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Murder, Race, Teens

How do I explain the Trayvon Martin verdict to my kids?

By David Muhammad
New America Media

After the verdicts were read, my eight year old son had seen my anger and asked "why did Zimmerman kill Trayvon?" Thinking of all that I heard, read and saw through the three weeks of trial, I said to him "I don't know for sure, but I think because he is racist."

The facts that are undisputed are that George Zimmerman profiled, followed and tracked down, shot and killed, 17-year old Trayvon Martin. As the slew of texts, tweets and Facebook messages streamed in from fellow angry friends and colleagues, I sat there furious, disappointed and frustrated. The feeling was also strange. I've spent most of my career trying to help people and change systems so that there is less incarceration. But here I was wanting nothing more than for Zimmerman to be convicted and locked up. Although I've spent several years of my career as a law enforcement official, the sole reason I got into government was to reform the system that is broken. And now the country, and indeed the world, is again seeing how broke America's criminal justice system really is. Even though the prosecution was thoroughly out lawyered by the defense, there appeared to be more than enough evidence to convict. A teenage boy was murdered and the shooter was not held responsible.

This summer, I have been having my children watch the ground breaking PBS "Eyes on the Prize" series. The night before the Zimmerman verdicts, we watched the last episode which featured the story of Arthur McDuffie. McDuffie was a military veteran and successful black businessman who was stopped by the Miami police, beaten and kicked to death for no reason. Although clear and convincing evidence was presented to an all-white male jury of the murder of McDuffie, including the testimony of other officers at the scene, the three white officers

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JUSTICE?



Abdul Kebbeh, 6, holds a sign at a rally at Seattle's Westlake Park on Sunday, July 14, to protest the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin. Over 500 people showed up at the rally and march, while hundreds also marched in Portland. Find a whole page of photos online at www.theskanner.com

Convention Planners Love Portland

If we had a headquarters hotel it would attract business to the city

By Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

As Metro pushes forward with plans to site a 600-bed hotel near Portland's Convention Center, Travel Portland brought together a group of convention planners to deliver a message: Portland needs a headquarters hotel.

"If you build it they will come," said Ed Potillo, conference and membership director for the National Alliance of Black School Educators.

"We've talked to other convention planners who bring group larger than mine and they want to come to Portland. And they won't just use the Convention Center Hotel; they will fill it and then some. They'll use other hotels too, including on the other side of the river."

"But if you don't build it, they won't come at all."

Metro's plan would build a \$197 million Grand Hyatt Hotel adjacent to the Convention Center. According to Metro's figures, Hyatt and

Minnesota-based Mortensen Development group would invest around \$120 million in the project. The Oregon Legislature has approved \$10 million in Lottery funding. Metro and the Portland Development Commission would each contribute \$4 million in grants and loans. The \$60 million would come from Metro bond that would be paid off over 30 years with a lodging tax. Portland City Commissioners will vote on the lodging tax proposal in August.

A group called the Coalition for Fair Budget Priorities, which includes other Portland hoteliers, is opposing the plan, arguing that it's nothing but a giveaway of taxpayer money to a private corporation.

"If this headquarters hotel was a good bet, it would be funded and built by the private sector with no public subsidy involved," wrote Paige Richardson in an op-ed for the Portland Tribune. "But the truth is that this 'if you build it, they will

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Social Justice in Octavia Butler Project

Sparkling imaginations and creating a model for supporting artists

Bruce Poinsette
Of The Skanner News

When one thinks of science fiction, images of spaceships, aliens and zombies might come to mind. However, Walidah Imarisha looks to her enslaved ancestors as visionary science fiction writers.

"They dreamed us up," she says. "They

couldn't imagine us. They couldn't imagine Black folks without chains and yet because they could envision it they were able to work to bend reality to create it—to create us."

Imarisha and her co-editor Adrienne Maree Brown are partnering to publish Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements. The project seeks to demonstrate how community

organizing and social justice work are a form of science and speculative fiction.

"Science fiction has long been a space to process the struggles of being human on this planet, in dystopic settings, in utopic settings," says Brown. "It is our right and responsibility to envision the next world and write ourselves into it. We see this as

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