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# 'Judging' the George Zimmerman court cases: Is his father a factor in trials?



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Many people were scratching their heads in confusion at Florida's complex Stand Your Ground laws after news broke that the man who shot at George Zimmerman, notoriously known as the killer of unarmed teen Trayvon Martin on **Feb. 26, 2012**, was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Matthew Apperson was convicted of attempted second-degree murder on Mon., Oct. 17, according to **New York Daily News**, as well as shooting into an occupied vehicle and aggravated assault.



*No guns (Photo credit: Pixabay)*

Those who followed the Trayvon Martin case have long believed that Zimmerman continues to get off scot-free from this legal case and more:

- A **narcotics officer** as the first person to question Zimmerman instead of a homicide detective in the Martin tragedy
- A **dropped case** of aggravated assault and misdemeanor counts of domestic violence battery and criminal mischief from his then-girlfriend Samantha Scheibe
- Allegations that he posted nude photos of a woman he dated named Heather (no last name given) and tweeted that she cheated on him with a **"dirty Muslim"**
- A **perjury case** that only his ex-wife, Shellie Zimmerman, plead guilty to and required her to complete 100 hours of community service and one year of probation
- Trying to auction off the gun killed by Martin for **\$250K**

While social media users are baffled by Apperson going to prison for shooting at Zimmerman's vehicle, and Martin's killer walking away with only minor injuries in both instances, Apperson and Zimmerman reportedly have a history of road rage confrontation dating back to 2014. According to Apperson's mother, **Janet White**, her son shot in self-defense. Apperson himself told police that Zimmerman had aimed a gun at him first.

There's also speculation that Zimmerman keeps walking away from these legal battles unscathed because his father was a judge. That's not exactly true, but his father does have a connection to the legal system. Let's explore.



*George Zimmerman mugshots*

Robert Zimmerman is reportedly a **retired magistrate**, someone who has the ability to “issue various types of processes such as arrest warrants, summonses, bonds, search warrants, subpoenas, and certain civil warrants.” In the “**Introduction to the magistrate system of Virginia**” — as of January 1, 1974 until July 1, 2008 — the only method of selection of a magistrate was through appointment by the chief circuit court judge having jurisdiction within the district the magistrate was appointed to serve. (After 2008, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia has a hand in it.)

Although law school is not necessary for this position, the magistrate must be in good standing with the Virginia State Bar. The state employees must be U.S. citizens, residents of Virginia, cannot be a law enforcement officer, must meet **minimum training and certification standards**, and must obtain 20 mandatory continuing legal education credits annually.

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The latter qualifications would more than likely mean that Robert Zimmerman knows more about legal rights than the average citizen. This is in addition to George Zimmerman already showcasing his enforcement enthusiasm by **applying to be a police officer**.

Robert J. Zimmerman served as a full-time magistrate in Virginia from 2000-2006. In Virginia, magistrates also are judicial officers but are not considered judges. This is because magistrates cannot try cases and issue final orders disposing of a case.

Unlike a judge, a magistrate (who wasn't required to have a bachelor's degree until 2008) has only limited law enforcement and administrative powers. In **Virginia**, the "principal function of the magistrate is to provide an independent, unbiased review of complaints of criminal conduct brought to the office by law enforcement or the general public. Magistrates also conduct bail hearings in instances in which an individual is arrested on a warrant charging him or her with a criminal offense. Magistrates provide services on an around-the-clock basis, conducting hearings in person or through the use of videoconferencing systems."

Although retired, Robert Zimmerman was in a position to advise son, George Zimmerman, on the legal implications associated with the Martin trial, along with the other cases.



*Legal rights (Photo credit: Pixabay)*

George Zimmerman may generally be one lucky man or maybe his lucky charm is indeed his father. At some point though, will that luck run out or should this be seen as yet another reason why it's a good idea to be more savvy at learning the way the criminal justice system works — whether you agree with it or not?

Have more questions about public figures and the criminal justice system? Contact [J. Paye & Associates](#) today.

Shamontiel L. Vaughn contributed to this blog. Find out more about her at [Shamontiel.com](#).

*The information contained here is intended to provide useful information on the topic covered but should not be construed as one-size-fits-all legal advice. Speak to an attorney specifically about your legal situation for specific terms and conditions.*

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