

# [Brandon greenberg](https://assignbuster.com/brandon-greenberg/)

Brandon Greenberg ENG 105 Prof. Papayanis April 18, 2012 When Will the True Story Be Revealed? People never want to know about tragedy when it happens, especially when it relates to black youth in America. The infamous Trayvon Martin story down in Florida drew massive attention, inspiring the type of controversy around the nation that helped make “ racial profiling" and “ stop-and-frisk" household phrases. Florida’s “ stand your ground" law has been used as a defense in many cases where unarmed people were shot and killed by frightened shooters who feared for their personal safety. However, studies are now showing that this law is being used disproportionately against minority youths who are predominantly black and Hispanic in ethnicity. In this particular case, Martin was a seventeen-year-old black male walking home from a convenience store situated near a gated community in Sanford, Florida. George Zimmerman, a neighborhood crime-watch volunteer of mixed white-and-Hispanic heritage, shot and killed young Martin. This unfortunate act was committed by Zimmerman as a direct result of racial profiling; he stated to police that Trayvon looked suspicious because of his oversized hooded sweatshirt worn over his dark-skinned complexion. It is a sad testament to the daily life of some Americans who are stereotyped because of what they look like, as opposed to the content of their character. Many lessons can be learned from the Trayvon Martin case. One is that clearly, young black men simply cannot wear what they want to wear. Otherwise, they are in danger of scaring white people and being murdered in cold blood. Another lesson is that the media, like it or not, is going to report on whatever they want, regardless of what the actual truth may be. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, police officers are free to profile whenever and whomever they please, regardless of agency procedure. These lessons may not be the most politically-correct, but the reality of the matter is that they are completely true. Young black males are not safe in America today, because the color of their skin and the unique clothing style they choose to wear seems to frighten and alarm some people — especially law enforcement and other security personnel in American communities. This senseless incident involving the death of Trayvon Martin only serve as reminders to the rest of us what black and Hispanic people live with every day -- that racial profiling is a real thing, and it is aimed directly at them. Anyone walking in a suburban area who is black or Hispanic already knows they could and probably will become victims of profiling by law enforcement at some point. Everybody has heard of or experienced the scenario of the black teenager walking down the street, headphones in his ears, fully engaged in his music, wearing a gym bag across his chest, walking on a dark night when a woman approaching him on the same side of the street, thinking to herself: I should probably cross the street now. Would a teenage white boy, get the same reaction? Because Trayvon was a brown-skinned kid walking in a nice area of town, Zimmerman assumed he did not belong there and so Trayvon was targeted. A black teenager in a hoodie carrying nothing in his hands except a candy bar and a soda is apparently threatening to some people. And it seems to be the case that many of these threatened people are walking around carrying firearms. Why is that? Criminals do not commit crimes bearing candy bars and soda cans — that is a fact. When a black man enters a store wearing baggy sweatpants and a hoodie, employees rarely take their eyes off him. A white man dressed the exact same way will be left alone, unless of course they give an employee a reason to stare. So my point being made again is, profiling goes on everyday in a young black male’s world and same went for Trayvon’s as well. People of color were being profiled long before Trayvon took that final walk home on that fateful night, but this case has brought the issue to the forefront of the national media. Another issue concerning profiling and law enforcement is the stop-and-frisk and the NYPD. Up in New York, black people getting shot by “ cops" is nothing new. In 2011, the Wall Street Journal online reported that “ New York City police officers stopped and questioned 684, 330 people last year, a record number since the department started producing yearly tallies of the tactic" (Gardiner, 2012). In fact, the stop-and-frisk controversy seems to have coincided with the Trayvon Martin scandal. Maybe all these incidents are symbolic of a cultural flaw in America, or maybe it is a human phenomenon that we can never fully comprehend. The media is considered biased by conservatives towards the liberal left. If that was true then that same biased media would have reported the entire Trayvon Martin story in a factual way, instead of getting involved with the story and even shaping the story as it unfolded. The Miami Herald story of May 26, 2012 states that: A review of the testimony of witnesses to the Feb. 26 killing shows several of them modified their accounts or grew skeptical of their own recall after weeks of heavy news coverage that included marches across the nation demanding Zimmerman’s arrest. Several said they reshaped their stories because of what they learned on TV (Robles, 2012). Typically, a fair and balanced media will try to stay as far away from becoming part of the story as possible. Here though, this was apparently not the case. The media is always trying to make a story sexy, with as many explosive headlines as possible. As the Trayvon Martin case unfolded, reporters seemed to go beyond their usual dubious ethics and insert themselves right into the center of the story. That is not good journalism; any journalism teacher will tell you that. When witnesses in a nationally-infamous case are changing their stories over and over again, one hesitates to believe what one reads. The takeaway is that the media will report on whatever it wants to, with little regard to factual accuracy or ethics. Finally, one cannot help but wonder how the story would have played out had the victim been a blonde white boy shot down by a black security guard. Maybe the Law enforcement officers, or anybody put in charge of maintaining public safety, should not feel comfortable profiling people based on race or ethnicity. America is a place where finally, after hundreds of years of enslavement, people from any race or culture can exploit the “ land of the free, " fully able to claim their little piece of the rock. Each individual is free to make the choice to be a law abiding citizen. The law is not in place to be taken for granted; George Zimmerman took the law into his own hands when he chose to gun down Trayvon Martin. The “ stand your ground" law may save him as it has saved so many other reckless individuals, but the laws of men will not save men from their ultimate judgment. Law enforcement officers have even more leeway with using deadly force, and when an agency-issued firearm is discharged, it better be for a good reason. When the reason is that a group of officers simply panic when an unarmed black man reaches for his wallet and identification, as was the case with Amidou Diallo in Brooklyn, that is simply not good enough. 41 shots pumped into an innocent man is reason enough to put laws in place that punish such behavior properly and swiftly. A teenage boy getting his life snatched away from him is reason enough to prevent the George Zimmermans of the world from getting a second chance at working in security and public safety. Individuals who take justice into their own hands and then claim they were just “ standing their ground" is just a cop out, really. In a unconscious moment of fear and confusion, like desperate soldiers without a war of their own, they did what they instinctually felt was justified, for a split second. The repercussions need to be looked at, nevertheless, and unless it turns out the facts in the story show otherwise, a man needs to face up to what he does during a crime of passion. Legally speaking, that is up to the courts. Ultimately they will deal with such great responsibility in the way that they will. Everyone else, however, in the news media and in the neighborhoods of America, "Home of the Free, " will have to deal with and ultimately answer for their instinctual fears. Whether it is a racial one or any other kind of fear that affects the rest of us, human beings should really start to deal with the rage inside when something like the Trayvon Martin case happens. If we don’t, we only pass time until the next one happens. WORKS CITED Gardiner, Sean. “ Stop-and-Frisks Hit Record in 2011. " Feb 14, 2012. Wall Street Journal Online. Web. June 6, 2012. Robles, Frances. “ Witnesses in Trayvon Martin Case Contradict, Change Their Stories. " May 26, 2012. The Miami Herald Online. 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