



## COMMENTARY

# Trayvon Martin: Gone Too Soon

*By Kevin Rowan*

**T**he phrase the more the things change the more they stay the same is often thrown around these days. We take a look at how the world is nowadays and things always look as if they are changing but the more you actually think about it, are they really?

From the wars that are going on to the ongoing issues we have going on with racial tension, I believe racial tension is the top issue in America today and it does not seem to be going anywhere anytime soon. It seems that we keep going through the same issues.

You see cases such as Trayvon Martin, who was a 17-year-old African American from Miami Gardens, Florida. He was fatally shot by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer. Martin, who was serving a school suspension, had gone with his father on a visit to his father's fiancée at her townhouse. On the evening of February 26, 2012, Martin went to a convenience store and purchased candy and a canned drink. Martin returned from the store, he walked through a neighborhood that had been the scene of robberies several times that year. Zimmerman, a member of the community watch group, saw Martin and called the Sanford Police to report him for suspicious behavior. Minutes later, there was an altercation between the two individuals in which Martin was shot in the chest. Zimmerman, who was slightly injured in the altercation, was not charged at the time of the shooting by the Sanford Police, who said that there was no evidence to refute his claim of self-defense, and that Florida's stand your ground law prohibited law-enforcement officials from arresting or charging him.

After national media focused on the tragedy, Zimmerman was eventually charged and tried in Martin's death. The jury acquitted him of second-degree murder and of manslaughter in July 2013. It's very sad, but it was also profiled as a racial case due to Martin being African-American and George Zimmerman being of Caucasian and Hispanic background. Other cases that followed Martin's were high-profile incidents such as Michael Brown and Freddie Gray, two African-American men who died as a result of encounters with law enforcement officers.

I relate these incidents to myself as I went through a racial situation this past summer. As I returned home for the summer from college, me and a group of friends decided to attend a party at a fraternity house at The University of Maryland in College Park. My friends and I were all African American. The particular frat house we went to was the scene of a party hosted by a group of Caucasians and the attendees were by majority Caucasian as well. Upon arrival, we went to the entrance of the party. We were met by a group of white males who told us, "Y'all can't stay here." We had to leave as they told us it was an invite-only. We sensed, however, that we were told to leave because we all were young African-American men. We left very frustrated, but felt as though we learned a lesson. This was a small case of how racial tension is happening today, not only locally but around the nation as well.

*"It seems that cases of racial discrimination against African Americans keep reoccurring. History seems to be repeating itself."*

It seems that cases of racial discrimination against African Americans and other people of color keep reoccurring. History seems to be repeating itself despite the changing times. Racial discrimination in the United States has been a major issue since the Colonial era and the slavery era. Legally or socially sanctioned privileges and rights were given to Caucasian Americans, but not granted to others. Will these issues ever go away? It's happened so many times in history we may never know or rather it may never happen in our lifetime. Only time will tell if we, as one nation and world of people, can get over the huge hurdle that has plagued us for centuries. This issue is a sensitive one in today's world, and some people may be in denial that racism exists today. It can only be fixed from within each individual. Some might argue it will stay divided. But as I stated earlier, history seems to be repeating itself, and only time will tell if it will get better or worse.

Oprah Winfrey

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