



Media Unreliability in Zimmerman-Martin Case

Last week, NBC News became truthful, at least partially, when it issued an apology about altering a taped 911 conversation between George Zimmerman and a police dispatcher in the high-profile Trayvon Martin story, a case being linked to racism and profiling.

What viewers of NBC's *Today* show heard was this taped comment by Zimmerman, talking to a police dispatcher: "This guy looks like he's up to no good. He looks black."

That conveniently fits with the assumption that Zimmerman is a racist, guilty of anti-black profiling.

Here's what actually is on the 911 tape before NBC News cut out key words and aired a reworked conversation. Zimmerman says: "This guy looks like he's up to no good, or he's on drugs or something. It's raining and he's just walking around, looking about."

Responds the dispatcher, "OK, and this guy, is he black, white or Hispanic?"

Answers Zimmerman, "He looks black."

After an internal investigation about what went wrong, NBC said "an error was made in the production process."

They're saying they weren't intentionally piling on, weren't prejudging Zimmerman as a homicidal bigot.

They're saying they weren't trying to sensationalize a story in order to boost ratings, weren't intentionally doing anything to increase racial tensions.

It was simply "an error in the production process," just some bungling by perhaps a low-level employee who wasn't too good at slicing and splicing.

"We will be taking the necessary steps to prevent this from happening in the future and apologize to our viewers," said NBC. It offered no apology to Zimmerman and didn't say how the "error" happened.

In airing another tape, showing Zimmerman being brought into the police station shortly after the shooting, MSNBC's commentators were quick to report that Zimmerman didn't appear to have any injuries.

That was before the clarity of the film was strengthened and MSNBC commentators had to backtrack and admit that Zimmerman clearly had injuries to the back of his head, as he had stated in describing the struggle that preceded the shooting.

In portraying the shooting of Martin in racial terms, the media initially described Zimmerman as white, then as Hispanic, and finally the *New York Times*, positioning the case within the paradigm of white-on-





Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on April 10, 2012

black crime, began describing Zimmerman as a "white Hispanic."

News reporter Bernard Goldberg, author of *Bias*, a best-seller about how news is distorted by the media, charged that the *Times* began describing Zimmerman as "white" in order to further a story line: "The New York Times, in almost a caricature of a liberal media, refers to George Zimmerman as a 'white Hispanic.' I guarantee you that if George Zimmerman did something good — if he finished first in his high school graduating class when he was younger — they wouldn't refer to him as a white Hispanic. He'd just be a Hispanic. He's only a 'white Hispanic' because they need the word 'white' to further the story line, which is, 'White, probably racist, vigilante shoots an unarmed black kid.'"

Adding gas to the fire, the New Black Panthers have offered a growing monetary reward for the capture of Zimmerman. Dead or alive?

It's time, clearly, to cool the rhetoric and wait for all the evidence to come in.

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