

They're Black, I'm White... I was allowed to move about freely, but my associates were held in the lunchroom by armed FBI agents

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July 24, 2013

They say "Justice is Blind" but recent events have opened the eyes of Americans to the fact that justice is not blind, it isn't even color blind. You can see justice is not blind at all but it sees race, religion, wealth, power, intelligence, charisma, and beauty before deciding guilt or innocence. The "greatest justice system in the world" is prejudice.

The verdict in the George Zimmerman trial has shown Americans, in a very public way, the way race can effect a verdict. When the juror in the case spoke out she called Mr. Zimmerman, George. That Mr. shows she related to him. But when she spoke of a statement Mr. Martin made, she said that's how "They" talk. Showing a distance from Mr. Martin. That distance can be defined as a racial gulf. A middle aged white woman just could not relate to the black teenager who was killed. It was easy for her to relate to Mr. Zimmerman; white, middle class, protecting his territory from the scary black man.

None of this should have effected her view of the evidence presented but it did. It should not have been taken into account when the police investigated the scene, but it was. It should not have been taken into account by the public, but it was. This case should have been seen as a case of a grown man with a gun, who followed an unarmed teenage boy, a conflict ensued, and the man killed an unarmed teenager.

But through the tragedy, and by no mean was it anything less than a tragedy, we can see this produced view of life is not unique. My view was brought into sharp focus as I saw my life change because of others prejudiced views of the world.

Even before our business was raided, our indictment, our trial, and our conviction, I saw the specter of racism and preconceived ideas effect our business. When you have a prospective client (a large law enforcement agency) tell the CEO of your minority owned business, "this is the best software we have seen. It is just what we need. But one piece of advice, put a white face on your company" Why would the color of the executives' skin matter when making a sale? Another time it was said "The only reason I can see that the deal did not close is because you are black" Again, why should this matter except for prejudice in the world and the people we are dealing with. I wonder if their thoughts were "We can give this much money to a bunch of black guys. It will set a bad precedent".

Then on February 9, 2005 I saw, in full force, how law enforcement treats whites vs. blacks. When our business was raided I was the only white person in the office. The FBI agents, who outnumbered the people in the office, treated me with respect while they treated the black men and women with disdain, anger and mistrust. I was kindly asked to go to the lunchroom by an agent. My associates were ordered and herded to the lunchroom. I was allowed to leave the lunchroom unescorted, retrieve my belongings and laptop from my office, given a card by the agent in my office "in case I wanted to talk" and allowed to leave the office without being searched. As I left the office I saw one of my associates having his wallet searched by two agents and I was not even acknowledged as I passed.

Almost all of the agent were white, 99%. While I was allowed to move about freely, my associates

were held in the lunchroom, escorted if they had to use the restroom, questioned, searched when they were allowed to leave and generally treated like they were animals, rather than business professionals. The racism was obvious. One agent even asked the COO if he would hire a white woman to work here. This is outrageous. You may say well it was a raid the FBI did not know what they were going to encounter. Then why was I treated differently when the only difference was I was white. And the FBI did know the people they were dealing with, we had presented the software to them too and they loved it. How then did they obtain a search warrant that stated we were a "purported software company".

Even when I was summoned to testify at the first grand jury, which did not indict, I was told I was not a target of the investigation. They did not allocate enough time for me to testify, I only had 5 minutes, and they had to reschedule me to another day, I complained about a family member being operated on this day and I wasted it waiting to testify, I was told they would have happily rescheduled my testimony. But that was never offered to any of the other black witnesses.

Once we got to court the racism and prejudice was still evident. The judge immediately called our business a scam and when speaking to the black defendants she used statements "You are so articulate", "You speak so well", and "You are so intelligent". When was the last time you heard anyone say that to a white executive? You had witnesses use some of the same terms. The judge even made the defendants discuss which witnesses they were going to have testifying and what they would be testifying about, all in front of the AUSA's prosecution team. When have you seen that before? When prosecution witnesses were questioned about statements made by the defendants, witnesses used terms like "I thought", "I assumed", "I believed" thus bringing into question the validity of their testimony. We were still convicted.

You could feel that the atmosphere of the investigation, raid and trial were racially tinged. I felt they were thinking, How could a small black company create something faster, better and more flexible than the big companies like IBM and Lockheed Martin. There must be something criminal going on but we sure can't give them this much money (billions). We also wondered why a disinterested 3rd party, Greg Goldberg, would hand deliver a letter detailing how to prosecute the case to the US Attorney's office. Why would the case, that had been said to be a civil case, be pursued for 6 years to get a criminal indictment?

Every time I see a white owned/run company admit to fraud and pay a fine these questions come back to me. Here we have 5 black men and one white man who run a business, owe debt, innocent of any wrongdoing but are convicted of fraud and sentenced to between 8 and 10 years in prison and all without any previous criminal activity. But another company that admitted to an 800 million dollar fraud against the federal government just pays a fine, no criminal charges. Eric Holder even said that some companies are just too big to prosecute. Where is our "Blind Justice" in these cases.

The president has said "our justice system does not equally apply the law", but we tell the world we have the best justice system. We then condemn other countries for their laws and justice system. I just don't see that we have the best system in the world, we have a system that easily and without remorse puts innocent people in prison while the guilty roam free. The time has come for us to condemn our justice system and find ways to fix it.