



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on October 8, 2012

## Zimmerman to Sue NBC

George Zimmerman, the man [charged with second-degree murder](#) in connection with the killing of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, on Feb. 26, 2012, [will file](#) a defamation lawsuit against NBC.

Zimmerman is taking the action because NBC edited an audiotape of Zimmerman's phone call to police the night of the shooting, which made Zimmerman appear to be a racist who was pursuing Martin because Martin was black.



[Zimmerman shot Martin](#) after spotting the 180-pound football player walking in the community where Zimmerman was a neighborhood watch volunteer. Zimmerman told police that Martin attacked him, and that he was forced to shoot the overpowering young man. Martin's defenders claim Zimmerman was a wild racist vigilante.

### The Lawsuit and Tape

Zimmerman is suing NBC because of what he says is its malicious editing. He believes NBC smeared him when it aired a portion of his call to police.

[According to](#) the *New York Post*, Zimmerman's attorneys "are about to file a complaint against NBC and its top executives, naming news president Steve Capus and correspondent Ron Allen, who was the reporter on the scene for the broadcast on *Today* on March 27. He also remained the reporter for the story on NBC Nightly News." The *Post* continues,

A source tells us, "The suit will be filed imminently against NBC and its news executives. The network's legal department has put everybody in the news department involved with this incident on notice, telling them not to comment."

In broadcasting the part of the tape where Zimmerman described Martin, NBC aired this soundbite from the neighborhood watch volunteer: "This guy looks like he's up to no good. He looks black."

But the full version of the tape shows that quite a bit of the dialog was left out, and the words were manipulated. The conversation with police really [went like this](#):

**Zimmerman:** 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.

**Dispatcher:** OK, and this guy — is he black, white or Hispanic?

**Zimmerman:** He looks black.

In other words, Zimmerman did not volunteer that Martin was black. He merely answered a question from the dispatcher.

After the conservative Newsbusters media watchdog [revealed the deception](#), [NBC launched](#) an investigation. The network [fired at least two employees](#) for it (although some [media reports claim](#) the number was three), and NBC [was forced](#) to apologize.



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Now, NBC faces the task of explaining how the tape was edited, and why anyone permitted it to be aired.

The question legally is what Zimmerman must prove. Airing the edited version of his conversation with police was clearly defamatory. Yet NBC fired employees. The question is whether NBC's actions afterward will protect it from a fair-minded jury, or whether Zimmerman's reputation is so badly damaged by the media's rush to judgment about him that jurors won't care what NBC did.

## Other Media Manipulation

The selective editing of the audiotape isn't the media's only blurring of the facts in the case. When the shooting became national news, the media widely reported that Zimmerman was white, pushing the meme that Zimmerman racially profiled Martin because he was black. The *New York Times* [labeled Zimmerman](#) a "white Hispanic," an unusual term.

Critics have noted that another [deceptive practice](#) of the media was in the selection of photos. The picture of Martin that ran with the stories [showed](#) him as a baby-faced boy of about 12 years old. But Martin was in fact a strongly-built 17-year-old, and critics have said that [his persona](#) on the Internet, in his Twitter account, and elsewhere, [was that](#) of a thug.

On the other hand, photos of Zimmerman [were not of 28-year-old respectable man, but of a heavy-set 22-year-old](#) in the orange jumpsuit of a county jail. It wasn't a jumpsuit, [according to](#) one report, but that is the way it appeared.

When [ABC showed video](#) of police taking Zimmerman into the station, it placed a "chryon" over the injured part of his head, and the network also claimed the tape showed no injuries. The *Daily Caller* [challenged that claim](#). A photo released later, ironically [by ABC](#), showed Zimmerman's head bleeding.

In a further twist of the story, director Spike Lee [tweeted an address](#) he thought belonged to Zimmerman, but instead was the address of an elderly couple. Because of Lee's attempt to visit vengeance upon Zimmerman, essentially inviting anyone who saw the tweet to show up at his house and kill him, the couple was forced to flee. Lee later "settled" with the frightened pair.


Politicians jumped in as well. [A congresswoman said](#) Martin was a "sweet young boy hunted down like a dog," while a congressman [donned a "hoodie"](#) on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives

## Evidence Thus Far Exonerates Zimmerman

But despite what critics say was the media's attempt to railroad Zimmerman, the evidence that emerged shows that he told the truth when [he said](#) Martin attacked him, and was bashing his head into the ground and trying to kill him when Zimmerman pulled his gun and fired.

In July, the *Orlando Sentinel* reported that the FBI's investigation shows that [Zimmerman is not a racist](#). [According to](#) the paper,

Federal civil-rights investigators interviewed dozens of George Zimmerman's friends, neighbors and co-workers, and no one said he was a racist, records released Thursday show.

FBI agents spread out across the state, talking to three dozen people, including gun-shop employees, Zimmerman's ex-fiancée and the Sanford police detective who led the investigation into the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black 17-year-old. 

Reuters [published a long report](#) saying much the same thing. That story also explained why Zimmerman carried a gun: Police had told him and his wife to buy the weapon to defend themselves against a



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vicious pit bull running loose in their neighborhood.

At the same time, the [Miami Herald reported](#) that the lead detective in the case [told the FBI](#) that colleagues had tried to pressure him into filing false charges against Zimmerman. According to the *Herald*,

The lead Sanford Police investigator who sought manslaughter charges against George Zimmerman told the FBI that a sergeant and two other officers tried to pressure him into making an arrest in the controversial case — even though he didn't think there was enough evidence.

In May, ABC News [released the medical report](#) that showed Zimmerman's injuries as consistent with his story of self defense.

Despite having all this evidence — and no evidence that Zimmerman lied — special prosecutor [Angela Corey charged Zimmerman](#) with second-degree murder. When she released her affidavit, leftist legal luminary [Alan Dershowitz came to](#) Zimmerman's defense.

He called the affidavit, which did not include the evidence showing Zimmerman spoke the truth about that night, "unethical," "immoral," and "irresponsible."

Dershowitz also [fired a broadside](#) at Corey from the pages of the *New York Daily News*.

Citing the medical report that showed that Zimmerman's injuries were consistent with his claim of self defense, [Dershowitz wrote](#), "The prosecutor will have no choice but to drop the second-degree murder charge against Zimmerman — if she wants to act ethically, lawfully and professionally."

After Dershowitz's attack, [Corey threatened to sue](#) Harvard University, where Dershowitz teaches law.

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