

The Second Amendment

"I SAY THAT THE SECOND AMENDMENT IS, IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, THE FIRST AMENDMENT. IT IS AMERICA'S FIRST FREEDOM, THE ONE RIGHT THAT PROTECTS ALL THE OTHERS. ... IT IS THE FIRST AMONG EQUALS. IT ALONE OFFERS THE ABSOLUTE CAPACITY TO LIVE WITHOUT FEAR. THE RIGHT TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS IS THE ONE RIGHT THAT ALLOWS 'RIGHTS' TO EXIST AT ALL."

Charlton Heston



Amendments are additions to the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights is the term for the first ten amendments (there are 27 in all). In the Bill of Rights, we find the Second Amendment, which by many is seen as the document that gives all Americans the right to own and carry guns.

The Second Amendment

A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

(infringed krænket)

The message of the Second Amendment is not completely clear, and Americans do not agree on how to understand the meaning of it.

In plain words, the amendment states that:

A well regulated militia, consisting of members of 'the people', has the right to keep and carry weapons when this is necessary for the security of a free state.

The statement contains both:

- A **right** to keep and bear arms, "the right of the people to keep and bear arms".
- A **context** in which this right should be used, "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state".

In America today, the discussion of the Second Amendment is focused on how to understand the **context**: "A well regulated militia."

In pairs

- In an American dictionary, the word '**militia**' has two definitions:
 - a **part of the organized armed forces of a country, called on only in emergency**
 - a **private group of citizens organized for military service**

Look at the statements below and decide if they describe the word **militia** by definition 1 or definition 2. Look up the words you do not know.

- A militia is a kind of reserve army, controlled by the government.
- The militia groups meet in private and organise military training.
- A militia is the common man's defence against government tyranny.
- Armed citizenry is a duty for responsible Americans.
- The guns in their homes are registered state property.
- The militia members assist police and fire-fighters when ordered to do so.
- The militia members are ready to take the law into their own hands.
- Private, unregistered guns are kept in the home.
- The militia members feel patriotic.
- In America, the definition matches the National Guard.

- The word '**regulated**' also has two meanings in the dictionary:
 - controlled or governed according to rule or principle or law**
 - marked by regularity or discipline**

Match the definitions of '**militia**' 1 and 2 with the definitions of '**regulated**' a and b.

- Which understanding of "a well regulated militia" would you have if you were an activist taking part in a campaign against unregistered gun ownership? Prepare to explain your answer in class.
 - Which understanding of "a well regulated militia" would you have if you were a militia member? Prepare to explain your answer in class.

GUN POLITICS

The term gun politics refers to the public debates on **freedom** versus **restriction** of private ownership and usage of guns. The issues of whether gun ownership should be regulated by the state, and of how gun ownership

influences society, have long been debated in the United States. In the following chapter, you will work with the most common issues in the American gun debate.

Gun rights versus gun control

In pairs

In the list below, you will find some of the most commonly used arguments in the American gun debate. Look up the words you do not know.

1 Read through the arguments FOR and AGAINST guns with a partner and make sure that you agree on their meaning.

2 Match arguments 1 – 7 with a – g. One of you is FOR and one is AGAINST. Take turns to read aloud from the list and match each other's arguments.

FOR GUNS

Those who are *for* guns and *against* more control of private gun ownership argue that:

1. Owning a gun is a fundamental individual right protected in the Constitution of the United States.
2. Gun ownership means fewer crime victims.
3. Guns are not dangerous to their owners because responsible gun owners know how to handle guns in the home, and more people are killed in swimming pools, cars or choking accidents than in gun related deaths.
4. Guns in the home reduce burglary.
5. A population with guns can threaten the government with violent revolution and keep it from becoming tyrannical.
6. Leaving the protection of your family to the government is irresponsible.
7. The government should not control an individual's right to own guns as long as the individual does not harm or scare other people.

AGAINST GUNS

Those who are *against* guns and *for* more control of private gun ownership argue that:

- a. The government should be able to control the amount of guns and register gun ownership for all individuals, so that guns can always be traced and identified in case of a crime.
- b. In cases of burglary, guns in the home often escalate the violence.
- c. The government is responsible for protecting people against crime, and thus there is no need to own a gun.
- d. Owning a gun is not a fundamental individual right protected in the Constitution of the United States.
- e. Modern American governments are not tyrannical, and the people have no need to use violence against them. Therefore it is unnecessary for them to be armed.
- f. Guns are dangerous to their owners, because gun related deaths are often a result of violence in the home, accidents, or suicides.
- g. Gun control means fewer deaths.



