



“Challenging People to Shape
a Better Future Now”

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Criminal Injustice System Failed Trayvon

Watching television Satur-
day night, I sat in
stunned silence as the
jury returned its not guilty verdict
for George Zimmerman in connec-
tion with the shooting death of 17-
year-old Trayvon Martin in
Sanford, Fla. Then, I was jolted by
a comment made by Prosecutor
Bernie de la Rionda: “... We live
in a great country that has a great
criminal justice system. It is not
perfect but it is the best in the
world and we respect the jury’s
verdict.”

In what country does de la Rion-
da live?

Surely, he couldn’t be referring
to the United States. Granted,
making the prosecutor prove his or
her case against a defendant is a
great idea. So is the notion of
being presumed innocent until
proven guilty. But when it comes
to African Americans, this is by no
stretch of the imagination “a great
criminal justice system.”

I don’t say this out of any bitter-
ness over the failure of the jurors
to convict Zimmerman for mur-
dering Trayvon Martin. Yes, I
thought Zimmerman was guilty of
murder or, at the least, manslaugh-
ter. But as much as it pains me, I
must also acknowledge that the
state of Florida did a poor job
prosecuting Zimmerman.

Trayvon’s death is a cold
reminder that the Black homicide
rate is more than six times that of
Whites. According to 2010 FBI
statistics analyzed by the Violence
Policy Center, the homicide rate
for Black victims was 16.32 per
100,000, compared to a rate of
2.66 per 100,000 for Whites.

For Black women, the rate was
4.28 per 100,000, compared to
1.48 per 100,000 for White
females. And African-American
men were homicide victims at a
rate of 29.50 per 100,000, com-

THE CURRY REPORT

George E.
Curry



pared to 7.08 per 100,000 for
White males.

“America faces a continuing epi-
demic of homicide among young
black males,” according to the
introduction to a Violence Policy
Center report titled, “Black Homi-
cide in the United States: An

I see those six ladies in the jury ... I
submit that if they were armed, they
would have shot Trayvon Martin a lot
sooner than George Zimmerman did.

—Geraldo Rivera

Analysis of 2010 Homicide Data.”
The report, published in January,
continued, “The devastation homi-
cide inflicts on black teens and
adults is a national crisis, yet it is
all too often ignored outside of
affected communities.”

And what happens when crimi-
nal cases move through America’s
“great criminal justice system?”

Richard Pryor used to joke that
criminal justice in the U.S. means
“just us.” Although the comedian
usually evoked a laugh – unlike
Zimmerman lawyer’s knock-
knock joke – this is no laughing
matter.

American Progress, the Wash-
ington, D.C.-based think tank, col-
lected some interesting statistics
and published an article titled,
“The Top 10 Most Startling Facts

About People of Color and Crimi-
nal Justice in the United States.”

Among the facts:

- People of color make up about
30 percent of the U.S. population,
but 60 percent of those impris-
oned.
- Once convicted, Black offend-
ers receive sentences that 10 per-
cent longer than White offenders
for the same crimes. In addition,
Blacks are 21 percent more likely
to receive mandatory-minimum
sentences than White defendants
and 20 percent more likely to be
sentenced to prison.
- Although African-Americans
comprise 14 percent of regular
drug users, they are 37 percent of

selves on that rainy night, in that
housing complex that has just
been burglarized by three or four
different groups of black young-
sters from the adjacent communi-
ty. So it’s a dark night, a
6-foot-2-inch hoodie-wearing
stranger is in the immediate hous-
ing complex. How would the
ladies of that jury have reacted? I
submit that if they were armed,
they would have shot Trayvon
Martin a lot sooner than George
Zimmerman did. This is self-
defense.”

This is the same Geraldo Rivera
who said last March, “I think the
hoodie is as much responsible for
Trayvon Martin’s death as George
Zimmerman.”

Fox News even invited Mark
Furman, the former detective for
the Los Angeles Police Depart-
ment, to discuss the role of race in
jury selection for Zimmerman’s
trial. Lawyers for O.J. Simpson
presented evidence that Furman
had used the n-word more than 40
times over a 10-year period. Yet,
Furman, who pled no contest to
perjury charges and sentenced to
three years of probation, appeared
on Fox News’ “America Live” to
talk about race.

When Zimmerman earlier
selected Fox News as the only net-
work he would grant an interview
to, he was right at home.

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What do locals think about the Trayvon Martin trial?
Find out on *The Skanner News* YouTube channel



The Portland Rally for Trayvon Martin: Anger, Grief, Compassion, Love

Sunday’s Rally in support of Jus-
tice for Trayvon Martin was an
outpouring of anger, grief, frustra-
tion, sadness, compassion and
love. People from Portland com-
munities shared thoughts, feelings
and experiences with an interra-
cial, intergenerational, interethnic,
crowd of hundreds of people
including many members of the

GLBT community.

Sen. Avel Gordly had a tremen-
dous effect on us. She inspired us,
she led us, she taught us, she
moved us as she laid another brick
in the foundation of love needed to
build our Beloved Community.
She invited young black men in
the audience to come stand with
her and her son on the stage as she
spoke.

In doing so, Sen. Gordly helped
humanize these young men. She
forced us to surrender our tenden-
cy to abstract the lives of these
human beings into some vaguely
formed (mostly media driven)
image of young black maleness.
She asked us to express our con-
cern and love for them by asking
us to say aloud to them “Your life

is important to me.” We did. She
then asked audience members to
look at one another and express
the same caring, the same affirma-
tion for the lives of one another by
saying: “Your life is important to
me.” We did.

She challenged us to stop pass-
ing one another by without
acknowledging each other, as
though we had no connection. In
doing so she helped us consider
how our failure to connect under-
lies our tendency to depersonalize
each other and thereby fail to lis-
ten to each other.

Several speakers gave us ideas
on actions or how to get organized
or involved in groups that will
help make the changes we want to
see, and we are grateful. Many of

us will find our way into an organ-
ization or program or public
action.

Sen. Gordly gave us a somewhat
different challenge. She chal-
lenged us to start making change
immediately, right there at the
rally. Her challenge pointed out
that while we need organizations,
programs or public actions to
effect change, some of the most
significant changes we have to
make are in our own hearts. We
must look into our hearts to find
what we might need to explore,
eliminate, rearrange or create as
we take the next steps toward
building Beloved Community.

Thank you Sen. Gordly.
Kathleen Saadat
Portland