



NEWS MEDIA PROJECT

February 26, 2012

The Shooting and death of Trayvon Martin and
the shooter, George Zimmerman

NOT GUILTY

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Race Relations and Crime- Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman, a crime with no relations.

- Race relations in America have a long history of being tenuous and challenging. A significant event in society can morph into symbolic importance and change society's perspective of reality, especially when news media attaches what may seem like endless attention and sensationalism to the event.
- The magnitude and breadth to which the murder of Trayvon Martin and the trial of George Zimmerman impacted society, and stirred quite the uprising, is a case in point where people's perceptions of race relations were greatly impacted. The focus no longer exclusively examined the particulars leading to the death of the young Trayvon and innocence or guilt of George Zimmerman, the community night watchman, but traveled down the dark road of racism, racial profiling and gun control. A racist white man with a gun shot a young black boy with skittles in his pocket and Arizona iced tea in hand, while chatting with his girlfriend and got away with murder. This is basically what Trayvon supporters were lashing out against and Zimmerman supporters were protesting, claiming self-defense. The details and evidence of the crime were muddled, but the protests and uproar were loud and clear.
- This case reawakened historical issues of times that we were, as a society and community, expected to grow and evolve from, but instead we fell backwards.
- Unlawful demonstrations and random acts of criminality were occurring in response to the case, the verdict, and the alleged racism and racial profiling that became synonymous to the case, in spite of whether or not racism was actually on trial.

News Media, Liberal, Conservative Coverage

Bipartisan coverage of the Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman case may be viewed as not being “fair and balanced.”

Many liberal based media reports covering the case, while there were scanty reportings from the conservative media.

While NBC, MSNBC, CBS, NPR and **CNN** reported the findings of the murder and the case, **CNN** was the news media that documented a timeline of the facts.

Fox News also captured a timeline, but in a documentary style attaching photos to the events.

Other than **Fox News**, there appears to be no other obvious conservative coverage.

Does the timeline of each media use a play on lexicon to manipulate and steer the audience in a particular direction?

Does the liberal mainstream media invoke a one-sided point of view or does it deliver a nuanced point view?

Does presidential media coverage set a tone or influence a bias?



CNN's, Who's Who?

Trayvon Benjamin Martin

- Born February 5, 1995
- 17 years old, African American
- Miami Gardens, FL
- Resided with mother
- Received 10-day suspension from high school due to drug residue in book bag



George Zimmerman

- Born October 5, 1983
- Part-time student at Seminole State College
- Neighborhood watch captain of gated community



One verdict. CNN and Fox News deliver their reporting of the case, you decide.

- CNN reports timeline of events.
- Fox News reports the crime with supporting photos and commentaries.
- Does the timeline or the photos have a play on words with how the facts are stated?
- Read and compare the “timeline” of events stated by each.
- Lots of coverage of this case by the “liberal” news media, CNN, MSNBS, CBS etc.
- Conservative media appears less ubiquitous.
- Does partisan media influence outcomes?
- Those in the pro-Trayvon camp sought to portray Zimmerman as a racist.
- Those on Zimmerman’s side attempted to portray Martin as a thug who was looking for trouble.

's Timeline:

February 26, 2012 to February 24, 2015

- **2/26/12**, Zimmerman calls 911 to report a “suspicious person” in the neighborhood.
- Instructed not to get out of his SUV or approach person
- Zimmerman disregards instructions
- Zimmerman shot Martin, claiming it was self-defense
- Police report notes Zimmerman was bleeding from the nose and back of the head

Timeline cont'd.

- **3/14/12**, The case is turned over to the Florida State attorney.
- **3/15/12**, **Zimmerman's father**, Robert, writes to the Orlando Sentinel that George has been **unfairly portrayed as a racist**, and that **George is Hispanic** and grew up in a multicultural family.
- **3/16/12**, Authorities release seven 911 calls from the night of the shooting. In one of the 911 recordings, **Zimmerman, against the advice of the 911 dispatcher, follows Martin**. In one of the recordings, a voice screams, "Help, help!" in the background, followed by the **sound of a gunshot**.
- **3/19/12**, The Justice Department and the FBI announce that they **have launched an investigation into Martin's death**.

