



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 24, 2013

## Days After Acquittal, Zimmerman Rescues Family From Flipped SUV

Just days after being acquitted by a jury in the 2012 shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, George Zimmerman (shown on right) helped [rescue a family trapped in their overturned vehicle](#) — and proved that he had not gone far from home despite numerous death threats.



According to the Seminole County Sheriff's Office, on July 17, at approximately 5:45 p.m. Eastern, police were called to the scene of a one-car accident at the intersection of Interstate 4 and State Route 46 in Sanford, Florida, less than a mile from the scene of Zimmerman's deadly confrontation with Martin. A blue Ford Explorer had driven off the highway and rolled over, trapping Mark and Dana Gerstle and their two children inside.

By the time a deputy arrived at the accident scene, the family had been helped out of the vehicle by two men, one of them Zimmerman. Police said Zimmerman, 29, was holding a fire extinguisher at the time. An eyewitness told [Breitbart News](#) that the vehicle had "caught fire" and that Zimmerman had "helped assist the family out of the vehicle and put out the fire with the extinguisher." Other reports suggest that Zimmerman thought there was a fire and was prepared to battle it but was mistaken.

In a statement, the sheriff's office said Zimmerman "was not a witness to the crash and left after making contact with the deputy." The former neighborhood watch coordinator was, however, recognized by people on the scene and thanked for his help, the eyewitness told Breitbart.

No one was injured in the accident, the sheriff's office said.

Zimmerman's act of kindness marked his first known public appearance since his July 13 acquittal. His family said he has been in hiding since the verdict was rendered, and his lawyers said he has been wearing a bulletproof vest on those rare occasions when he surfaces. His parents also say they have not been able to return to their home as a result of the threats they have received.

"We have had an enormous amount of death threats. George's legal counsel has had death threats, the police chief of Sanford, many people have had death threats," Zimmerman's father, Robert Zimmerman, told [ABC News](#). "'Everyone with Georgie's DNA should be killed' — just every kind of horrible thing you can imagine."

A woman with a cellphone number that differs from Zimmerman's by a single digit has also been on the receiving end of numerous threats meant for Zimmerman. Lori Tankel of Winter Park, Florida, got "at least 80 phone calls within one day of the jury's not guilty verdict" and many more over the next weekend because her cellphone number had been posted online by someone who thought it was



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Zimmerman's, she told ABC News.

"They were saying things like, 'Zimmerman? Is this George? We're going to get you, we're going to kill you,'" she said.

Given all this, Zimmerman was taking quite a risk venturing out in public and involving himself in an event that was sure to be observed by many passersby.

"I think he's more brave than I might have been if I was George Zimmerman with the animosity and anger that has come out since an acquittal. I'm not sure that I would take the risk," Zimmerman's attorney, Mark O'Mara, told Orlando's WFTV. "But again, George's thought processes are just different. His makeup is to help out."

Zimmerman, in fact, apparently considered his actions at the accident scene so commonplace that he didn't even mention them to O'Mara in subsequent conversations.

[Predictably](#), some of those who are absolutely certain that Zimmerman murdered Martin simply because of Martin's skin color are charging that Zimmerman's good deed four days after his acquittal was a public-relations stunt designed to rehabilitate his image.

Blogger [Shannon Barber](#), "a self-described queer feminist and activist for LGBT rights, women's rights, and secular rights in America," had this to say about the story:

Now, color me cynical, but this is just a little too convenient for comfort to me. Here we have a man who is supposedly so afraid of death threats from a nation of outraged people that he cannot come out of hiding. He desperately needs to start rebuilding his reputation and, miraculously, he just happens to be in the right spot at the right time to save a family from a car accident? Details are scant at the moment and if they stay that way, that will be far more suspicious than a kid walking home with Skittles and iced tea.

Commenters at the [Huffington Post](#), likewise, called the Zimmerman rescue "staged" or simply fabricated.

Thus far, however, there is no evidence to suggest that anything underhanded took place last Wednesday. Zimmerman appears simply to have happened to be in the right place at the right time. (The family who benefited from his assistance might attribute his arrival on the scene to something greater than mere chance.)

"It is awfully coincidental that four days after the verdict something like this happens," O'Mara admitted in an interview with [CBS This Morning](#).

"On the other hand," he continued, "once I heard the story, it didn't surprise me because this is the George Zimmerman that I have come to know."



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