the bank transfers to avoid triggering reporting requirements on sums over \$10,000.

However, Mrs. Zimmerman's legal troubles should not affect her husband's case, experts said, except by possibly tarnishing her credibility if she were to be called as a witness.

"The prosecutor sent a strong message that you have to tell the truth in court because it is the whole basis of the American judicial system," said attorney Benjamin Crump, who is representing Martin's family, following the news of Mrs. Zimmerman's arrest. "The credibility of each witness is always at the crux of every legal case."

Crump also praised the decision to revoke Zimmerman's bond earlier this month, again seizing on the announcement to highlight the question of credibility. "We fully expect that the special prosecutor will make George Zimmerman's credibility be front and center in this entire case," he was quoted as saying.

The same day as Mrs. Zimmerman was arrested, the court order revoking her husband's bond was publicly released. "There are several factors that weigh against his release," Judge Lester wrote. "Most importantly, though, is the fact that he has now demonstrated that he does not properly respect the law or the integrity of the judicial process."

Despite recent developments, Mr. Zimmerman's prosecution has stirred a great deal of controversy. Numerous legal experts continue to lambaste prosecutors for what they say was a deceptive affidavit charging the 28-year old with murder, pointing out that crucial evidence such as [medical reports](#) and [photographs showing his injuries](#) were omitted from the document.

Among the most outspoken and high-profile critics has been Harvard law Professor Alan Dershowitz, who repeatedly called for the murder charges to be dropped while accusing Special Prosecutor Angela Corey of serious misconduct. The blistering criticism even led Corey to threaten him and his employer with a lawsuit for libel and slander.

"In her motion to revoke his bail, Corey argued that Zimmerman 'intentionally deceived the court' by making 'false representations,'" [explained](#) Dershowitz in a statement revealing the State Attorney's threats. "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."

According to legal experts, much of the available evidence in the case would tend to support Zimmerman's claim that he fired on Martin in self-defense. Witness testimony, pictures of injuries on



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the back of Zimmerman's head, and medical records showing that he suffered from a broken nose are all consistent with his story, independent analysts say.

Until a frenzy of press coverage and mass protests led by race activists forced the case into the national spotlight, authorities had initially declined to press charges. Since then, however, the case has polarized much of the nation while sparking a wave of political opportunism on everything from restricting gun rights and self-defense protections to attacks on the independence of local law enforcement.

A state task force examining Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law, which allows would-be victims to defend themselves without having to flee, began official meetings this week. Despite a media-manufactured controversy over the state's strong self-defense protections, however, polls [show](#) the law is supported by an overwhelming majority of Americans.

Mr. Zimmerman's next bond hearing is set for June 29, but some analysts expect him to remain in custody until the case is resolved or taken to trial. A hearing date for Mrs. Zimmerman's perjury charge has not yet been selected.

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Photos: Photo released by the Seminole County Sheriff's Office shows Shellie Zimmerman (left), June 12, 2012; Special Prosecutor Angela Corey (right): AP Images



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