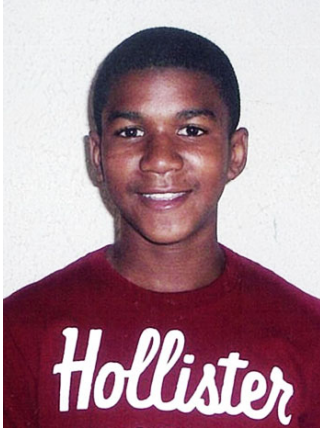


## Why Trayvon Martin Still Matters

Written by U.S Immigration News  
Saturday, 05 May 2012 22:13 -

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There has not been a case in recent history that has riled the public as the murder of Trayvon Martin on February 26 in Sanford, Florida. Unless you live under a rock you have heard, read, or seen at least one news report on the assassination of the seventeen-year-old. Bloggers, media pundits, civil rights leaders and even President Barack Obama have voice their opinions about this case. The death of Trayvon's caused an almost unprecedented social outcry. Over 2.2 million signatures were collected on a petition to arrest the alleged shooter, George Zimmerman. Thousands and hundreds of hoodie marches were held across the nation in solidarity with Trayvon's outfit on the day of his fatal shooting; walkouts were staged by students in Florida; a number of high-profile citizens and celebrities released statements or made comments asking for a full investigation.

It seemed almost inconceivable that in our 2012 America, an unarmed young black male could still be gunned down for what appears to be racial profiling. Was this just a case of vigilante overreaction? Or, as Zimmerman now alleges, a case of self-defense?

The disturbing elements that further stirred up debates about this case were the circumstances surrounding the shooting: Trayvon's parents were not advised of their son's death until 3 days

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later, Trayvon's body lay in the morgue as a John Doe when he had on an ID that clearly identified him. There were signs of possible police corruption and abuse of power, as reporters began to delve into some of the procedural faux pas surrounding the case. The month long delay in charging Zimmerman only aggravated matters. To this day, many believe that were it not for the insistent demands of Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin, Trayvon's parents, who were joined by the voices of thousands across this nation, George Zimmerman would still be a free man today.

The facts surrounding this case have caused and stirred many a debate and discussion on race and racial profiling and gun control. Even in this day and age with a Black family in the White House, black youth, in particular black males, are not safe from the burden of racism. In a nation where democracy and civil liberties are afforded to all, we have given citizens the rights bear deadly arms, shoot if they feel their life is been threatened and kill another unarmed citizen.

For centuries, black parents have felt the need to reiterate to their black sons that they need to conduct themselves in a non-threatening manner in public. Insisting that their sons assume the role of the de facto enemy when they are not. How much more non-threatening could Trayvon have been by simply walking home from the convenience store with a bag of skittles and a can of iced tea in his hands?

Every parent, regardless of race or ethnicity, has had to have the conversation where they provide their children, both male and female, with pointers as to what to do if they are followed or attacked by a stranger. Yell for help, turn around and face the stranger, cross the street, speak to them in a loud assertive voice so that they may see that you are not afraid, tell someone, and if you can, call 911. Many of these same pointers were followed by Trayvon Martin on the night of his fatal shooting.

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Perhaps some of the same strategies that were supposed to save Trayvon did not contribute to his death but actually caused it. By his girl friend's account Trayvon possibly faced his attacker, even yelling: "Why are you following me?" Terror, confusion and uncertainty perhaps filled his mind during the last minutes prior to his death. On the other hand, George Zimmerman alleges an added element to the mystery, Trayvon attacked him.

Zimmermans' story and the story reporters created by piecing together details of that fatal night point out to a terrifying encounter between the teenager and a neighborhood watchman on the night of the tragedy. Unfortunately, Trayvon is not alive to tell his side of the story. We are saddened by the prospects of what his life could have been if he had remained alive.

Yet, while the death of Trayvon Martin has raised a multitude of opinions and passions on the issue of race relations and gun control, this incident presents some critical questions that require our attention. *When will the American society cease from viewing and treating our young black boys as menaces? When will black mothers and fathers be able to stop teaching their sons not to walk or live in the fear of the racist perceptions of others? When will Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of having our children judged by the content of their characters and not by the color of their skins ever become a reality in America?* Until as a society we can issue satisfying answers to these questions, Trayvon Martin's death still matters.

Copyright © 2012 by **Norka Blackman-Richards**, is an educator, a writer and an empowerment speaker on women, education, diversity and generational issues. She is the

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