

“Can’t we just get along”? Those famous words from Rodney King still apply to America today. It is 2012 and race based hate haunts us daily. There is always something sensational to remind us that we have yet to overcome this evil. The latest big indication that it still lives is the incident from Sanford, Florida

. A child of God, a son and brother of only 17 years in age was struck in the chest by a bullet. The bullet did not come from a gang member, robber or thug. It came from a “volunteer neighborhood watchman” - whatever that is.

Like the Watergate Incident which took down a US President, it wasn’t the initial act that causes us to scream. It was the cover up. What the authorities of Sanford did or did not do subsequent to the shooting is deplorable and leans towards racism.

First, they showed no regard for the family of Trayvon. Here is a corpse of a teenager with his cell phone in his pocket. They made no attempt to locate his family which could have been done in minutes via the cell phone. It wasn’t until his father called police that they informed the family. Secondly, they took the shooter’s word on what happened. Whenever a policeman shoots an individual his weapon is taken for testing; he is given a blood alcohol and drug test and then he is assigned to desk duty until a thorough investigation is completed. Sanford police took his weapon but did nothing else. In fact, they performed a drug test on Trayvon for some reason.

There are a lot of things that don’t add up. Why was this watchman following Trayvon who was walking directly home from a convenience store? The watchman’s 911 call sounds like someone drunk but yet they never test him. He weighs more than 100 pounds over Trayvon’s weight but yet he says Trayvon was beating him up. The police ignore the claims of Trayvon’s girlfriend who he called claiming a person was following him. They need to do a run on the shooter’s weapon to see if it has been used in other shootings. Why haven’t they begun a grand jury investigation? Why isn’t there an autopsy done on Trayvon? That might show the entry of the bullet and if he was shot lying on the ground as opposed to attacking the watchman.

This is a pure tragedy but there is more to it than the great loss suffered by the Martin family. It is the reminder that Black young men are at risk whenever they intermingle in the same environment as policemen or guards. Emmett Till, Rodney King and now Trayvon Martin are just a few reminders that if you are a parent of a Black male, you have much to fear.

I have four Black daughters. Not one day ever occurred that I feared for their safety from police. I also have two sons, the babies, and there have been many times that my wife and I would seriously worry about their future and safety. The fear was justified. One of my sons was beaten by DC policemen and falsely charged. It took \$20,000+ to get the false charges thrown out. The other son was given a false citation and harassed by a University of Maryland policeman which we also had to get thrown out. Their best friend escorted a white female student back to her dorm after a campus nightclub closed. The Prince Georges, Maryland police department declared this to be disturbing the peace (interracial walking after hours). For this they stayed in a jail cell from Friday night to Monday afternoon. His family had to also pay big bucks to get it thrown out. Just about every Black family I know with a son has similar horror stories.

My wife and I are lucky. Our sons are grown now and have survived with their lives and no trumped up criminal record. There are too many of us who cannot say that. It is an American shame and, somehow, we have got to end this institutional illness. Perhaps we can develop a protocol for all correctional administrators to adhere to. A check list that can be used as a requirement for all policemen, guards etc. That will promote fair and impartial treatment for all regardless of race and/or ethnicity.

The time to end stereotypes and prejudgment is long overdue. Perhaps we should no longer hope for it but sincerely demand it. Something stinks in Sanford, FL and we must expunge it from our society. May God bless the Martin family and may justice prevail in Sanford, FL. All individuals who have failed should pay for their transgressions. May this become an example of what happens whenever fair and impartial treatment is not applied to each and every citizen.

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