CRIME+
INVESTI
GATION

Timeline cont'd.



- 2/27/12, Martin's father files a missing persons report. Police officers visit father and father is able to identify son's photo.
- 3/8/12, Investigators receive fax from physician containing medical records identifying injuries sustained by Zimmerman, night of shooting.
 - Open wound of scalp, nasal bones, closed fracture, assault by other specified means.
- 3/12/12, Police Chief says that Zimmerman has not been charged because there are no grounds to disprove his story of events.
- 3/13/12, Homicide detective recommends Zimmerman be charged with manslaughter as he "failed to identify himself" as a concerned citizen or neighborhood watch member on two occasions that night. Officer reports that he thought Zimmerman's head injuries were "marginally" consistent with life-threatening episode, as described by him, during which neither a deadly weapon nor deadly force were deployed by Trayvon Martin."

Timeline cont'd.



- **3/20/12**, Lawyer for Martin holds news conference telling reporters Trayvon was on the phone with his 16-year old girlfriend at the time of the shooting. **Girlfriend** wishes to be anonymous but **says she heard someone ask Martin what he was doing and heard Martin asks why the person was following him, according to the attorney.** The girl then got the impression that there was an altercation in which the earpiece fell out of Martin's ear and the connection went dead.
- **3/21/12**, CNN analyzes one of the tapes of Zimmerman's call to dispatch, in which he is purported to have used a racial slur against blacks. **The results are inconclusive.**
- **3/22/12**, Police chief announces he is stepping down "temporarily" as head of the department, which has been criticized for its handling of the fatal shooting.

Timeline cont'd.

3/22/12, FL Gov. Rick Scott announces he is appointing a replacement as state attorney in the investigation.

3/23/12, President Obama speaks out publicly for the first time on the growing controversy over the shooting of Trayvon Martin, saying that the incident requires national "soul searching."

3/24/12, A handful of members from the New Black Panther Party offer a \$10,000 reward for the "capture" of George Zimmerman.

3/26/12, One month after Martin's death, rallies take place in cities across the country. City Commission holds a town hall meeting on the incident and its aftermath. Martin's parents speak at the meeting.

3/28 12, Zimmerman's father appears on TV and says that Martin threatened to kill his son and then beat him so badly Zimmerman was forced to shoot.



Timeline cont'd.



- **3/29/12**, Zimmerman's brother, Robert, appears on **CNN** and says medical records will prove that his brother was attacked and his **nose was broken by Trayvon Martin before he fatally shot the teen.**
- **4/2/12**, FBI agents interview **Martin's girlfriend**, who, phone records show, **was on the cell phone with him shortly before the fatal confrontation.**
- **4/7-8/12**, Zimmerman launches a website warning supporters about groups falsely claiming to be raising funds for his defense. **The site includes a link through which donations can be made to pay for Zimmerman's lawyers and living expenses.**
- **4/11/12**, Zimmerman is charged with second-degree murder. His lawyer tells CNN that Zimmerman has turned himself in.
- **4/20/12**, Zimmerman's bond hearing is held. **During the hearing, Zimmerman apologizes to the family of Trayvon Martin for the loss of their son.**

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Timeline cont'd.

- 4/23/12, Zimmerman is released on bail at 12:05 a.m. Later in the day, Zimmerman enters a written not guilty plea and waives his right to appear at his arraignment.
- 5/15/12, A medical report by George Zimmerman's family doctor, taken a day after the 2/26 shooting, shows Zimmerman was diagnosed with a fractured nose, two black eyes and two lacerations on the back of his head.
- 6/1/12, Judge revokes Zimmerman's bond and orders him to surrender within 48 hours after the prosecution argues that Zimmerman and his wife misrepresented their finances when Zimmerman's bond was originally set in April.
- 6/3/12, At 1:45 p.m., Zimmerman surrenders to authorities and is taken into custody.
- 6/12/12, Zimmerman's wife is arrested and charged with perjury.