VOCABULARY EXERCISES

In groups of 3 or 4

1 Divide the following subjects between the groups. Use Google to search the Internet for information on your subject. Focus on the basic facts. Prepare a 5 minute presentation of your subject in class.

- The Declaration of Independence
- The American Revolution
- The Founding Fathers
- The Bill of Rights
- The Oklahoma City Bombing
- The National Rifle Association – NRA
- The Brady Campaign

2 Look up the following words in an English dictionary, and make sure you understand the explanations. Then write down a Danish translation of each explanation.

- the National Guard, constitution, declaration, amendment, civil right, colony, tyranny, arms, right, duty

3 Match the following words with their definitions.

FOR GUNS

- pro-gun, militia, self-defence, armed citizenry, concealed-carry, legitimate purpose

1. protecting yourself in case of danger
2. carrying a gun which is hidden from others
3. an intention which is not in conflict with the law
4. ordinary people who keep guns loaded in their private homes
5. in favour of gun ownership
6. a group of citizens who practice military training in private

AGAINST GUNS

- anti-gun, gun control, assault weapon, legislation, lobby, anachronism

1. a military-style, semi-automatic machine gun
2. a historical phenomenon which is no longer relevant today
3. in favour of restrictions on gun ownership
4. the act of making laws
5. restrictions on gun ownership issued by the government
6. a group of people who try to influence politicians toward a desired action

The National Rifle Association and the Brady Campaign

"WHEN WE GOT ORGANIZED AS A COUNTRY, WROTE A FAIRLY RADICAL CONSTITUTION, WITH A RADICAL BILL OF RIGHTS, GIVING RADICAL AMOUNTS OF FREEDOM TO AMERICANS, IT WAS ASSUMED THAT AMERICANS WHO HAD THAT FREEDOM WOULD USE IT RESPONSIBLY."

Bill Clinton

The National Rifle Association (NRA) and the Brady Campaign interpret the Second Amendment very differently.

A: The NRA believes that the right to keep and bear arms is an individual right which belongs to "the people" as a defence against tyrannical governments, while the Brady Campaign argues that this right belongs to "a well regulated militia", organized by the government to protect the people.

B: The two organisations disagree on the relevance of the amendment in a modern democracy like the United States. The NRA argues that the threat of tyranny is always present. The Brady Campaign argues that armed revolution and violence against the government is not necessary in a democracy.

C: The NRA fights restrictions on all types of weapons. The Brady Campaign points out that the weapons on the market are far more dangerous today than they were when the Second Amendment was written. The word "arms" may cover all kinds of weapons, including military-style semi-automatic machine guns.

PRE-READING

This pre-reading covers both "The Second Amendment Myth & Meaning" and "The NRA and the Second Amendment".

In groups

- 1 Read the following quotation from *Bowling for Columbine* <18.15>. James Nichols and Michael Moore are at Nichols' farm. James Nichols has just shown his .44 Magnum handgun to Michael Moore, and the following conversation takes place.

James Nichols: "No one has the right to tell me I can't have it. That's protected under our Constitution."

Michael Moore: "Where does it say that a handgun is protected?"

James Nichols: "No, 'gun'."

Michael Moore: "It doesn't say 'gun'. It says 'arms'."

James Nichols: "'Arms', what is 'arms'?"

Michael Moore: "It could be a nuclear weapon."

James Nichols: "You're right. It could be a nuclear weapon."

Michael Moore: "Should you have weapons-grade plutonium here on the farm?"

James Nichols: "I don't want it."

Michael Moore: "But should you have the right to have it if you did want it?"

James Nichols: "That should be restricted."

Michael Moore: "Oh, oh, so you do believe in some restrictions?"

James Nichols: "Well. There's wachos out there."

What problems does this conversation reveal about the Second Amendment?

- 2 The notorious gangster Al Capone once said, "You can get a lot further with a kind word and a gun than with a kind word alone." Discuss the arguments for and against his statement.
- 3 What do you understand by the word 'myth'? What psychological function does a myth have for us? Think of a well-known myth and explain its function or importance in the context in which it appears.

The Second Amendment Myth and Meaning

"YOU DON'T NEED NO GUN CONTROL. YOU KNOW WHAT YOU NEED?
BULLET CONTROL. I THINK ALL BULLETS SHOULD COST
\$5000. YOU KNOW WHY? IF A BULLET COST \$5000 THERE'D BE
NO MORE INNOCENT BYSTANDERS."

