

THE DIALLO SHOOTING: THE REACTION; Worlds and Words Collide as Four Are Arraigned in Diallo Case

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Opposing worlds collided yesterday as the unsealing of indictments in the Amadou Diallo case brought nearly all the players in New York City's seven-week-old political drama striding across protest lines, making pronouncements and wading through jeering and cheering crowds.

It was a day of defiance, tears, slogans and, above all, loud public speeches.

The four police officers, mere silhouettes to the public since they shot and killed Mr. Diallo on Feb. 4, emerged from their arraignment to declare their innocence and bask in the embrace of supporters.

The Rev. Al Sharpton, as ubiquitous as ever, basked in his own limelight, marching the slightly bewildered and exhausted parents of Mr. Diallo from microphone to microphone, from rally to rally, from the Bronx down to lower Manhattan.

Although the case against the four officers will be decided at some point in a criminal trial, even the lawyers who are preparing a civil lawsuit against the city on behalf of the Diallo family -- the so-called dream team of Johnnie L. Cochran Jr. and Barry Scheck, who defended O. J. Simpson -- weighed in before television cameras with their analysis of the prosecution case.

For several hours, as the four officers were being arraigned inside the courthouse on second-degree murder charges, Lou Gehrig Plaza, on East 161st Street, was packed with people penned into separate groups by metal police barricades.

The crowd was about evenly divided between those protesting the Diallo killing and those supporting the accused officers. They dueled, but only with signs and rhetoric.

"No justice, no peace!" chanted the people on one side, who erupted in cheers and thrust their fists in the air at the sight of Mr. Sharpton and Mr. Diallo's mother and father.

The three had surprised the crowd by showing up on foot after walking the two blocks to the State Supreme Court from the office of Robert T. Johnson, the Bronx County District Attorney, where Mr. Johnson gave them a briefing on the charges voted by the grand jury last week.

On the other side of the barricades, a few of the estimated 300 off-duty police officers, rallied by the police union, the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, called out their own version of the chant. "No justice, no police!" they yelled.

But for the most part, the officers' demonstration was subdued, with many holding signs that said, "It's a tragedy, not a crime."

"I don't think there should be resentment toward police officers," said Tim Nickels, a union board member. "We're not the enemy of the citizens. We just want a fair trial."

At 4:30 P.M., Officer Sean Carroll, one of the officers charged in the Diallo case, emerged from the courthouse and headed for a microphone to declare his innocence.

On the way, he made an emotional detour into the group of police demonstrators, stopping to hug and be hugged, to shake hands and to pat his fellow officers on the back.

"We support you. We support you," several of them called out as, one by one, the three other accused officers made the same pilgrimage through the police union ranks. From the other side of Walton Avenue, a few onlookers greeted the sight of the police officers with shouts of "You're a murderer."

Mr. Diallo's mother, Kadiadou Diallo, and his father, Saikou Amad Diallo, seemed to be present at every event connected with the arraignment.

Mrs. Diallo arrived late in the morning at Newark International Airport from Guinea with her three remaining children, ages 20, 16 and 15.

Like her former husband, who flew from Guinea to the United States on Tuesday, she received V.I.P. treatment. The family was whisked off the Sabena Airlines plane to a special security building, where Mr. Sharpton was waiting to take her to the Bronx in a black stretch limousine.

In the courthouse, where she saw for the first time the four police officers who shot her son, Mrs. Diallo wept. Afterward, she said she could barely describe the emotions she felt at being in the same room with them. "It was pain," she said.

But for the Diallos, who speak English haltingly and appear devoted to Mr. Sharpton, the pain was not over. After thanking the crowd at the courthouse that had cheered them like rock stars when they appeared, the couple were driven in a limousine to the offices of Mr. Cochran at 99 Hudson Street.

There, to a room packed with reporters and television cameras, Mrs. Diallo made a short speech. "Amadou's blood will feed the battle for justice for everyone in this life," she said.

Then, as if to quell any suggestion that she has unwillingly put herself and her family at Mr. Sharpton's disposal, she added, "Rev. Al will be with my family, and I want to announce that we will sink or swim together."

But the mother's confidence flagged a short time later, when Peter J. Neufeld, one of the lawyers working with Mr. Cochran, animatedly described in graphic detail just where he believes the police bullets hit their son, and to what effect. Mrs. Diallo's eyes welled with tears and she slumped against Rev. Sharpton's shoulder. She was led, shakily, out of the room.

Mr. Cochran said they would prepare a civil lawsuit on behalf of the Diallo family, adding that "we will not seek to interfere in any manner with the criminal trial."

But while praising Mr. Johnson, they appeared to chafe a bit at not actually being able to prosecute the case themselves.

"We will be vigorous, we will be relentless in our pursuit of justice," Mr. Scheck said.

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