Timeline cont'd.

- **6/18/12, Audio of six phone calls** between Zimmerman and his wife are released, along with bank statements.
- **6/20/12, Police chief is officially fired.**
- **6/25/12, Zimmerman's attorney** files a motion **requesting a "reasonable bond"** be set for Zimmerman's release from jail.
- **7/5/12, The judge sets Zimmerman's bond at \$1 million.**
- **7/6/12, Zimmerman is released from jail after posting the required 10% of the \$1 million bail (\$100,000).**
- **7/13/12, Zimmerman's legal team** files a motion. The motion claims Zimmerman cannot get a fair trial because the judge used "gratuitous, disparaging" language in the previous week's bail order.



Timeline cont'd.

- **7/18/12**, Zimmerman, appearing on **Fox News** "Hannity" show, does his first television interview since the shooting. He says he **would not do anything differently**.
- **8/9/12**, A photo of Trayvon Martin's body and George Zimmerman's school records are mistakenly released by prosecutors. Special Prosecutor Angela Corey's office issues a statement asking reports to **"please disregard and do not use the information contained in the initial e-mail. It was inadvertently attached."**
- **8/13/12**, George Zimmerman appeals Judge Lester's refusal to recuse himself with the Fifth District Court of Appeals.
- **8/29/12**, A **Florida appeals court** grants Zimmerman's request for a new judge, saying Judge Kenneth Lester's remarks in a bail order **put Zimmerman in reasonable fear of a fair trial**.



Timeline cont'd.

- **8/30/12**, Judge Debra Nelson is assigned to replace Judge Kenneth Lester in the case of George Zimmerman.
- **12/7/12**, Zimmerman sues **NBC Universal** for allegedly editing the 911 call he placed on the night of the tragic event. He states in the lawsuit that **NBC** unfairly made it appear that "Zimmerman was a racist, and that he was actually profiling Trayvon Martin."



- **2/9/13**, The Justice for Trayvon Martin Foundation hosts a "Day of Remembrance Community Peace Walk and Forum" in Miami. It takes place four days after what would have been Martin's 18th birthday.
- **3/5/13**, Lawyer Mark O'Mara **decides against seeking a pretrial "stand your ground" immunity hearing for George Zimmerman** citing lack of preparation time.

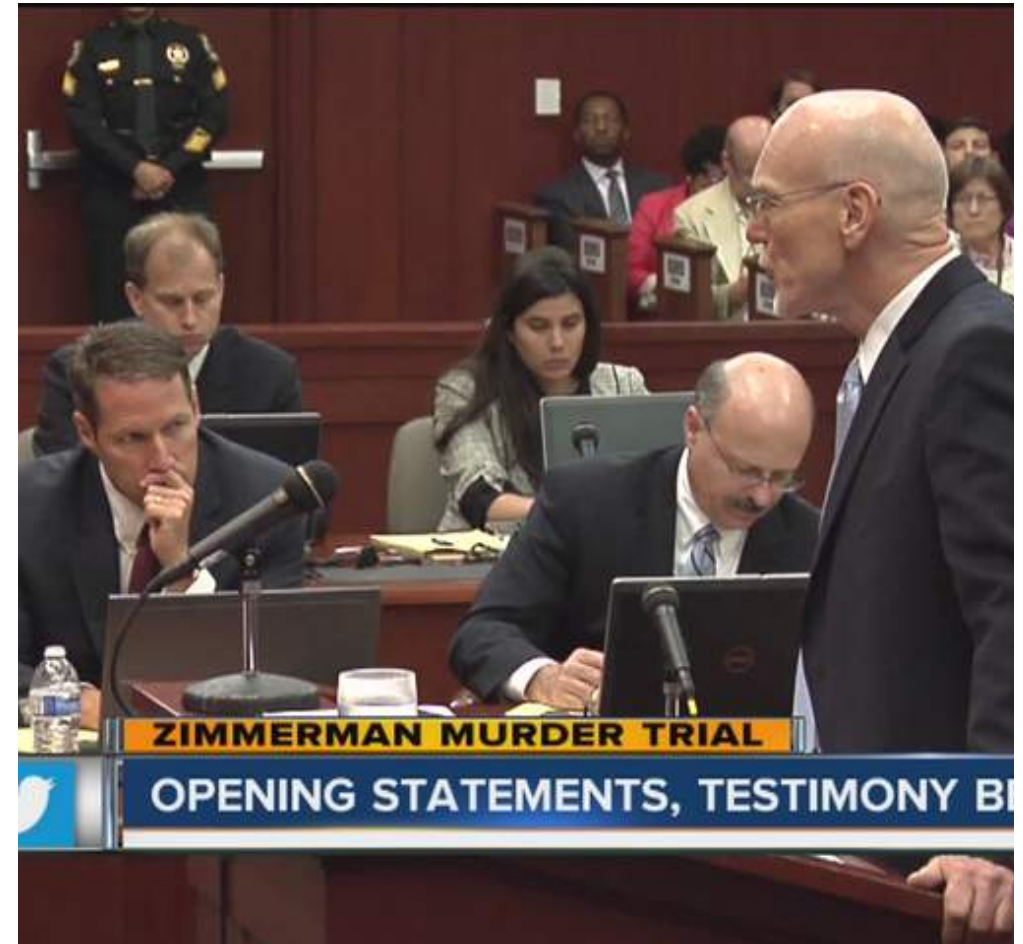
Timeline cont'd.