Chris Rock in *Bowling for Columbine*

Brady Campaign



To Prevent Gun Violence

SENSIBLE GUN LAWS SAVE LIVES

The Brady Campaign is America's largest organization working to prevent gun violence through legislation and grassroots efforts. In 1981, President Ronald Reagan's press secretary Jim Brady was shot and seriously wounded during an assassination attempt on the president. As a result of his experiences, he and his wife, Sarah Brady, began to work for stricter gun control laws. In 1993, the Brady Bill law was passed, requiring a five-day waiting period and background checks for those who wish to buy a handgun. A ban on the military-style, semi-automatic machine guns, the so-called "assault weapons", followed in 1994. The assault weapon ban was set to run for ten years and was not renewed in 2004 by President George Bush.

The Second Amendment Myth & Meaning

2006

The NRA's Second Amendment Myth

Our nation suffers from an epidemic of gun violence. Guns take the lives of 105 Americans every day – 15 of them are children and teenagers. In the four years between 1988 and 1991, more Americans were murdered with firearms than were killed in battle during the eight years of the Vietnam War. Sensible national gun control laws are urgently needed to stem this violence.

Time and time again, the National Rifle Association and other opponents of rational restrictions on guns charge that gun control laws violate the Second Amendment to our Constitution. According to the NRA, the Second Amendment's guarantee of a "right to keep and bear arms" is as broad and fundamental as the First Amendment freedoms

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of speech, assembly and the press. The NRA has even argued that citizens have a constitutional right to own machine guns and military-style assault weapons!

The NRA's constitutional theory is a calculated distortion of the text, history and judicial interpretation of the Second Amendment. In the words of former U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger, the NRA has perpetrated a "fraud on the American public."

Contrary to the gun lobby's propaganda, the Second Amendment guarantees the people the right to be armed *only in connection with service in a "well regulated Militia"*. Courts consistently have ruled that there is no constitutional right to own a gun for private purposes unrelated to the organized state militia.

It is time for the debate over gun violence to focus on the real issues, free from the NRA's constitutional mythology.

15 [...]

The Original Intent

The concept of a "well regulated Militia" is somewhat foreign to 20th century America, but it is central to the meaning of the Second Amendment.

At the time the U.S. Constitution was adopted, each of the states had its own "militia" – a military force comprised of ordinary citizens serving as part-time soldiers. Most of the adult male population was required by state law to enlist in the militia. The militia was "well regulated" in the sense that its members were subject to various legal requirements. They were, for example, required to report for training several days a year, to supply their own equipment for militia use, including guns and horses, and sometimes to engage in military exercises away from home.

30 The purpose of the militia was expressed in the Second Amendment – to assure "the security of a free State" – against threats from without (e.g. invasions) and threats from within (e.g. rebellions, riots, etc.).

The "militia" was not, as some gun control opponents have claimed, simply another word for the armed citizenry. It was an *organized* military force, "well regulated" by the state governments. Noah Webster's Dictionary of 1828 defines "militia" as: "...the able bodied men organized into companies, regiments and brigades, with officers of all grades, and required by law to attend military exercises on certain days only, but at other times left to pursue their usual occupations."

[...]

a'ssembly forsamling
(offentlig)
military-style assault
'weapon halv-automatiske våben såsom TEC9, der ligner militære maskinpistoler
calculated distortion bevidst forvrængning
judicial interpretation de synspunkter som højesteretsafgørelser giver udtryk for
U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice retspræsidenten for den amerikanske højesteret
perpetrate begå
fraud bedrag
lobby civile organisationer, som forsøger at få støtte til en bestemt sag af senatorer og kongresmedlemmer
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The Second Amendment in the Twentieth Century

The Second Amendment has become an anachronism, largely because of drastic changes in the militia it was designed to protect. We no longer have a citizen militia in which a large portion of the population is enrolled for part-time military service and required by the government to maintain private arms for such service. As the nation grew, it became unworkable and unduly expensive for the states to impose military training and service on that many Americans.

The modern "well regulated Militia" is the National Guard – a state-organized military force of ordinary citizens serving as part-time soldiers, like the early state militia. However, unlike the early militia, the National Guard is of more limited membership and depends on government-supplied – not privately owned – arms. Whereas in 1787 federal restrictions on privately owned guns may have interfered with the "well regulated Militia," this is not the case today. Gun control laws have no effect on the arming of today's militia, since those laws invariably exempt the National Guard. Therefore, they raise no serious Second Amendment issue.

