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George Zimmerman's trial and the hope for a 'not guilty' verdict

Mary Ann McGivern | Jun. 27, 2013 NCR Today

I'm listening -- we are all listening -- to reports of the trial of George Zimmerman for the death of Trayvon Martin. Nothing about it is good, going back to the "stand your ground" law the Florida legislature reaffirmed after the shooting. Now that's inviting violence.

A young man of color is dead. Another young man of color is standing trial, facing a life sentence. A life sentence. That gets me, among other things. I think 20 years is long enough, with up to half time off for good behavior.

There's no such thing as sending a message. If you have a gun and an itch to use it, if you have a gun for self-defense or if you just have a gun because everybody else has a gun, well, whatever will be will be. We've all become fatalistic about guns.

I almost never want anyone locked up. I'm rooting for a "not guilty" verdict. But I've met some men I'm glad were locked up. They were dangerous, a threat to public safety. And I know that punishment can be part of the process of redemption. I've met men and women who were transformed in prison.

But a life sentence rejects the possibility of redemption. We are too quick to throw the key away.

The jury may find George Zimmerman not guilty. As I say, I'm always rooting for that not-guilty verdict. I don't want anyone to go to prison. And I trust juries. Those men and women feel the weight of responsibility on them, for the dead and for the living.

Trayvon Martin's death is a loss for us all. That's what I want the Florida legislature to know. That's what I want George Zimmerman to know. I want Trayvon's parents to know that we, too, experience that loss.

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