- **4/5/13**, Martin's parents settle a wrongful-death claim against the homeowner's association of the Florida subdivision where their son was killed.
- **4/30/13**, George Zimmerman **waives his right to a "stand your ground"** pretrial immunity hearing. Zimmerman's attorneys decide they will instead **try this as a self-defense case**. If Zimmerman had had a pretrial immunity hearing, a judge would have ruled whether his actions were protected under the "stand your ground" law. **If the judge had ruled in favor of Zimmerman, it would have meant that no criminal or civil trial could proceed.**
- **5/28/13**, Judge Debra Nelson rules on several motions brought by the defense. **Nelson rules that Trayvon Martin's familiarity with guns, his marijuana use, and fights he may have been in cannot be brought up in Zimmerman's trial.** She also denies a request to take the jury to the crime scene. Nelson, however, rules that jurors will remain anonymous and will be referred to by numbers only.
- **6/20/13**, An **all-female jury** is selected.



CNN Timeline cont'd.

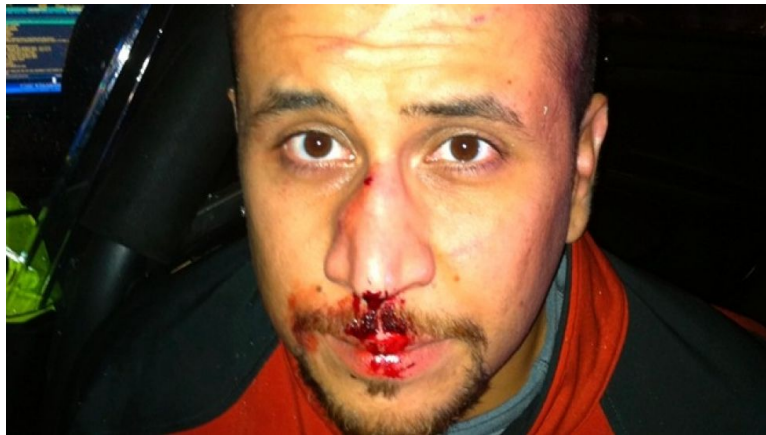
- 6/24/13, The **trial begins** with opening statements.
- 7/13/13, The **six-woman jury finds George Zimmerman not guilty**. They **had three choices**: to find Zimmerman guilty of second-degree murder; to find him guilty of the lesser charge of manslaughter; or to find him not guilty. The jurors deliberated for more than 16 hours total.
- 8/28/13, **Shellie Zimmerman**, wife of George Zimmerman, **pleads guilty to a misdemeanor charge of perjury**. Prosecutors said she lied when she told a judge during an April 2012 bond hearing for her husband that the family was indigent.
- 2/24/15, The **US Justice Department** announces that **no federal civil rights charges** will be brought against George Zimmerman.



