



**From the Desk of Rev. Julius R. Scruggs, President
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Reflections on Trayvon Martin's Death

April 4, 2012

The death of Trayvon Martin, a seventeen year old African American student of Sanford, Florida, has triggered a massive outpouring of concern, conversation, and demonstrations across America, and rightly so.

Many of us, black, white, brown, red and yellow, are appalled that nothing has been done to Mr. George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch captain, who shot and killed Trayvon Martin on the evening of February 26, 2012.

I will be the first to admit that we don't know all the facts, but we do know enough to know that justice has not been executed. Based on the tapes from the 911 dispatcher, we are aware of these facts. Mr. Zimmerman called 911 to report "a real suspicious guy" in his neighborhood. According to the tapes, Mr. Zimmerman, gave the following statements: "This guy (speaking of Trayvon) looks like he is up to no good or he's on drugs or something... now he is coming towards me. He's got his hand in his waistband. And he is a black male... something's wrong with him. Yup, he is coming to check me out. He's got something in his hands. I don't know what the deal is...these assholes, they always get away."

The recording suggests that Zimmerman left his vehicle to run after Trayvon. The dispatcher advised Zimmerman NOT to follow Trayvon, but he did anyway. Several minutes later, according to the other 911 callers, Zimmerman and Trayvon got into a wrestling match. One of the pair could be heard screaming for help. Then a single shot was fired, and Trayvon lay dead.

The fact that Mr. Zimmerman referred to Trayvon as an "asshole" and that he was a black male, and that "he looks like he is up to no good or he is on drugs or something" leads me to believe that he had formed a prejudicial attitude toward Trayvon even before they approached each other. If I am correct, then he shot this young man with a heart that was already filled with prejudice. Even if you say that he was not prejudiced, he still had no right to shoot Trayvon and kill him. He has no right to take life, because he is not able to give life. From a Christian perspective, only God is able to give life and take life. Mr. Zimmerman, as many have indicated, needs to be jailed, and tried in a court of law for Trayvon Martin's death.

I am so pleased that the NAACP's National and local offices have been at the forefront of this case. As a member of the Religious Affairs Committee of the National NAACP Board, I have been on several conference calls as we discussed how this incident should be addressed. I am pleased that CEO and President Benjamin Jealous and others have been in Sanford, Florida to address this issue.

Let each one of us pray that justice will be done in Trayvon Martin's death. America and the global community need to be made more aware that the life of a black male American is as important as any other person's life. We can also pray that ethnic bigotry would be eliminated in our nation and in the world. We need to hear afresh Martin Luther King, Jr.'s words that "We will either learn to live together as brothers (and sisters) or we will all perish as fools." "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." May God help us.