



Geraldo's Point on Hoodies

There is no point in dressing like a hoodlum when you are not a hoodlum, even though that has become a fashion for some minority youths, including the teenager who was shot and killed in a confrontation in Florida. I don't know the whole story of that tragedy, any more than those who are making loud noises in the media do, but that is something that we have trials for.

People have a right to dress any way they want to, but exercising that right is something that requires common sense, and common sense is something that parents should have, even if their children don't always have it.



Many years ago, when I was a student at Harvard, there was a warning to all the students to avoid a nearby tough Irish neighborhood, where Harvard students had been attacked. It so happened that there was a black neighborhood on the other side of the Irish neighborhood that I had to pass through when I went to get my hair cut.

I never went through that Irish neighborhood dressed in the style of most Harvard students back then. I walked through that Irish neighborhood dressed like a black working man would be dressed — and I never had the slightest trouble the whole three years that I was at Harvard.

While I had a right to walk through that tough neighborhood dressed in a Brooks Brothers suit, if I wanted to — and if I could have afforded one, which I couldn't — it made no sense for me to court needless dangers.

The man who shot the black teenager in Florida may be as guilty as sin, for all I know — or he may be innocent, for all I know. We pay taxes so that there can be judges and jurors who sort out the facts. We do not need Jesse Jackson or Al Sharpton or the President of the United States spouting off before the trial has even begun. Have we forgotten the media's rush to judgment in the Duke University "rape" case that blew up completely when the facts came out?

If the facts show that a teenager who was no threat to anyone was shot and killed, it will be time to call for the death penalty. But if the facts show that the shooter was innocent, then it will be time to call for people in the media and in politics to keep their big mouths shut until they know what they are talking about.

Playing with racial polarization is playing with fire.

Much has been made of the fact that the teenager was unarmed. The only time I have ever pointed a loaded gun at a human being, I had no idea whether he was armed or not. All I knew was that I could hear his footsteps sneaking up behind me at night.

Fortunately for both of us, he froze in his tracks when I pointed a gun at him. If he had made a false move, I would have shot him. And if it had turned out later that he was unarmed, I would not have lost a



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moment's sleep over it.

You know that someone was unarmed only after it is all over. If he attacks, you have to shoot, if only to keep the attacker from getting your gun.

It so happened that the man I pointed a gun at was white. But he could have been any color of the rainbow, and it would not have made the slightest difference.

Let the specific facts come out in the Florida case. That is why we have courts.

Have we forgotten the Jim Crow era, with courts making decisions based on the race of the defendants, rather than the facts of the case? That is part of the past that we need to leave in the past, not resurrect it under new racial management.

Who is really showing concern for the well-being of minority youngsters, Geraldo Rivera who is trying to save some lives, or Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, and others who are hyping this tragic episode for their own benefit?

Race hustlers who hype paranoia and belligerence are doing no favor to minority youngsters. There is no way to know how many of these youngsters' confrontations with the police or others in authority have been needlessly aggravated by the steady drumbeat of racial hype they have been bombarded with by race hustlers.

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