Fox News: The Trayvon Martin case:

Pictures tell the story.

George Zimmerman is seen in this February 26, 2012 police photo provided by the George Zimmerman legal defense fund. The photograph of Zimmerman with a bloody, swollen nose taken on the night the shot and killed unarmed black teenager Trayvon Martin last February was posted on the Internet on Monday by Zimmerman's legal defense team. (Reuters/George Zimmerman Legal Defense Fund/Sanford Police Department)



An undated handout photo shows George Zimmerman shortly after he killed Trayvon Martin, in Sanford, Florida.



Fox News: The Trayvon Martin case: Pictures tell the story. Cont'd

When 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was shot to death in Sanford, FL on 2/26/12, the case was initially ignored by the national media. But when this photo, believed to have been taken a few years before his death, began to circulate in newspapers and on television, the story made headlines. Unarmed at the time of his death, Martin was carrying a bag of Skittles and a bottle of iced tea when he was shot in the chest by George Zimmerman (Associated Press/Martin Family).



Fox News: The Trayvon Martin case: Pictures tell the story. Cont'd

Zimmerman, 28, the son of a Peruvian mother and white father, told police he shot Trayvon Martin in **self-defense**. The volunteer neighborhood watchman had called police to report that a suspicious man was walking through the gated community where Zimmerman lived. Zimmerman called 911 as he followed Martin. "We don't need you to do that," the operator can be heard telling Zimmerman on tape. At some point, Zimmerman and Martin confronted each other and the teen was killed. Police responded to the scene, but Zimmerman, whose gun was registered, was not charged. (AP)



Fox News: The Trayvon Martin case: Pictures tell the story. Cont'd

The shooting occurred in the Retreat at Twin Lakes, a gated community in Sanford, FL. Martin, who had been watching the NBA All-Star game at his father's home, was walking through the community after going out at halftime for snacks. (AP).



Fox News: The Trayvon Martin case: **Pictures tell the story.** Cont'd

Although there is no evidence that Martin, shown here with his father, was doing anything illegal, Zimmerman told the 911 operator that there was a suspicious person in the neighborhood, who appeared as though he was on drugs.



