

NO ANSWERS

JESSE BISHOP
EDITOR'S
LETTER



THE COLUMBIA I KNOW has long been one with guns. On Jan. 26, 1996, Shelley Jones, a Columbia Police Department officer, was shot in the chest outside of Gerbes. A nationwide manhunt ensued. The shooter, Larry Hayes, was arrested in Las Vegas a week later, and in July 1996 he was sentenced to life in prison.

It was my first exposure to extreme violence in Columbia. Jones survived, but the Columbia I knew as a child didn't.

Almost 17 years later, the story of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin and the man who killed him has captivated the nation. In the wake of the ruling, journalists warned of imminent rioting. The actual reaction has been predominantly nonviolent, social unrest manifesting itself on social media more than in the streets.

This week, *Vox* attempted to distill Columbia's online reaction to the verdict (page 4), but we have more immediate issues to deal with at home than the death of a 17-year-old Floridian.

At 12:31 a.m. Monday, 17-year-old Tre'Veon Marshall was pronounced dead after a shooting at McKee Park in northeast Columbia. Hours later, another teen was sentenced to 17 years in prison for the 2012 murder of 17-year-old Bryan Rankin, and we've had a string of other firearms crimes in recent weeks.

Both the Zimmerman trial and the violence in our own community leave us with questions — about our justice system, about race, about the nature of self-defense. And, of course, about guns.

I'm not about to climb on a soapbox and offer answers. Mayor Bob McDavid and Columbia Police Chief Ken Burton can take care of that. As much as I wish I knew of a solution, I have none.

We haven't figured out crime in the 17 years since Jones was shot. We're still asking the same questions and still lacking answers. I don't know what the solution is, but I do know one thing, Columbia. We're better than this.



on the cover

DESIGN BY
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VOX

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