



Savage Portrayals: Race, Media and the Central Park Jogger Story

By Natalie Byfield

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In 1989, the rape and beating of a white female jogger in Central Park made international headlines. Many accounts reported the incident as an example of “wilding”—episodes of poor, minority youths roaming the streets looking for trouble. Police intent on immediate justice for the victim coerced five African-American and Latino boys to plead guilty. The teenage boys were quickly convicted and imprisoned. Natalie Byfield, who covered the case for the *New York Daily News*, now revisits the story of the Central Park Five from her perspective as a black female reporter in *Savage Portrayals*.

Byfield illuminates the race, class, and gender bias in the massive media coverage of the crime and the prosecution of the now-exonerated defendants. Her sociological analysis and first-person account persuasively argue that the racialized reportage of the case buttressed efforts to try juveniles as adults across the nation.

Savage Portrayals casts new light on this famous crime and its far-reaching consequences for the wrongly accused and the justice system.

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Savage Portrayals: Race, Media and the Central Park Jogger Story By Natalie Byfield Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"[A]n important study.... The author reviews the race, class, and gender issues in the heavy media coverage of the case, melding her own reporting of the case with that of others. Among other things, she argues that public pressure in such cases often leads to juveniles being tried as adults--as happened here. This is an important cautionary tale."

--*Communication Booknotes Quarterly*

"[Byfield's] firsthand insights into covering the story powerfully illustrate(s) the institutionalized relationship between law enforcement agencies and media outlets in the formation of dominant news discourses."

- James West, *American Journalism*

"[Byfield's] study, *Savage Portrayals: Race, Media and the Central Park Jogger Story* is both a history of the case and a damning indictment of police-media collusion in framing a story."

-Michael Hirsch, *The Independent*

"Students and scholars of news media will find Byfield's analysis of the institutionalized relationship between the police and media nothing short of extraordinary."

-James M. Thomas, *Social Forces*

"Byfield seamlessly alternates her voice with that of an observer and offers a more objective view of the news coverage and its possible impact on case outcomes.... The book is well-written and engaging.... Its publication is especially timely.... Byfield's autoethnographical accounts of newsroom relations provide unique insight into the news-making process for sensationalized stories.... There is much to be learned from this book."

- Jeff Gruenewald, *American Journal of Sociology*

"Byfield brings bifocal vision to her analysis of media treatment of the Central Park Jogger story, which she covered in her first career as a journalist for the New York Daily News... From her current perspective as a sociologist, Byfield reexamines the horrific event in light of after-acquired evidence and scholarly methodology, particularly content analysis of news coverage, and she tells a revised story in which issues of race, class, and media bias taint the justice system. VERDICT: A chilling, ultimately instructive portrayal of savage injustice " - Library Journal

From the Back Cover

"Natalie Byfield's *Savage Portrayals* deftly deconstructs how race, sex, and class warped the media coverage of the Central Park Jogger case and contributed to the wrongful convictions of five innocent black and Latino teenagers. Byfield's personal recollections as a reporter for the Daily News make her analysis uniquely powerful and insightful."

--**Sarah Burns**, filmmaker and author of *The Central Park Five*

"Byfield has a strong and compelling narrative voice, not to mention a really important story to tell. What particularly holds *Savage Portrayals* together is the vantage point of her being a black female inside the world of white-dominated journalism in a sophisticated city like New York. Byfield combines this with a nuanced understanding not only of black and white race relations, but also, and most importantly, of the media's role in constructing the racial order/social structure. The exposé she provides on the ways in which race taints the ability of editors and other opinion-makers to live up to the highest standards of journalistic integrity and balance is truly important in this age of mass incarceration of men of color."

--**Gregg Barak**, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Eastern Michigan University and author of *Criminology: An Integrated Approach*

About the Author

Natalie P. Byfield is an Associate Professor of Sociology at St. John's University in Queens, New York. She has also taught in Journalism and Media Studies. She is a former Staff Writer for the *New York Daily News*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important action, like looking for your favorite guide and reading a book. Beside you can solve your problem; you can add your knowledge by the e-book entitled *Savage Portrayals: Race, Media and the Central Park Jogger Story*. Try to face the book *Savage Portrayals: Race, Media and the Central Park Jogger Story* as your buddy. It means that it can for being your friend when you experience alone and beside those of course make you smarter than previously. Yeah, it is very fortunated for yourself. The book makes you a lot more confidence because you can know almost everything by the book. So , let's make new experience and knowledge with this book.

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Have you spare time for the day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a stroll, shopping, or went to often the Mall. How about open or even read a book allowed *Savage Portrayals: Race, Media and the Central Park Jogger Story*? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time together with your favorite's book, you can cleverer than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have additional opinion?

Dan Hanner:

Book is to be different per grade. Book for children until eventually adult are different content. To be sure that book is very important usually. The book *Savage Portrayals: Race, Media and the Central Park Jogger Story* seemed to be making you to know about other knowledge and of course you can take more information. It is rather advantages for you. The reserve *Savage Portrayals: Race, Media and the Central Park Jogger Story* is not only giving you much more new information but also to become your friend when you truly feel bored. You can spend your spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship with the

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