

Ralph Bunche Journal of Public Affairs

Volume 5

Issue 1 *social and equal justice in America in the case of stand your ground (SYG) law.*

Article 1

Spring 2016

Social and Equal Justice in America in the Case of Stand Your Ground Law

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Recommended Citation

Ewoh, Andrew I.E. (2016) "Social and Equal Justice in America in the Case of Stand Your Ground Law," *Ralph Bunche Journal of Public Affairs*: Vol. 5: Iss. 1, Article 1.

Available at: <http://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu/rbjpa/vol5/iss1/1>

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Editors' Introduction

Social and Equal Justice in the Case of Stand Your Ground Law

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The *Ralph Bunche Journal of Public Affairs* is devoting this special issue to social and equal justice in America in the case of stand your ground (SYG) law. The *Journal* hopes that the three articles on this topic will deepen our readers' understanding and the legal meaning of this law for states that enforce it and for those persons that have been or could be affected by it, particularly, African Americans and other minority groups. As always, the opinions and findings delineated in these articles are going to attract more scholarly inquiries and possibly compel concerned citizens to call for new legislation that will stop people from abusing the law in its current status.

The first article, "Stand Your Ground in Florida: The Effect of Race, Location and Weapons on Convictions," by Kevin Wagner, Dukhong Kim and Jeremy Hagler explores the historic assumptions and motivations undergirding not only the adoption of this law in Florida, but its utilization in the same jurisdiction. Using data containing 202 cases from 28 counties in Florida, Wagner, Kim and Hagler find that race is significantly important in predicting the success or failure of SYG defense. While their findings may not be generalized to other jurisdictions, they conclude that the type of weapon used is crucial in envisioning the legal outcome of such cases; thus, suggesting that individuals that deploy firearms are more successful in invoking the SYG defense in their favor in contrast to knives and other weapons.

In the second article, "The Fight or Flight Response: A Look at Stand Your Ground," Andrea Headley and Mohamad Alkadry not only address the historic importance of SYG law, but they examine other issues that are inherently considered in every systemic discussion of self-defense laws. They conclude that while the SYG laws tend to vary in terms of their foundational intentions and realistic outcomes, race is not a statistical predictor of legal outcomes pertaining to the specific cases examined in Florida. Nonetheless, Headley and Alkadry recommend that future studies should explore the extent to which race influences legal officials' (such as prosecutors, judges, jurors, and law enforcement officials) decisions in the SYG court deliberations.

The third article, "Codification of Fear: SYG Laws," by Thelma Harmon uses a legal historic analysis in explicating the codification of "fear" into certain laws in the United States that affect African American disproportionately. Since SYG laws fall within these codified laws, Harmon concludes that states and the federal government should find a political,

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palatable mechanism to safeguard both the civil and human rights of individuals disproportionately affected by SYG laws.

In sum, I would like to thank our committed editorial board members, reviewers, and staff for their willingness to serve. I also extend thanks to all the contributors in this volume for considering *Ralph Bunche Journal of Public Affairs* as an outlet for their scholarly work.