Fox News: The Trayvon Martin case: **Pictures tell the story.** Cont'd

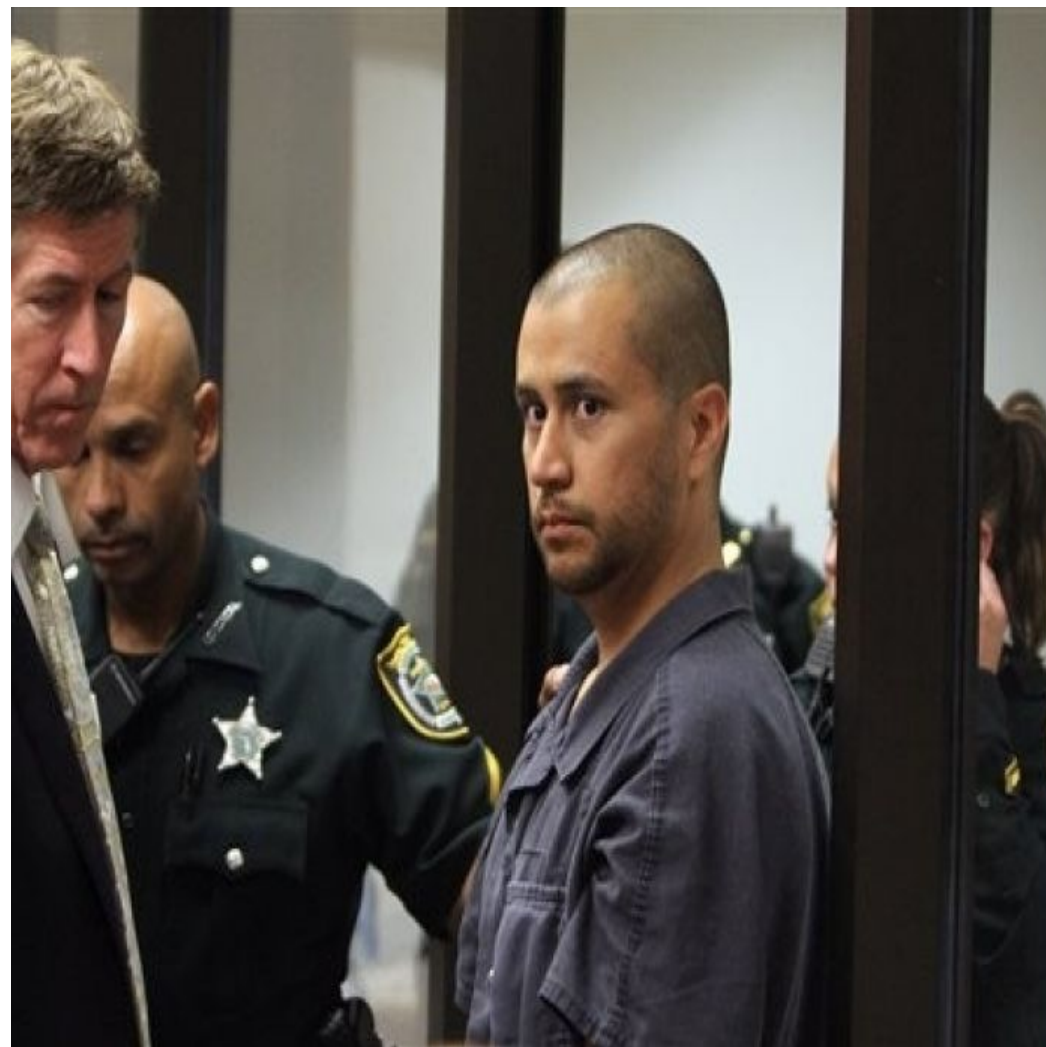
As the national media coverage on the story, **NBC News** came under fire for **editing the 911 tape** in a way that made it appear Zimmerman was racially profiling Martin. The doctored version was aired on the “**Today**” show.



Fox News: The Trayvon Martin case: **Pictures tell the story.** Cont'd

911 Call:

"This guy looks like he's up to no good...**he looks black,**" Zimmerman says in the **version of the tape that aired on NBC.** But in the **unedited version,** Zimmerman only mentioned Martin's race when prompted by the dispatcher. **"This guy looks like he's up to no good. Or like he's on drugs or something. It's raining and he's just walking around, looking about,"** Zimmerman said. Only after the 911 dispatcher asks if the person was "black, white or Hispanic?" did Zimmerman reply, "He looks black." (AP)





The case shone a **spotlight on Florida's "Stand your Ground" law**, which states that an individual can use force in self-defense when there is a legitimate belief of a threat, without having to retreat first.

Zimmerman claimed Martin had confronted him, broke his nose with a punch and was bashing his head into the pavement when he fired the deadly shot. (FL HistoricCapitolMuseum.gov)



Verifying Zimmerman's injuries could be crucial to establishing he acted in self-defense. On April 3, ABC News released a video of Zimmerman being led into the police stationhouse for questioning which did not clearly show marks on his scalp. Days later, the network aired enhanced video that seemed to show a gash on Zimmerman's head. (ABC).



As the controversy grew, Zimmerman stayed in hiding. The New Black Panther Party reportedly put a \$10,000 bounty on him and he received other death threats. On **April 10**, the **two attorneys representing Zimmerman, Hal Uhrig, left, and Craig Sonner announced that they withdrew as his counsel because they had not heard from him in days and he took actions related to the case without consenting them (AP).**



Meanwhile, the case had drawn the attention of civil rights activists, including Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Al Sharpton. Both men rushed down to Florida to lead protesters in a demand for justice. Sharpton and Martin's parents, Tracy Martin, left and Sybrina Fulton, flew to Washington for an **April 11** news conference at the Washington Convention Center, where they called for Zimmerman to be prosecuted (AP).



