

Zimmerland

by Lance Manion

His time as a volunteer on the neighborhood watch had been going so well and now this. His worst fear realized.

He didn't even mean for it to happen. He was just walking along, making sure that no white, Hispanic, Native American or Asian people were doing anything illegal when he noticed the young black man walking down the street.

He hadn't meant to. As soon as he realized it was a black teen he averted his eyes and began to walk the other direction but he couldn't be sure if the young man had noticed or not. The neighborhood was plagued with crime committed by young black men so everyone at the neighborhood watch had to be extra careful about profiling. The very last thing they could afford to do is pay attention to the people most likely to be committing these acts.

He cursed cruel fate.

He felt somehow he deserved it because he didn't like rap music. Not even Eminem ... although the Beastie Boys were fun.

He walked more briskly, hoping to be able to turn the corner and leave the terrible encounter behind him. To make matters worse, the black kid was wearing a hoodie. He had noticed the hoodie. How much more racist could he have been? That poor sweet wonderful enormous child.

He was wondering if the youth noticed and was debating about taking a quick peek behind him when he got his answer. He felt a hand on his shoulder and turned ... right into the punch.

He felt somehow he deserved it because sometimes he wished there were more white players in the NBA. Didn't the fact that he rooted for Tiger Woods count for anything?

He fell to the ground and for the third time this week he received a very justified beating. He was just glad that he didn't have a weapon to defend himself. Lord knows what he would have done. What he was capable of.

The important thing was not to attract any attention to himself or the situation. Live or die, he knew as long as he kept his mouth shut this would never make the papers. The hot glare of the spotlight wouldn't fall on his community, exposing the bias towards crime that seemed to be festering.

The horror.

He wonders briefly whatever happened to that lovely girl Tawana Brawley.

He lay there and reflected on all the hate inside him as the kid continued to smash his face into the pavement. He hoped this young man would be able to put the terrible indignity of being observed behind him and bravely carry on with his life.

He just wanted to help keep his neighborhood safe and now look at him.

He was a monster.

Is this really the world he wanted to raise his kids in?

