



NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to Hold Briefing in Orlando, Florida on Racial Disparities in Stand Your Ground Laws

Washington, D.C. – The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will convene a national panel of experts in Orlando, Florida to examine whether there are racial disparities in the application or enforcement of Stand Your Ground laws.

The briefing will take place on October 17, 2014, Friday, from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm in the Grand Ballroom of the Rosen Plaza Hotel, 9700 International Drive, Orlando, Florida 32819. The briefing is open to the public without registration. Media who are planning to attend with cameras and equipment must contact the Commission as soon as possible at publicaffairs@usccr.gov to arrange for adequate space and technical needs.

Stand Your Ground laws have been controversial particularly since the Trayvon Martin case. These laws, which in some form have gained passage in 33 states, justify the use of deadly force and eliminate the duty to retreat if an individual reasonably believes that such force is necessary to prevent imminent death or great bodily harm to him- or herself.

Of concern to the Commission is whether there is possible racial bias in the assertion, investigation and/or enforcement of justifiable homicide laws in states with Stand Your Ground provisions. Experts at the briefing will present testimony on the personal impact of the laws, findings from their research regarding the racial dimensions of justifiable homicides, and will elaborate upon actions being advanced by advocacy groups to alleviate concerns related to Stand Your Ground laws.

Experts who are scheduled to appear are:

- Ahmad Nabil Abuznaid, Attorney - Dream Defenders
- Elizabeth Burke, Managing Attorney, The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence

- Arkadi Gerney, Senior Fellow - Center for American Progress
- David A. Harris, Professor of Law - University of Pittsburgh School of Law
- William Krouse – Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress
- David LaBahn, President - Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
- John Lott, President – Crime Prevention Research Center
- Lucia McBath, Mother of Jordan Davis
- Representative Harold Mitchell, Jr., South Carolina House of Representatives
- John Roman, The Urban Institute
- Katheryn Russell-Brown, Professor of Law, University of Florida School of Law
- Minority Leader J. Todd Rutherford, South Carolina House of Representatives
- Ilya Shapiro, Senior Fellow - CATO Institute
- Senator Christopher L. Smith, Florida Senate
- Professor Ronald S. Sullivan, Jr., Harvard Law School

Staff Director Marlene Sallo stated, “The Commission is fulfilling an important obligation by investigating and reporting on the use of Stand Your Ground laws in order to ensure that such laws are not violating the civil rights of Americans.”

Deaf or hearing-impaired persons who will attend the meeting and require the services of a sign language interpreter should contact Pam Dunston at (202) 376-8105 at least seven business days prior to the briefing.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing a federal civil rights enforcement report. For information about Commission’s reports and meetings, visit <http://www.usccr.gov>.

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