Florida State Attorney Angela Corey, who Gov. Rick Scott appointed special prosecutor in the case, held a news conference to announce that **Zimmerman would be charged with second-degree murder in the shooting death of Martin. (AP)**



Later that evening, Zimmerman's new attorney, Mark O'Mara, told reporters outside his office in Orlando that Zimmerman would plead not guilty. With tensions mounting in the racially charged case, O'Mara called for calm and said his client would turn himself in. (AP)



As O'Mara said he would, **Zimmerman surrendered to police in Sanford.** Pictured is his booking photo provided by the Sanford Police Department.
(AP/Sanford Police Department)



Churchgoers at the Allen Chapel, in Sanford, reacted to news of Zimmerman's arrest with jubilation. (AP)



The public got its first look at Zimmerman when he appeared shackled in a Seminole County courtroom with O'Mara during a court hearing in Sanford, FL on **April 12th**. Zimmerman could get life in prison if convicted of second-degree murder. (AP)



Circuit Judge Jessica Recksiedler, here at a status hearing, was initially slated to hear the case. But she recused herself after attorneys complained that she had a conflict of interest. Her husband is a member of a law firm whose founder is a legal analyst on television. (AP)



Skittles, the multicolored candy that Martin was carrying when he had his fateful encounter with Zimmerman, became **a rallying symbol for protesters**. Here, Jajuan Kelley of Atlanta wears a Skittles wrapper over his mouth during a demonstration. Supporters, including players from the NBA's Miami Heat, also donned hoodies, like the one Martin was wearing when was killed. (AP)



Zimmerman faced a new judge, Circuit Judge Kenneth Lester, on **April 20**, when he appeared for a bond hearing. Zimmerman's wife and other family members testified to his character by phone after reportedly receiving death threats. (AP)



Martin's mother, Sybrina Fulton, and family attorney Benjamin Crump attended the bond hearing at the Seminole County Criminal Justice Center.
(AP)



Zimmerman shared a smile with a member of his defense team after Judge Lester granted his release on \$150,000 bail. While free and awaiting trial, Zimmerman must obey a curfew and wear an electronic monitoring device. (AP)



On **April 22, 2012** in the middle of the night, Zimmerman walked out of the intake building at the John E. Polk Correctional Facility after posting the required 10 percent of his \$150,000 bail. His attorney said Zimmerman would waive his right to appear at his May 8th arraignment. (AP)



Zimmerman was whisked away moments after walking out of the intake building at the John E. Polk Correctional Facility. Zimmerman's ultimate destination is being kept secret for his safety. His attorney said at the time he will likely remain in hiding until his trial begins sometime next year. (AP)



June 10, 2013: George Zimmerman arrives in circuit court for his trial, along with co-counsel Don West in Sanford, FL. (AP/Orlando Sentinel)

Fox News...

- **JUAN WILLIAMS:** “Let me just say there is damage done to the fabric of the country by the way I think the media has portrayed it and the way it's been handled. Look, you know, if my kid walks up to your house, Bill O'Reilly, and some guy says, 'Oh, I saw a black kid walking up to Bill O'Reilly's house so I shot him,' you would be like what is going on here? ”

So, if a black guy shot a white kid, and they said, 'Oh, the kid was carrying Skittles and iced tea, but you know what these punks get away with it all the time.' People would say forget who was on top of who and who was punching who. Why was a guy with a gun deciding that he had to act violently with a teen with an iced tea?

Fox News star, Geraldo Rivera



- **March 2012, Rivera blamed Trayvon Martin's fashion choices for his shooting death at the hands of neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman. On Fox & Friends, Rivera stated:**
 - "I am urging the parents of black and Latino youngsters, particularly, to not let their young children go out wearing hoodies. I think the hoodie is as much responsible for Trayvon Martin's death as George Zimmerman was."
- Bill O'Reilly, news host and anchor of The O'Reilly show on Fox:
 - "It's a bit complicated because the reason Trayvon Martin died was because he looked a certain way and it wasn't based on skin color. If Trayvon Martin had been wearing a jacket like you are and tie like you are, Mr. West, this evening, I don't think George Zimmerman would have any problem. But he was wearing a hoodie and he looked a certain way. And that way is how **"gangstas"** look. And, therefore, he got attention. And the reason that that culture has risen is because there are a lot of gangs. And they're violent and they dress a certain way. And when people see that, they associate that kind of bad conduct. So, Martin was innocent of anything. He didn't do anything wrong, Trayvon Martin, but because he looked a certain way, he lost his life. And it's all interconnected to this violent crime that, as you stated and I stated, is driven by dissolution of the family, and no supervision, and nobody really caring about what happens in those precincts."

