



Trayvon Martin: A Child, or a Thug Wannabe?

George Zimmerman has been acquitted in the shooting death of “the child,” the “young boy,” Trayvon Martin.

As should go without saying, it is of course a tragedy that our world is such that it regularly claims human life. It is particularly tragic when young people, like Martin, lose their lives in circumstances that could have so easily been avoided.

But Martin was no “child.” He was not yet a legal adult, but at 17 years of age he could, with a parent’s permission, kill and die for the United States military. And 17-year-olds, particularly when they are six feet tall, intoxicated on drugs, and physically fit, as was Martin, can and do kill and die in the streets of America.



Yet it isn’t just Zimmerman’s persecutors who are fond of sanitizing Martin’s character.

Writing for *Front Page* magazine, Arnold Ahlert castigates his fellow conservatives for acting badly.

In “Framing Trayvon,” Ahlert contends that “many conservatives” have engaged in a “demonization campaign” against Martin — or “Trayvon,” as Ahlert calls him — that runs “parallel” to that promoted against Zimmerman by such “racial arsonists” as Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson. Conservatives “have hastily embraced caricatures of Trayvon Martin, painting him as a vicious street thug who deserved his fate.”

Ahlert insists that Martin sounded like “little more than a rambunctious teenager” whose family and friends describe as “a fine young man,” “warm and funny,” and “a standout athlete with an enormous appetite.”

Where do we begin?

First, Ahlert is correct that, from day one, the “racial arsonists” did indeed rush to demonize Zimmerman. Yet he fails to so much as hint at the fact that the demonization of Zimmerman demanded the *idealization* of Martin. By now, everyone who’s paid any attention to this case is all too familiar with the media’s tireless juxtaposition of Zimmerman’s mug shots alongside the outdated pictures of a prepubescent Martin.

Had Ahlert mentioned this, it would immediately become clear that it isn’t “conservatives,” but *Martin* who supplied us with a negative caricature of Martin. More accurately, as details emerged since February of 2012, time has exploded the *idyllic caricature* of Martin that the “anti-racists” have labored to embed in the popular imagination. The Martin who had that fateful encounter with Zimmerman was a far cry from the sixth-grader whose photograph was plastered all over the media for months after the



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on July 15, 2013

shooting. As Ahlert himself admits, at the time of his death, Martin “used foul language, made obscene gestures on camera, probably smoked marijuana, and engaged in other troublesome teenage behavior” — like getting caught with possession of what was likely stolen jewelry, getting repeatedly suspended from school, and attempting to assault a bus driver.

This brings us to a second point.

Neither conservatives nor anyone else has made Martin out to be a *vicious* thug, as Ahlert says. What the record shows is that he was a thug of a sort, a thug wannabe, if you will. At the very least, he was *thuggish*, even if he may not have been a full-blown thug.

And we know this, not just from his record, but solely from the fact that he unleashed a torrent of violence upon Zimmerman.

No one credibly disputes that Martin threw the first punch. From what has been determined, it was he who threw every other punch after that as well. To be clear, there was no *exchange* of blows between Martin and Zimmerman. Rather, Zimmerman was on his back as Martin repeatedly pounded on him.

And it is not as if Zimmerman was in his face posing an imminent danger to Martin. Had this been the case, then perhaps the latter would have been justified in launching a preemptive punch (even if he would not have been justified in punching his face into the ground after he had succeeded in knocking him down).

Had Martin really feared for his life when he noticed that Zimmerman had been following him, and had he conducted himself in a non-thuggish way, then he would have done what Zimmerman did when he first observed Martin: call the authorities. Martin could’ve ended his phone call with Rachel Jeantel — to whom he referred to Zimmerman as a “creepy a** cracker” — and called the police.

Instead, he chose to lie in wait for Zimmerman before jumping him.

This is the official account of the events of that fateful evening when Martin’s life ended — an account that the jury in Florida accepted and that no one has been able to contradict.

Contra Ahlert, to acknowledge these facts is *not* to say that Martin “deserved” to be killed. Much less has anyone, least of all the “conservatives” whom Ahlert lectures, even remotely insinuated that Martin deserved to be killed because of his lifestyle.

However, to concede the facts *is* to concede both that Martin did indeed act thuggishly and that Zimmerman was just as justified in shooting him as an elderly woman would be justified in shooting an assailant who had her pinned on the ground while striking her.

Though painful, we mustn’t lose sight of the realities of this issue — even if the Zimmerman haters, including some alleged “conservatives,” insist upon calling them “caricatures.”



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