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The NRA and the Second Amendment

"NOW, I DOUBT ANY OF YOU WOULD PREFER A ROLLED UP NEWSPAPER AS A WEAPON AGAINST A DICTATOR OR A CRIMINAL INTRUDER. YET IN ESSENCE, THAT IS WHAT YOU HAVE ASKED OUR LOVED ONES TO DO, THROUGH AN ILL-CONTRIVED AND TOTALLY NAIVE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE SECOND AMENDMENT."

Charlton Heston

The National Rifle Association (NRA) is an organization which promotes the Second Amendment right to carry arms. The NRA was founded in 1871 and began as a small sportsman's club in New York. Today, the organization has four million members and defends the right of citizens to buy, possess and use firearms for legitimate purposes. The NRA raises tens of millions of dollars each year to defend Second Amendment rights, and many consider the NRA to be one of the most influential political lobbies in the United States, because of its ability to deliver large numbers of votes in elections.

NRA and the Second Amendment

An extract from the official NRA homepage

2006

Those who founded our state and federal governments conferred upon them extensive powers but reserved to the people certain individual freedoms. Citizens demanded that our original federal Constitution be amended to include a Bill of Rights with specific provisions to safeguard cherished individual liberties.

The language and intent of the framers of the Second Amendment were perfectly clear two centuries ago. Based on the English Common Law, the Second Amendment guaranteed against federal interference with the citizen's right to keep and bear arms for personal defence. Too, the revolutionary experience caused our forebears to address the second concern – the need for the people to maintain a citizen – militia for national and state defence without adopting the bane of liberty, a

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large standing army. An armed citizenry instead of a standing army was viewed as preventing the possibility of an arbitrary or tyrannical government.

[...]

5 Since the adoption of the Second Amendment – “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed” – there have been two methods of trying to destroy that fundamental freedom.

The anti-gunners’ first approach is, simply, to deny that a key provision
10 of the Bill of Rights was ever intended to protect individuals. They can never cite an 18th century source for their claim that the Bill of Rights, or any provision of it, was intended to protect the “rights” of anyone but individuals. Yet they constantly assert, with the acquiescence of the news media, that only some vague “right of states to have militias” was meant.
15 Sometimes they also allege that modern firearms were unforeseen. They ignore the fact that states had “powers,” not “rights,” and that a number of states guaranteed the right to keep and bear arms as well. And media types – who can spread lies around the nation in a fraction of a second, when it took over a week for news to travel throughout the early U.S.
20 – insist the Founding Fathers could never envision guns which could be fired about twice a second rather than twice a minute.

There are those today who assert that the Second Amendment is out of date and obsolete in a modern age. If the Second Amendment is to be viewed as nothing more than a dusty 18th century relic, buried
25 by scientific advances, then what about the First Amendment? How can those civil libertarians who forcefully denounce each and every abridgement of the First, remain absolutely silent before each and every attempted infringement of the Second?

The direct and blunt and anti-developmental approach is easy to re-
30 ject for anyone willing to read history. The second – and in some ways more serious – threat to our freedoms is the incremental approach. Some lawmakers have deserted gun owners, claiming to support the right to keep and bear arms but also saying that right must be “balanced” with the needs of society as a whole.

35 Some also claim that banning certain guns, or parts of guns, or features of guns doesn’t constitute a serious infringement of rights. They claim society’s “greater good” outweighs the individual right to own a semi-auto with a large-capacity magazine, or a large capacity magazine itself, or . . .

[...]

40 For 130 years the National Rifle Association of America has stood in opposition to all who step-by-step would reduce the Second Amend-

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matic weapon

ment right to keep and bear arms to a privilege granted by those who govern. NRA continues to fight against those who would dictate that American citizens should seek police permission to exercise their constitutional rights.

5 NRA believes that the Second Amendment speaks to far more than a right to enjoy firearms for hunting and target shooting, the phony “sporting purposes” notion to which so many cling. Such notions trivialize an essential freedom which NRA is honor bound to defend, a constitutional safeguard as worthy of defence as freedom of speech.

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WHILE-READING

This while-reading covers both “The Second Amendment Myth & Meaning” and “The NRA and the Second Amendment”.