Fox News...

- Meanwhile, **Martin's parents are blaming police for leaking information** about the details about the fight he had with Zimmerman that portrayed the teen as the aggressor.
- Martin's mother, Sybrina Fulton, and family attorneys said Monday that it was part of an effort to demonize her son.
- **"They killed my son and now they're trying to kill his reputation,"** Fulton told reporters.
- **Martin had been suspended by Miami-Dade County schools because traces of marijuana were found in a plastic baggie in his book bag,** family spokesman Ryan Julison said. **Martin was serving the suspension when he was shot Feb. 26.**
- **The Sanford Police Department insisted there was no authorized release of that new information but acknowledged there may have been a leak.** City Manager Norton Bonaparte Jr. said it would be investigated and the person responsible could be fired.
- **Martin family attorney Benjamin Crump said the link between the youth and marijuana should have no bearing on the probe into his shooting death.** State and federal agencies are investigating, with a grand jury set to convene April 10.
- **"If he and his friends experimented with marijuana, that is completely irrelevant,"** Crump said. **"What does it have to do with killing their son?"**

Fox News...

- Martin's parents, along with civil rights leaders such as Sharpton and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, argued that Zimmerman — who identifies himself as Hispanic — had racially profiled their son. And they accused investigators of dragging their feet because Martin was a black teenager.
- Before a special prosecutor assigned to the case ordered Zimmerman's arrest, thousands of protesters gathered in Sanford, Miami, New York and elsewhere, many wearing hoodies like the one Martin had on the night he died. They also carried Skittles and a can of iced tea, items Martin had in his pocket. President Barack Obama weighed in, saying that if he had a son, "he'd look like Trayvon."
- Despite the racially charged nature of the case, race was barely mentioned at the trial.
- "This case has never been about race or the right to bear arms," Corey said. "We believe this case all along was about boundaries, and George Zimmerman exceeded those boundaries."
- One of the few mentions of race came from witness Rachel Jeantel, the Miami teen who was talking to Martin by phone moments before he was shot. She testified that he described being followed by a "creepy-ass cracker" as he walked through the neighborhood.
- Jeantel gave some of the trial's most riveting testimony. She said she overheard Martin demand, "What are you following me for?" and then yell, "Get off! Get off!" before his cellphone went dead.
- The jurors had to sort out clashing testimony from 56 witnesses in all, including police, neighbors, friends and family members.
- For example, witnesses who got fleeting glimpses of the fight in the darkness gave differing accounts of who was on top. And Martin's parents and Zimmerman's parents both claimed that the person heard screaming for help in the background of a neighbor's 911 call was their son. Numerous other relatives and friends weighed in, too, as the recording was played over and over in court. Zimmerman had cuts and scrapes on his face and the back of his head, but prosecutors suggested the injuries were not serious.
- To secure a second-degree murder conviction, prosecutors had to convince the jury that Zimmerman acted with a "depraved" state of mind — that is, with ill will, hatred or spite. Prosecutors said he demonstrated that when he muttered, "F----- punks. These a-----". They always get away" during a call to police as he watched Martin walk through his neighborhood.
- To win a manslaughter conviction, prosecutors had to convince the jury only that Zimmerman killed without lawful justification.
- *This is not about a black or a white thing, this is about a right or wrong thing.- Sybrina Fulton, Trayvon Martin's Mother*

Media Coverage

- The truth about Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman falls somewhere in the middle
- Dueling media narratives had masked the actual facts of the case.

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