

## Florida case highlights danger of certain clothes for minorities

Mario T. García | Mar. 29, 2012 NCR Today

As I was walking in to my health club Wednesday morning, I saw a young white man -- perhaps 18 -- leaving the club wearing a hoodie. I had no fear of him, and he seemed perfectly innocent. It impressed upon me that the issue in the unfortunate killing of that young black man, Trayvon Martin, in Florida that has achieved national attention has little to do with attire, per se. It has to do with the color of one's skin under the hoodie.

The combination of Martin's hoodie plus his blackness led George Zimmerman to allegedly fear him and shoot him. The issue of race cannot be avoided in this tragedy. It's possible that even if Martin was not wearing a hoodie that Zimmerman would have still shot and killed him.

For still too many, blacks and Latinos are perceived as criminals and a danger. Although much has been made of the fact that people such as Zimmerman involved in neighborhood watches in Florida should not be allowed to carry weapons and, instead, to allow the police to handle any potential danger, the fact of the matter is that the police themselves might have shot and killed Martin. Racial profiling involves both civilians and police forces. There is no such thing as a post-racial American society, and we need to continue to address our historical racial divide.

Having said all of this, I do believe that Martin's death should be a warning to black and Latino parents to be careful with how their children, especially their boys, dress. Following what has happened in Florida, I would not allow my Latino son to wear a hoodie. While the hoodie itself may be innocent, it, along with the combination of a minority male wearing it, can bring about harm, as occurred in the Martin case.

The fact of the matter is that hoodies are perceived as being gang attire, along with baggy pants. I am not personally in favor of young men dressing like this. It is a form of swagger and oppositional culture that can bring about harm. While intellectuals may celebrate certain clothing as a form of oppositional culture, I don't think they would be as enthusiastic if one of their sons were killed because he was mistaken for a gangster.

What is that saying? Clothes make the man. There is enough danger out there for young minority men without bringing more on because of how one dresses.

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