

CBS Mornings

02/16/24

7:00:23 a.m. [TEASE]

17 seconds

GAYLE KING: Fiery testimony by the D.A. in Trump's election case in Georgia over a personal relationship with a colleague. What could happen next.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Fani Willis Testimony]

FANI WILLIS: These people are on trial for trying to steal election in 2020. I'm not on trial, no matter how hard you try to put me on trial.

(...)

7:06:37 a.m.

3 minutes and 4 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Fani Willis Fires Back; GA Prosecutor Gives Defiant Testimony on Alleged Improper Relationship]

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: Now to dramatic testimony from the D.A. in charge of former President Trump's election interference case in Georgia. Fulton County D.A. Fani Willis was questioned over her personal relationship with a colleague. Trump and co-defendants want the case against them thrown out, but Willis says it's just a distraction. Nikole Killion was in the courtroom and joins us from Atlanta. Nikole, everybody across the country was riveted. Good morning.

NIKOLE KILLION: Hey, good morning to you, Vlad. And this could be another day of personal testimony as District Attorney Fani Willis faces more questioning. Her father is also expect to address the court. And, according to sources close to Willis, she demanded to testify, defying lawyers in her own office.

WILLIS: It is a lie. It is a lie.

KILLION: Fiery and fierce —

WILLIS: Don't be cute with me and then think that you're not going to get an answer.

KILLION: — a defiant Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis took the stand to defend her personal relationship with a special prosecutor she hired, Nathan Wade.

WILLIS: Mr. Wade, I would say, has been my friend since 2020.

KILLION: Several of the co-defendants in the 2020 election interference case looked on while

former President Trump slammed the testimony as “a...scam.”

WILLIS: You think I’m on trial. These people are on trial for trying to steal an election in 2020. I’m not on trial, no matter how hard you try to put me on trial.

KILLION: The hearing was prompted by a complaint from co-defendant Michael Roman who, along with Trump, wants Willis disqualified and the case thrown out. Their attorneys allege Willis personally and financially benefited from her involvement with Wade and claimed he was paid more than \$650,000 by Willis’s office as the pair took lavish trips to the Caribbean, Florida, and Napa Valley, California.

WILLIS: He likes wine. I don’t really like wine to be honest with you. I like Gray Goose.

NATHAN WADE: Our relationship wasn’t a secret. It was just private.

KILLION: Wade insisted Willis reimbursed him for the trips in cash.

WADE: She’s a very independent, proud woman. [SCREEN WIPE] It actually was a point of contention between the two of us. She is going to pay her own way.

WILLIS: But I’ve always paid my fair share on these trips, so I didn’t — not look at them as gifts.

JESSICA LEVINSON: This was jaw-dropping testimony.

KILLION: CBS News legal analyst Jessica Levinson.

LEVINSON: This entire hearing and all of the reasons why we’re here have almost certainly shaken the public’s confidence in this particular trial. And this was a great day for Donald Trump in a courtroom that he never appeared in. It’s a gift that he couldn’t have even asked for.

KILLION: Willis and Wade said their relationship started while they were working on the Trump case, but another witness contradicted that and said the pair were involved well before Wade started working with the D.A. A judge is expected to rule whether they should be disqualified from the case in the coming days, Tony.

TONY DOKOUPIL: We’ll be following it. Nikole, thank you very much.

(...)

7:11:12 a.m.

1 minutes and 16 seconds

KING: Can we talk about the Fani Willis case? Every — [TO DUTHIERS] — were you going to

DUTHIERS: No, no, yeah. Go ahead.

ROBERT COSTA: Who isn't talking about it?

DOKOUPIL: I know. Wow.

KING: What do you make of that? I mean, on some level, she clearly wanted to defend her reputation — not on some level, she wanted to. Most times, when you hear allegations, people stay silent. The fact that she walked into the courtroom, took the stand, and was very clear about where she stood. Did that help or hurt the case, or does it matter?

COSTA: It only matters if she's dismissed from the case. If Judge McAfee decides to say she's not going to be part of it, that could make it hard for the case to come to trial in Georgia before the election. But if this is just a storm for her, she moves forward with the prosecution in the coming months and Trump will face sweeping charges along with his co-defendants about trying to overturn the election.

DOKOUPIL: But he will use what he saw in the courtroom yesterday from Fani Willis —

COSTA: There's the legal war

DOKOUPIL: — to make his case politically.

COSTA: — and the political war.

KING: Yeah, they're saying a good day for Donald Trump. I don't know about that.

DUTHIERS: I mean, we'll see. As you say, if the judge says that there was no impropriety, it's not a good day.

COSTA: Look, Republicans are look at having a nominee who's a felon if he's convicted in the hush-money criminal trial.

DOKOUPIL: And a mean —

COSTA: That's had to say it's a good day, politically.

DOKOUPIL: — and a meaningful number of people in polls have said, if the conviction come through, that could sway them.

COSTA: And there are two federal trials as well: January 6th and classified records looming on the horizon.

DOKOUPIL: Yeah.

(....)

8:01:02 a.m.

15 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Dramatic Testimony]

WILLIS: These people are on trial for trying to steal an election in 2020. I'm not on trial.

DOKOUPIL: The district attorney in Donald Trump's election interference case in Georgia takes the stand to defend her personal relationship with a colleague.

WILLIS: Don't be cute with me and then think you're not going to get an answer.