



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Bill Perkins

## **Legislators Stand in Solidarity with 17-year old Trayvon Martin and his family and stand up against stereotyping and reckless actions.**

Bill Perkins

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### **Senator Perkins and Colleagues are Trayvon Martin**

We are each Trayvon Martin. We are all black men, who because of demonizing stereotypes, are subject to the irrational hysterical response of people who maintain that we are intimidating and frightening. Gangs, police officers and individuals, are all subject to this societal fixation of seeing black men as 'the bad guy.'

Young men are the worst victims of this hysterical response, youth like Antron McCray, Kevin Richardson, Raymond Santana, Kharey Wise and Yusef Salaam of the Central Park Five. These teens, falsely arrested, coerced and manipulated without lawyers. Savaged in the press, long before going to trial, they convicted by largely manufactured public opinion. Languishing in prison, they lost 10 years of their young lives, years, they will never recover. No one has apologized, not even people who took out ads to say they should be executed. Nor has the city compensated these young men for what happened.

Black men approaching middle age are hardly immune from the madness. Officer Desmond Robinson and Amadou Diallo, were two older victims of such vilification. Officer Robinson was shot by his partner. Mr. Diallo was viciously assaulted by having a plunger handle shoved up his behind.

As horrible as their ordeals were, they were fortunate, they lived. Shawn Bell, Abner Louima, Omar Edwards, Yusef Hawkins, Willie Turks and Michael Griffith, like Trayvon, were not as lucky.

Eliminating the fear and loathing focused on African American brothers won't be accomplished with a magic wand. Even better training of the police, or better laws on the books, is not enough to combat it. This condition is so deep seated that it impacts every aspect of life for blacks. Substandard education, a lack of jobs, stop and frisk, a DNA data bank, each of these things contributes to a mentality of compromising black men, of perpetuating the myth of the mad, bad and dangerous 'black bad guy'.

We are here in solidarity with Trayvon, not to cause division, but to take action before New York and America become so divided, we can't come together.

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