



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

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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