

Understanding The Role Values Play (And Should Play) In Self-Defense Law

Self-defense is a right so fundamental that the scholarly literature regularly refers to it as *the ancient right* or *the first civil right*. But despite the right's bedrock status in criminal law, legislators, academics, and every-day citizens alike all have strongly held—and, in fact, often strongly divergent—opinions about when it is legally (and morally) appropriate to exercise self-preferential force. Some favor "tough-on-crime" approaches, according broader leeway to those defending themselves against attacks. Others advocate for a more "humanitarian" construction of the law, providing greater protections even to culpable attackers who threaten their victims with serious injury.

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Authors



T. Markus Funk Ph.D.

Partner

MFunk@perkinscoie.com [303.291.2371](tel:303.291.2371)