

I am extremely saddened to hear about the devastating killing of Trayvon Martin. I send my condolences to his family, friends, and community. While there are many unresolved questions, it is in the best interests of our country, and our commitment to all individuals in this nation regardless of skin color, that justice be served. Mr. George Zimmerman still walks a free man, while a 17-year-old deceased and unarmed young man is under scrutiny, validating that the underpinnings of this case must be proactively investigated, evaluated, and determined.

According to a Federal Bureau of Investigation's 2010 Hate Crime Statistic directory, nearly 70 percent of hate-crime offenses were racially motivated by anti-black bias, with a total of 82 percent of them being biased against people of color, and 18 percent motivated by anti-white bias. These numbers, while jarring and unsettling, implore upon us a sense of urgency to address head on the racially charged violence and discrimination around us. While understanding the complicated nature of this violent act, all signs point to the fact that tragedy was brutally affected by racial bias.

This brutality should not become another statistic, yet we also cannot view it as an isolated event. As a World War II Internee, I know firsthand the impact that racially motivated crimes can have on a family and a community. Violent acts are disproportionately committed against communities of color, and it is outrageous that cases such as Trayvon's go uninvestigated, overlooked, and ultimately ignored. With a greater push for awareness on the tensions that lie in this nation, through constant dialogue, strengthening bridges across communities, and support from the local, state, and federal authorities in understanding the urgency of this situation, the Trayvon Martin's of our country will gain their deserved justice.