

Why doesn't the truth matter over preconceived prejudices and biases?

By Kendrick Barnes

July 24, 2013

I remember watching the verdict in the Trayvon Martin murder trial and feeling such a great sense of sadness. It was hard to accept that a man can walk away just like that after killing someone's child. And to think 6 jurors could listen to weeks of testimony and hear clear evidence of lies and racial profiling and decide with all of that the Mr. Zimmerman was justified in killing Trayvon Martin. That verdict brought back memories of when I heard the verdict of guilty at the end of my own trial. during trial 5 other co-defendants and myself impeached many witnesses that took the stand to testify against us. Clear evidence was presented during the course of the trial in the form of emails, signed contracts and prior witness interviews that supported our innocence. All of that evidence in clear black and white readily chronicling agreed upon terms and expectations. But all of that seemingly meant nothing to the jury when presented by 6 defendants 5 of whom are black.

Contrasting with the Trayvon Martin murder trial it seems this justice system seems to view whomever is black must be in the position of the wrong. Trayvon was murdered yet the jury believed that he was at fault for his own murder. Juror B37, speaking in an interview on CNN, felt that Trayvon could have solved everything just by running away. And that George Zimmerman even after being told to not follow after Trayvon Martin was justified in later killing an unarmed 17 year old. And in reference to us, collectively know as the IRP6, emails confirming agreements and terms sent back and forth between IRP Solutions and staffing vendors. Also signed legal contracts spelling out agreed upon terms meant nothing of front of 20 odd witnesses against us contradicting evidence in black and white. So either the victim of a crime, such as Trayvon Martin, or the accused if you are black in front of a majority white jury you are viewed in the wrong.

But what about the truth? Why doesn't the truth matter over preconceived prejudices and biases? We like to believe that justice is blind, but jurors are not. They are allowed to make a judgment based off of their own life experiences, like and dislikes, hopes and fears. And when they make a judgment it is final even if dead wrong. A jury verdict is just that, a verdict but not necessarily the truth. During closing arguments in the Trayvon murder trial defense attorney Mark O'Mara asked the jury not to make a common sense decision because that could hurt his client. Then how can this system be just if a common sense verdict leading to the truth should not be used? We now live in a country where dog fighting can land you time in prison if you are Michael Vick. But killing an unarmed black 17 year old is 100% legal if you are George Zimmerman. We also see commercials everyday about cats and dogs needing to be rescued from pounds across the country. But we say nothing that 25% of the world's prison population are confined in the United States. When does human life regardless of color matter to everyone?