

Sad, sad story of Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman

By D. Scott Miller

The sad, sad story of Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman continues to remain in our national consciousness. It has primarily been presented as evidence that we are still not getting race relations right. The subsequent marches, rallies and speeches have all alluded to it.

Trayvon was an African-American 17-year-old who was deemed suspicious wearing a hoodie and being black within a gated community. President Obama waded into the turbulent waters of issue by stating “If I had a son, he’d look like Trayvon.” which I should suggest encourages to look at this case not only through the lens of race but also with a focus on generations.

The upcoming legal arguments will likely revolve around interpretations of one’s right to Stand Your Ground. As early as 1895, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Beard v. U.S.* declared that an innocent person under attack was, “not obliged to retreat, but was entitled to stand his ground, and meet any attack upon him with a deadly weapon, in such a way and with such force as ... [he] honestly believed, and had reasonable grounds to believe, was necessary to save his own life, or to protect himself from great bodily injury.”

As a society, has our perspective on the next generation transformed from a sense of special protection for the “Baby on Board” generation to the fear-filled perception of them as an intrusive hoodie-wearing threat? Jobs are limited, must we stand our ground and keep them outside the gated community of opportunity. We like our church worship and community exactly the way it is, we have reasonable grounds to protect ourselves from generational change and to segregate that younger generation.

Here’s the challenge. “Stand Your Ground” is not an anticipated stance of a disciple of Christ. Our Lord reminds us to “offer no resistance to one who is evil” and to turn

the other cheek. Our primary stance to another is not as an enemy but as a neighbor deserving of our love. Youth ministry leader Adam McLane looks through his own office window daily and sees within his neighborhood many of God's children looking remarkably like Trayvon. He wonders about the many Trayvon Martins walking by on his way to the store, the Trayvon's riding by on bikes, those of a different race and the Trayvon's who are girls. He suggests that the teenagers in his neighborhood are probably a lot like the teenagers in your neighborhood, who are also just like the teenagers in Trayvon Martin's neighborhood.

"Stand Your Ground" is not an anticipated stance of a disciple of Christ. We are called to go (not stand ... what part of go do we fail to comprehend?) and make disciples of all the nations. And that all the nations stuff seems most likely to include all the generations. We are called toward stepping beyond protecting ourselves in our fear-induced ground and responding to our sons, our daughters, our nieces and nephews, and all those neighbor kids who look like Trayvon.

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