The Urban Institute investigated the disparate racial impact of “Shoot First” laws and found when White shooters kill Black victims, 34 percent of the resulting homicides are deemed justifiable,

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Responding to the death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black teen who was killed by a neighborhood watch volunteer, Minority Leader Chris Smith (D) ofFort Lauderdale, introduced a bill (SB 136) that would also allow police officers to arrest suspects who invoke the controversial “Stand Your Ground” law under questionable circumstances.

Armed citizens would not be able to automatically cite “Stand Your Ground” protections if they provoke or pursue their victims following confrontations under the new measure.

Existing law prohibits authorities from arresting “Stand Your Ground” defendants unless there is

probable cause to believe their actions have been unlawful. The law is unclear on whether someone can invoke the “Stand Your Ground” law when they pursue their victims.

Another fatal shooting this past Nov. of a young, Black, unarmed male at the hands of a White man has similarities to the Trayvon Martin case and is also raising the question, is the controversial “Stand Your Ground” law allowing for open season on Black men?

The family of the late 17-year-old Jordan Davis buried him in Dec. Reports say he was confronted by 45-year-old Michael Dunn (a White man) on Nov. 23 inJacksonville,Florida.Davisand two other teens were in a SUV when Dunn confronted the group about their music being too loud. During the argument, Dunn claims he saw a shotgun emerge from the backseat and, in turn, fired at least 9 shots at the SUV. Three of the bullets hitDavis, killing him.

Dunn is expected to use the “Stand Your Ground” law because he claims he felt threatened. However, no gun was found in the SUV.

Outcry followed, and the incident has placed the “Stand Your Ground” law back in the spotlight, and has raised concerns over whether the law carries racial underpinnings.

The law doesn’t seem to work for Black people too well. A few years ago, John McNeil, ofGeorgia, hired Brian Epp’s construction company to build a new home but, after several confrontations, they decided to end the relationship.

One day soon thereafter, McNeil’s 15-year-old son saw a man “lurking in the backyard” (it was Epp) and asked him to leave. Epp pulled out a knife on the teen and said, “why don’t you make me leave.” The teen called his father (McNeil) who called 911 and raced home.

When he arrived home, Epp went to his truck, concealed something in his pants and headed toward McNeil, prompting McNeil to grab a gun and fire at the ground, insisting Epp stop but he didn’t and even moved faster while reaching for his knife. He was stopped by a shot in the head. Shortly after, McNeil was charged with murder even though a neighbor corroborated the story.

There is a stark contrast between the treatment of George Zimmerman’s and John McNeil’s use of the “Stand Your Ground” defense because Zimmerman was afforded the benefit of race, despite Trayvon Martin being unarmed. Whether Zimmerman racially profiled Martin is something the courts will have to decide but there is an appearance of a double standard that cannot be denied when comparing how long it took to charge Zimmerman.

Instead of addressing the issue of race, conservatives and the NRA have simply dismissed it even though one could say there are few miscarriages of justice when White people are involved in killing Black people.

According to the Second Chance Campaign, A National Bureau of Research (NBER) analysis that reviewed 20 states with “Shoot First” laws, includingFlorida, found that the law has failed to deter violent crime. Instead, researchers found a clear increase in homicide in those states with up to 700 more people killed every year.

ANew York Cityanalysis of FBI data showed an increase in the number of justifiable homicides following the enactment of “Shoot First” laws, including an increase inFloridaof 192 percent.

The Urban Institute investigated the disparate racial impact of “Shoot First” laws and found when White shooters kill Black victims, 34 percent of the resulting homicides are deemed justifiable, while only 3 percent of deaths are ruled justifiable when the shooter is Black and the victim is White.

Those numbers imply Jim Crow Justice. They suggest that Black life does not have the same value as White life. They imply that a law that gives a person the right to use deadly force when he has the option to retreat from a conflict seems to tilt the scales of justice in favor of injustice.