

**STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN DANNY K. DAVIS**  
**PROTECTING A “SUSPECT” COMMUNITY: FORUM ON RACIAL PROFILING, FEDERAL HATE**  
**CRIMES ENFORCEMENT AND “STAND YOUR GROUND” LAWS**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 2012**

In his famous "Concord Hymn" Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote of a "shot that was heard around the world." Now, two hundred and thirty-seven years after that heroic shot another shot is echoing around the world. Only after this tragic shot a young man, Trayvon Martin, lay dead in the street.

There has been much speculation, and an almost endless stream of reports and leaks about the circumstances of the shooting and the history of these two men, Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman and even the city of Sanford, Florida which gained everlasting notoriety for running Jackie Robinson and the entire Dodgers AAA team, the Royals, out of town in 1947 when the Royals held Spring Training in Sanford.

Some of this history may be relevant and some not. Those bringing up this history may be attempting to influence public opinion on this case. What is certain is that there is a great deal we don't know about how Trayvon, an unarmed 17-year-old, was killed coming home from purchasing some candy that night of February 26th by a so-called crime watch volunteer, George Zimmerman.

Without a full investigation and trial we will never know the facts and who should be held accountable.

What we do know, or should know, is that Trayvon deserves justice, and Trayvon's family deserves answers. What we do know, or should know is that if there is no justice for Trayvon ultimately justice itself is under attack in America. Trayvon's brave parents have made a simple demand: investigate their son's murder and prosecute George Zimmerman for shooting and killing Trayvon Martin. They just ask what any parent would ask: let a jury examine the facts and make a fair determination about what happened that night and who should be held accountable.

In response to that shot heard round the world, and to Trayvon's parents' insistence on justice, millions of Americans have added their support to those demands. As a result, the local police chief has stepped down and the state prosecutor has stepped aside in the face of public outrage and the U.S. Justice Department has indicated they are now looking into the case.

Sadly, Trayvon case is not unique, far from it. Just this week the Children's Defense Fund released a report with some disturbing facts:

The 5,740 children and teens killed by guns in 2008 and 2009: Would fill more than 229 public school classrooms of 25 students each and was greater than the number of U.S. military personnel killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan (5,013).

The number of preschoolers killed by guns in 2008 (88) and 2009 (85) was nearly double the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty in 2008 (41) and 2009 (48).

Black children and teens accounted for 45 percent of all child and teen gun deaths in 2008 and 2009 but were only 15 percent of the total child population.

The leading cause of death among black teens ages 15 to 19 in 2008 and 2009 was gun homicide.

For white teens 15 to 19 it was motor vehicle accidents followed by gun homicide (2008) and gun suicide (2009).

Of the 116,385 children and teens killed by a gun since 1979 when gun data was first collected by age, 44,038 were black -- nearly 13 times more than the number of recorded lynchings of black people of all ages in the 86 years from 1882 to 1968.

But more white than black children and teens have died from gun violence which threatens all in America everywhere.

Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law has finally come under national scrutiny. According to a 2010 review by the Tampa Bay Times, the rate of "justifiable homicide" has tripled since the law passed in 2005. They reported that of ninety-three cases of shooting that involved sixty-five deaths, fifty-seven of those cases resulted in no criminal charge or trial and seven others led to acquittal at trial.

John F. Timoney, a former Miami police chief, Philadelphia police commissioner and deputy police commissioner in New York, recently wrote: "The very public controversy surrounding the killing on Feb. 26 of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed 17-year-old, by a crime watch volunteer, George Zimmerman, was predictable." He went on to note:

"As Florida police chiefs predicted in 2005, the law has been used to justify killings ranging from drug dealers' turf battles to road rage incidents. Homicides categorized as justifiable have nearly tripled since the law went into effect. Back in 2005, the National Rifle Association identified about two dozen states as fertile ground for the passage of laws just like this one. Florida was the first state to pass such a law. Today, at least 20 other states have followed suit."

The killing of Trayvon Martin has exposed once again that being young, Black and male in America means:

As a black infant, he was more than twice as likely to die as his white peers;

In his teens, he was at least one and a half times as likely to meet an early death as his white peers;

Homicide is the leading cause of death for black men his age, and comes at a rate many times every other racial or ethnic group;

If he had reached his 20s, he had a 1 in 8 chance of going to prison, because that empty bag of marijuana he had at school would have meant something very different for him than it does for the middle class white kids who use drugs at higher rates; and

He'd have gone on to live in a country in which nearly 4 in 10 black children live in poverty, in which 1 in 4 black households lack food security.

The 4.5 million African American men ages 15 to 29 represent 14% of the U.S. male population of that age and 12% of all African Americans in the U.S. The disparities in their rates of death, incarceration, and unemployment, high school and college graduation and health status ought to raise alarms about the future of African American families and our nation's well being.

Trayvon deserves justice, deserves not to have died in vain. True justice for Trayvon lies in bringing the man who killed him before the bar of justice. Honoring his family's loss demands changing the circumstances of young Black males in the United States.