

America is Guilty: Zimmerman Verdict Shows World America's True Colors

Written by Walter Fields
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As we held our breath when the jury in the George Zimmerman trial returned its verdict tonight, and screamed in anguish when “not guilty” was pronounced, it was clear to me America was guilty. Trayvon Martin would be alive today had this nation confronted its racial demons decades ago.

Instead, America chose to remain in denial, refusing to own up to the horrors of slavery and the brutality of Jim Crow, and the political and economic oppression of African-Americans. Successive presidential administrations danced around race, made trivial proclamations and chose imagery over substance, rhetoric over justice. All the while African-Americans waited patiently, remained prayerful and honorably respected that the nation we built and died for would come to terms with its hatred of us. We did so while we were discriminated against in the workforce, denied access to colleges, prohibited from moving in certain neighborhoods, preyed upon by the police, swallowed up by the criminal justice system and spit out by school systems. And the racists continued to eat away at the soul of this nation.

Now, again, a Black child has been victimized by our nation's sickness and a jury has allowed a racist to walk free. And another set of African-American parents, like Mamie Till before them, is left with not a shred of justice and must face the rest of their lives eyes stretched toward heaven seeking answers. It is the American way and now six decades after Emmett Till, the world has witnessed the essence of the African-American experience. George Zimmerman is America, and this country, again, is guilty of a heinous crime. The jury's legal verdict might have been directed toward the defendant but America has incurred a moral verdict from which it cannot escape.

There is no getting around the fact that this young Black man was murdered in cold blood for no other reason than his race. Every attempt to frame this case in any other way was simply an act of deception. This case was about race the minute George Zimmerman stepped out of his car.

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And it was foreshadowed by race when Florida's legislature, backed by the National Rifle Association and the American Legislative Exchange Council, passed the "Stand your Ground" legislation and Governor Jeb Bush signed it into law. It was about race when five out of six jurors selected were white, all women; and none of them could surrender their white privilege or empathize with a grieving mother to bring a just verdict. Race set the table and racism was the main course served.

So, we are left to simmer once again. We are once again told to be calm, to temper our outrage and anger. Appeals are made to persuade us that violence is not the answer when violence led us to this moment in the first place. It defies human nature to witness your extermination and not use any means necessary to survive. This country has exhausted its privilege to ask African-Americans to be patient; it has violated every shred of decency and it can no longer ask us for concessions. It asked for this fight; we must now bring it.

It is time to reinvigorate the defiance of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and others who refused to cede ground to injustice, who confronted authority even at the risk of death, who objected to conceding their freedom and their blackness, and who worried not about offending Blacks who submitted to oppression and even whites who claimed to be on the side of justice but only in proportion. Our history bequeaths this fight, our present circumstances warrant it and if we are to have a future in America, we must engage it for the sake of our children. There can be no cowering, no wavering and no whining. And there can be no place where we do not confront this demon – in the schools, on your job, in the halls of government, in your neighborhood and if need be, in the streets.

I write tonight as a child of God, raised in faith and submissive to the will of God, but knowing and believing He did not put my people in this country to be slaughtered. I have chosen to live by faith and to be guided by the word of God and believe that all power is in His hands. But I know that the God I serve is also a God of justice and I will claim the right of my people to justice in America upon my own life.

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