

PROLOGUE

AS A FILMMAKER, I did not set out to write a book. I set out to produce a documentary about the rise of Florida politico Andrew Gillum. Even after I thought a book would be useful, I certainly did not expect to write *this* book. But I have done so, along with a documentary feature film of the same name.

The more I looked into Gillum's success, however, the more need I saw to investigate the unanswered questions of the criminal case upon which Gillum built his career. I had followed the 2012 shooting death of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin and the subsequent trial of George Zimmerman from afar and, like many others, I had grave concerns about the lynch mob mentality that drove the case.

The shooting and trial took place in Sanford, Florida. I intended to visit Sanford, but this investigation took me places I never expected to go. From the back alleys of Little Haiti in Miami to the bucolic campus of Florida State University in Tallahassee, I got an earful and an eyeful. I met George Zimmerman as I had hoped to, but I ended up centering both the documentary and this book on a young woman I did not even know existed when I started the project.

In getting to know this woman—"Diamond"—I was introduced to Miami's urban youth culture, a culture that thrives on some mix of

sex, drugs, gangs, texting, clubbing, shopping, and social media. Diamond's particular Haitian-American milieu featured its own unscrupulous subspecialty: identity switching. Only after I started the project did I realize I had stumbled into the most spectacular case of identity fraud in modern American judicial history. The fraud resulted in the seminal race hoax of the Obama years. I call it "The Trayvon Hoax." As shall become clear, no one has suffered more from this ongoing hoax than the black youth of America.

As shall become clear too, any number of interested parties profit from such hoaxes. The railroading of George Zimmerman, for instance, helped Trayvon Martin's biological parents shift the blame from their parenting deficiencies to a racial scapegoat. They extracted a huge settlement from a homeowners association and cashed in on book and movie deals. Their attorney, Benjamin Crump, got his slice of the insurance payout and forged a national identity as a civil rights champion. The old school race hustlers like Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson reestablished their relevance and refreshed their cash flow. Of even greater significance, politicians like Gillum and President Barack Obama successfully exploited Trayvon Martin's death to harvest votes and win elections—power!

If there is a main culprit in this story, however, I would argue that it is the press. The Zimmerman case was ground zero for the explosion of fake news and the race hoaxes that have followed, one more preposterous than the next. Think "hands up don't shoot" or the beyond preposterous Jesse Smollett racial "attack" by Trump supporters, a hoax so phony only the media could fall for it.

We expect individuals to be greedy and exploitive, politicians especially. It is the nature of the beast. As their very mission, however, the media are charged with shining light on political schemes. Time and again, however, the media have betrayed their craft. On the subject of race, they do so routinely. It is appalling that six years after the Zimmerman trial so much information was left for me, an independent filmmaker, to discover.

If the media had wanted to find the truth, it was there for the plucking. I was able to uncover it simply by reading publicly available

information from the legal proceedings and following up on what I read. How is it possible no one in the media chose to do what I did? The answer is simple. The media did not want to know. The truth would not have advanced their fear-fueled racial agenda.

The power of Investigative Journalism is the ability to set the record straight, to change history for the better by shedding light on facts and exposing lies and liars. Can anyone even remember the last major investigation broken by a major news organization? I can't. In an odd way, I suppose I should thank our lazy and disingenuous friends in the media for making it possible for an independent film maker like myself to tell this incredible story. My hope is to show how politicians and the media have pulled us apart, when our true aspirations have always been to come together as one nation.

So, sit back and stay calm, or at least try to. You are about to see how America got played by an epic race hoax that divided us for no reason and, alas, just keeps on killing.

Joel Gilbert
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ALSO A FEATURE FILM

JOEL GILBERT

**THE TRAYVON
HOAX** 

Unmasking the Witness Fraud
that Divided America

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