

Lisette Garcia

From: muhammed malik <activist.malik@gmail.com>
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To: undisclosed-recipients
Subject: "Trayvon Martin & Race" - Op-ed - Professor Ediberto Roman

Opinions? I strongly encourage you to read FIU Professor Ediberto Roman's commentary on the Trayvon Martin incident; in this op-ed he specifically comments on media references to Zimmerman's "hispanic" heritage. **SHARE THIS!**

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ediberto-roman/trayvon-martin-case_b_1371552.html?ref=miami



[Ediberto Roman](#)

Professor of Law, Florida International University

[Race and the Trayvon Martin Case...](#)

Posted: 03/23/2012 12:25 am

As the tragic events leading to the death of an innocent young man, Trayvon Martin, illustrate, race remains a matter of great debate in this country, and sadly a matter that all too often is associated with the abuse of power. In the matter of the killing of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, we do not have the repeated story of a white police officer, or officers, shooting a young unarmed African-American male.

We initially had a story a story of a white neighborhood watch member following, stopping, and eventually killing young Trayvon. But now, there are added complexities, news accounts are making a great deal of the fact that classic debates concerning race are a bit more complicated in this matter because the father of the accused, Robert Zimmerman, points out that his son has a Hispanic mother. The question several news accounts now raise is whether the fact that Zimmerman is part Hispanic changes the racial nature of the story.

To add to the race issue, Robert Zimmerman in a [statement](#) to the *Orlando Sentinel* writes:

George is a Spanish speaking minority with many black family members and friends. He would be the last to discriminate for any reason whatsoever. One black neighbor recently interviewed said she knew everything in the media was untrue and that she would trust George with her life. Another black neighbor said that George was the only one, black or white, who came and welcomed her to the community, offering any assistance he could provide. Recently, I met two black children George invited to a social event. I asked where they met George. They responded that he was their mentor. They said George visited them routinely, took them places, helped them, and taught them things and that they really loved George. The media portrayal of George as a racist could not be further from the truth.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

While all of the facts concerning this case are known to few, if any individuals, the claim that the accused was not motivated by race because he is Hispanic and has African-American family members, according to his father, does not remove race from the equation.

Legal scholars have long looked to our country's history with respect to race relations, and observed that race is not exclusively biologically determined. In fact, in his book *White by Law*, Professor Ian Haney Lopez examines our country's biased naturalization laws to illustrate that race is as much a social construction as it is anything else. In other words, the fact that one is member of a racial or ethnic minority group does not preclude the fact that one may be a racist or use racial bias as a motivation for one's actions. To put it even more directly, the fact that one is bi-racial or bi-ethnic does not mean one cannot be a bigot or at least motivated by racial enmity.

Additional accounts further complicate the Martin tragedy, and if true, may further the point made above. According to a [recently released account](#) of the police dispatch report, the accused may have been muttering a racial slur just before he confronted the victim. A recent online story [states](#) "that in a call to the police dispatcher released this weekend, George Zimmerman can be heard muttering what sounds like 'f***ing c**ns' under his breath as he followed 17-year-old shooting victim Trayvon Martin, police say."

In addition, according to a U.S. News Online [report](#), the accused "called 911 dozens of times in the months that led to the fatal shooting... The Seminole County Sheriff's Office released six calls he had made, four of which called police to report "suspicious" persons -- all of whom were black..." If in fact the dispatcher report does reflect the slur, and if the accused had an agenda, claims that the accused had no racial animosity come into serious question. And on a somewhat related point, it should not be lost on any of us, that the Hispanic community within itself often struggles with issues concerning race, particularly with respect to difference or perceived differences in color between members of the same community.

In the end, race relations in this country remain a complex but all too often issue in many of our realities. Let us not use race to confuse the facts behind any case, and let us be careful not to use race as an excuse to condemn or exonerate anyone.

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*Martin Luther King: "Injustice Anywhere is a Threat to Justice Everywhere!"