

## Stand Your Ground

In 2007, Texas expanded “Stand Your Ground” laws that justify the use of deadly force in cases of self-defense. According to Texas law, deadly force can be used to protect property and to stop rape, arson, burglary, robbery, theft at night, and criminal mischief at night. Before the expansion of the law, deadly force could be used to protect oneself unless one could escape from danger without harming anyone, according to Sandra Thompson, a professor at the University of Houston Law Center. But since 2007, the law no longer requires individuals to try to attempt to retreat from danger prior to “protecting” themselves.

Benito Pantoja, 24, was shot and killed by a Houston man in 2010 for stealing \$20.29 from a taco truck tip jar. Two years later, retired Texas firefighter Raul Rodriguez was sentenced to 40 years in jail for killing his neighbor because of a noisy party. Both men cited “Stand Your Ground” laws in their defense.

In 2012, a 23-year-old father caught a man molesting his 5-year-old daughter in a horse barn and beat him to death. Although some hail the man as a hero, others wonder why he isn't being charged with murder, claiming that he did more than simply stop the man from molesting his child and that killing him was an unnecessary form of vigilante justice. A Texas grand jury declined to indict the father, declaring that he was within his right to use deadly force.

In Texas, “justifiable” killings increased from 32 in 2006 to 48 in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Studies have shown that legal protection for self-defense killing, such as “Stand Your Ground Laws,” not only increase the number of self-defense homicides, but also the incidence of murder and manslaughter by seven to nine percent, statistically significant data<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2012/07/03/texas-justifiable-homicides-reportedly-rise-with-castle-doctrine/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://econweb.tamu.edu/mhoekstra/castle\\_doctrine.pdf](http://econweb.tamu.edu/mhoekstra/castle_doctrine.pdf)

