



*State of North Carolina*  
*General Court of Justice*  
*Defender District 15B*

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MEMORANDUM

To: PD Chiefs  
Subject: Discussions in the Wake of the Trayvon Martin Tragedy  
Date: August 2, 2013

As Chair of the NC PD Committee on Racial Equity (PD CORE), I am forwarding you information from PD CORE that may assist you and your offices with facilitating a discussion on the Zimmerman verdict. One of CORE's stated objectives is to initiate and encourage ongoing dialogue within the North Carolina defender community regarding race and justice issues. The trial of George Zimmerman, which received an extensive amount of media coverage, provides a unique opportunity to discuss the intersection of race and our criminal justice system. In the wake of the verdict, many have felt that exploring and discussing the issues that have arisen from the tragedy and the ensuing trial is a constructive response and PD CORE shares this sentiment.

Should you choose to facilitate a dialogue in your own office, we have listed below a series of suggestions for having a productive discussion and a list of topics that may guide the conversation. Please also find attached to this email several media responses to the trial and outcome that may assist in initiating the conversation, particularly for those staff members less familiar with the details of the case.

Thank you in advance for considering our suggestion and for your efforts in continuing the discussion of race and criminal justice.

Suggestions for Having a Productive Meeting:

1. Consider whether to make the meeting mandatory or voluntary. A mandatory meeting will ensure depth of conversation and a variety of viewpoints, but may bring attitudes of resentment from those who are not interested or who feel saturated by the subject already. On the other hand, a voluntary meeting could leave out those who can and should contribute but may feel constrained.
2. You might also consider whether to invite support staff and investigators, as they may have perspectives quite different from the attorneys.

3. As this is a sensitive subject for some, it may be helpful to establish ground rules at the beginning of the meeting, such as not allowing interruptions and judgments about others' views. You may also want to go around the room first and provide everyone a chance to speak, perhaps starting with less senior or administrative employees first to make sure their voices are heard and not drowned out.

#### Discussion Topics:

1. The Role of Law Enforcement in the Investigation and Arrest of Mr. Zimmerman.
2. The Media Coverage of the Shooting of Trayvon Martin and Arrest of George Zimmerman.
3. The Use of Media by Counsel Before Trial and After the Verdict.
4. The Law of Self-Defense and Stand-Your-Ground/Castle Doctrine Statutes – Compare and Contrast with NC Law.
5. The Jury Pool and Jury Composition in the Case.
6. Addressing Race Issues in Jury Selection.
7. The Defense Strategy – strengths, weaknesses.
8. The Prosecution Strategy – strengths, weaknesses.
9. Witness Preparation.
10. Use of Expert Witnesses.
11. How to Address the Race Issue in Trial and Arguments.
12. How would this Case have been Handled in your Jurisdiction?
13. Lessons for PDs from the Trial and Outcome.
14. The Impact of Race on the Investigation, Arrest, Prosecution, Defense and Jury.
15. What, if anything, does the Jury's verdict, and the comments from Zimmerman supporters mean to you?
16. In what ways does this incident and trial inform us on issues of racialized mass incarceration in the U.S? In N.C?
17. Does the media portrayal of young black men contribute to this situation?
18. Would the outcome have been different if the shooter (Zimmerman) was a young black male?
19. What is the role and impact of implicit bias/unconscious racism in Zimmerman's behavior, law enforcement's response, media and the public response, and the ultimate outcome at trial?