



**Congressman Pedro R. Pierluisi**  
**Statement for the Record**  
**Protecting a “Suspect” Community: Forum on Racial Profiling, Federal Hate Crimes**  
**Enforcement and “Stand Your Ground” Laws**  
*March 27, 2012*

Thank you, Ranking Member Conyers.

The parents of Trayvon Martin have suffered a profound loss. As a father, and as someone who lost his own brother in a violent and unjustified attack, I know that no words of mine can ease their sorrow. What happened to their son, who was not armed, is an unspeakable tragedy. I hope they know that the courage they have demonstrated since Trayvon’s passing is an inspiration to millions of Americans of all races. Through their quest for justice, they honor their son’s memory. And they make it less likely that another family will have to bury a child.

I want to commend Attorney General Eric Holder and the U.S. Department of Justice. Earlier this week, the agency announced that it had opened an investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding Trayvon’s death. The Department pledged to conduct a thorough and independent review of all the evidence and to take appropriate action at the conclusion of the investigation. This is the right thing to do, and I know the Department recognizes the need to perform its investigation in a swift and scrupulous manner.

Members of the House Judiciary Committee have asked the Department of Justice to investigate whether the shooting of Trayvon may have violated federal hate crimes legislation that was enacted by Congress in 2009. I was proud to cosponsor that bill and to vote for it as a member of this Committee.

Finally, our society must speak with a strong and unified voice in opposition to racial profiling, whether conducted by federal and state law enforcement officers or by private citizens who purport to take the law into their own hands. I am a co-sponsor of the *End Racial Profiling Act*, introduced by Ranking Member Conyers in December 2011.

As an Hispanic, but more importantly as a human being, there are few things that trouble me more than when an individual is subjected to discriminatory treatment on the basis of his or her

race, color, ethnic origin or other immutable characteristics. Such treatment makes a mockery of the constitutional principle that all American citizens are entitled to the “equal protection of the laws.” The Fourteenth Amendment gives Congress the express power to enforce this principle through legislation. As Trayvon’s death makes painfully clear, this is a power that we must exercise in a proactive, responsible and appropriate manner.

Thank you.