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## Tennessee v. Garner and Graham v. Connor

TENNESSEE v. GARNER, (1985) A Tennessee statute provides that if, after a police officer has given notice of an intent to arrest a criminal suspect, the suspect flees or forcibly resists, "the officer may use all the necessary means to effect the arrest." Acting under the authority of this statute, a Memphis police officer shot and killed appellee-respondent Garner's son as, after being told to halt, the son fled over a fence at night in the backyard of a house he was suspected of burglarizing. The officer used deadly force despite being "reasonably sure" the suspect was unarmed and thinking that he was 17 or 18 years old and of slight build. The father subsequently brought an action in Federal District Court, seeking damages under 42 U.S.C. 1983 for asserted violations of his son's constitutional rights. The District Court held that the statute and the officer's actions were constitutional. The Court of Appeals reversed.

GRAHAM v. CONNOR, (1989) Petitioner Graham, a diabetic, asked his friend, Berry, to drive him to a convenience store to purchase orange juice to counteract the onset of an insulin reaction. Upon entering the store and seeing the number of people ahead of him, Graham hurried out and asked Berry to drive him to a friend's house instead. Respondent Connor, a city police officer, became suspicious after seeing Graham hastily enter and leave the store, followed Berry's car, and made an investigative stop, ordering the pair to wait while he found out what had happened in the store. Respondent backup police officers arrived on the scene, handcuffed Graham, and ignored or rebuffed attempts to explain and treat Graham's condition. During the encounter, Graham sustained multiple injuries. He was released when Connor learned that nothing had happened in the store. What are these decisions important to criminal procedure?

Tennessee v. GarnerThe Court's opinion sweeps broadly to adopt an entirely new standard for the constitutionality of the use of deadly force to apprehend fleeing felons. Thus, the Court "lightly brushed aside," *Payton v. New York*, supra, at 600, a longstanding police practice that predates the Fourth Amendment and continues to receive the approval of nearly half of the state legislatures. I cannot accept the majority's creation of a constitutional right Graham v. ConnorIn this case, petitioner apparently decided that it was in his best interest to disavow the continued applicability of substantive due process analysis as an alternative basis for recovery in prearrest excessive force cases.

It is for that reason that the Court would have done better to leave that question for another day. I expect that the use of force that is not demonstrably unreasonable under the Fourth Amendment only rarely will raise substantive due process concerns. But until I am faced with a case in which that question is squarely raised, and its merits are subjected to adversary presentation, I do not join in foreclosing the use of substantive due process analysis in prearrest cases.