**Case #1: Trayvon Martin**

A 17-year old boy wearing a hooded sweatshirt on a rainy night is on the phone with his girlfriend as he walks home from a store after buying a can of soda and some candy. The captain of a neighborhood watch group on patrol in a gated community of townhouses that has recently suffered a rash of break-ins drives by, spots him, and calls the police, voicing his suspicions that, “He is up to no good…” The 911 dispatcher tells the 28-year old man, who had taken some criminal justice courses at a community college, not to follow and confront the youth. But he does, and after he gets out of his SUV, they exchange words and become embroiled in a fistfight. Neighbors hear someone screaming and pleading for help and call 911. When officers arrive, they find the man bloodied and the teenager dead.

The man claims that he was the actual victim: that the taller and heavier teenager attacked him; that he was being severely beaten; and that he had the right to stand his ground and fire his licensed handgun in self-defense.

When the news spreads that the local police department has decided not to arrest the armed crime watcher volunteer, demonstrations erupt across the country, demanding the arrest of the man as an overzealous police wannabe who acted as a vigilante. Protestors also condemn provisions of the state’s “stand your ground” law for causing needless bloodshed and denounce the possibility of racial profiling (the slain teenager was black and the shooter has a white father and a Hispanic mother). The local police chief steps down, the country prosecutor and the Justice Department re-open the investigation, and President Obama identifies with the unarmed youth who was tragically and needlessly killed, telling journalists that, “If I had a son, he’d look like {the victim}.” (Robertson and Alvarez, 2012)

**Resources:**

***Print:*** https://www.cnn.com/2012/05/18/justice/florida-teen-shooting-details/index.html

***Video:*** *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ia0w\_dOj7R4*