

I'm black, don't shoot me

By [Eugene Robinson](#), Published:
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Sometimes, when I'm in my car, I crank up the music pretty loud. All you Michael Dunns out there, please don't shoot me.

Please don't shoot my sons, either, or my brothers-in-law, nephews, nephews-in-law or other male relatives. I have quite a few friends and acquaintances who also happen to be black men, and I'd appreciate your not shooting them as well, even if the value you place on their lives is approximately zero.

I know I shouldn't have to ask, but nothing else has worked. The criminal justice system has a mixed record — [Dunn was at least partly held accountable](#) for the burst of mayhem in which he fatally shot Jordan Davis, while [George Zimmerman got off scot-free](#) for killing Trayvon Martin. But whatever the final outcome, prosecutors and juries never get involved until after the fact. When mothers have already cried over the caskets of their dead sons. When it's too late.

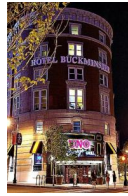
Davis's killing, if you haven't been following the case, was just as senseless as Martin's. On [Nov. 23, 2012](#), [Dunn](#) and his fiancée stopped at a gas station in Jacksonville, Fla., and parked next to a red Dodge Durango with four African American teenagers inside. The young men made the mistake — ultimately fatal to Davis — of having the Durango's music system turned up too loud.

["I hate that thug music,"](#) Dunn muttered, according to the fiancée's trial testimony. The woman went inside to buy wine and potato chips — the couple had already been drinking, she testified — while [Dunn, a software engineer](#) who was 45 at the time, waited in the car.

[Dunn complained to the teenagers about the music.](#) They turned it down, then turned it back up again. I'm not aware of any law that says young black men have to follow orders from every random white man who comes along.

Dunn told them again to turn down the music. He testified that Davis, who was 17, threatened him with what looked like a shotgun. No weapon was found in the teenagers' car, however, and no witnesses saw anything that looked like a weapon — [except the 9mm handgun](#) that Dunn took out of his glove compartment.

Dunn fired 10 shots, three of which struck Davis. He continued firing even as the teenagers' car squealed



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away. Davis probably died within minutes, according to testimony at the trial. Rather than wait for police to arrive, Dunn and his fiancée drove to their hotel — Dunn was in Jacksonville to attend his son’s wedding — where they spent the evening [eating pizza and drinking rum and Cokes](#). He was arrested the following day at his home not far from Cape Canaveral.

On Saturday, a Jacksonville jury found Dunn guilty on [three counts of attempted second-degree murder](#) for shooting at the surviving teens, plus one count of shooting a deadly missile at an occupied vehicle. But the jury failed to reach a verdict on the most serious charge of first-degree murder for killing Davis.

Prosecutors have announced they will retry Dunn on the murder charge. Regardless of the outcome, he faces [20 years in prison for each of the attempted murder charges](#), and the judge could make those sentences consecutive. He might well spend the rest of his life behind bars.

So the system delivered a measure of justice, at least. We can and should examine the racial biases of juries, such as those that sat in judgment of Zimmerman and Dunn. We can and should work to repeal statutes such as [Florida’s “stand-your-ground” law](#), which in both cases — notably through the instructions that the judges read to the jurors — encouraged giving defendants who claimed self-defense the benefit of the doubt.

I know it’s important that the next Zimmerman or Dunn be convicted of murder, if that’s what the evidence says. But I’m so very tired of funerals and trials. I want to know what we can do to keep the next Trayvon Martin and the next Jordan Davis alive.

While Michael Dunn was in jail awaiting trial — and authorities were recording his phone calls — [he said this to his fiancée](#): “When the police said that these guys didn’t have a record I was like, you know, I wonder if they’re just flying under the radar. Because they were bad.”

What he meant by “bad,” evidently, was “young, black and male.” It was this assumption that killed Martin and Davis — and that surely will kill again. We don’t just have to change laws. We have to change hearts and minds.

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