In pairs

1 The following words have been lifted from the two texts. Take turns to place the words on a piece of paper under the headlines of either the Brady Campaign or the NRA. Make sure to explain why you place a word with one or the other. Prepare to discuss your case in class.

- epidemic, guaranteed, cherished, murdered, urgently, infringement, sensible, individual, anachronism, relic, distortion, tyrannical, reduce, mythology, phony, state-organized, honor bound, government-supplied

2 Translate the following passages. Prepare to present your translations in class.

“Whereas in 1787 federal restrictions on privately owned guns may have interfered with the ‘well regulated Militia’, this is not the case today. Gun control laws have no effect on the arming of today’s militia, since those laws invariably exempt the National Guard. Therefore, they raise no serious Second Amendment issue.”

“For 130 years the National Rifle Association of America has stood in opposition to all who step-by-step would reduce the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms to a privilege granted by those who govern.”

NRA versus Brady. Read through the following quotations from the two texts, and discuss which are NRA quotations and which are Brady quotations.

- a. "Courts consistently have ruled that there is no constitutional right to own a gun for private purposes unrelated to the organized state militia."
- b. "Some lawmakers have deserted gun owners claiming to support the right to keep and bear arms but also saying that right must be 'balanced' with the needs of society as a whole."
- c. "Some also claim that banning certain guns, or parts of guns, or features of guns doesn't constitute a serious infringement of rights. They claim society's 'greater good' outweighs the individual right to own a semi-auto with a large-capacity magazine ..."
- d. "The NRA has even argued that citizens have a constitutional right to own machine guns and military-style assault weapons!"
- e. "NRA believes that the Second Amendment speaks to far more than a right to enjoy firearms for hunting and target shooting ... Such notions trivialize an essential freedom which NRA is honor bound to defend."
- f. "...the Second Amendment guaranteed against federal interference with the citizen's right to keep and bear arms for personal self-defence."
- g. "Contrary to the gun lobby's propaganda, the Second Amendment guarantees the people the right to be armed only in connection with service in a 'well regulated Militia.'"
- h. "For 130 years the National Rifle Association of America has stood in opposition to all who step-by-step would reduce the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms to a privilege granted by those who govern."
- i. "Gun control laws have no effect on the arming of today's militia, since those laws invariably exempt the National Guard. Therefore, they raise no serious Second Amendment issue."
- j. "The 'militia' was not, as some gun control opponents have claimed, simply another word for the armed citizenry. It was an organized military force, 'well regulated' by the state governments."
- k. "...they constantly assert, with the acquiescence of the news media, that only some vague 'right of states to have militias' was meant."
- l. "The modern 'well regulated Militia' is the National Guard – a state-organized military force of ordinary citizens serving as part-time soldiers, like the early state militia."
- m. "The Second Amendment has become an anachronism, largely because of drastic changes in the militia it was designed to protect."
- n. "If the Second Amendment is to be viewed as nothing more than a dusty 18th century relic, buried by scientific advances, then what about the First Amendment?"

In pairs

- 1 Look at the list of examples a – i below, and discuss the interests of the individual on the one hand and society on the other. One of you should defend the rights of the individual, and the other should defend society's common good. Prepare to present your arguments in class.
 - a. gun control
 - b. church tax
 - c. a future public DNA-database
 - d. civil registration numbers for all citizens
 - e. video surveillance of public areas
 - f. copying and sharing music and films on the Internet
 - g. driving a car without a seatbelt
 - h. infertility treatment provided by the State
 - i. unlimited freedom of speech
- 2 If you were to form a lobby organisation in Denmark which one would you form and why?

Why I Picked Up a Gun

"THIS IS AN AMERICAN TRADITION. IT'S AN AMERICAN RESPONSIBILITY TO BE ARMED. IF YOU'RE NOT ARMED, YOU'RE NOT RESPONSIBLE. WHO'S GOING TO DEFEND YOUR KIDS? THE COPS? THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT? NO, NO, IT'S YOUR JOB TO DEFEND YOU AND YOURS. IF YOU DON'T DO IT, YOU'RE IN DERELICTION OF DUTY AS AN AMERICAN. PERIOD."

(dereliction grov forsømmelse)

Militia member in *Bowling for Columbine*

The following article is an editorial from the Internet site www.ifeminists.com. The main principle of individualist feminism, or ifeminism, is that all human beings have a moral and legal claim to their own persons and property. In the case of gun ownership, ifeminists believe that governments are wrong to limit access to firearms. They argue that women need firearms to defend themselves against powerful attackers.

PRE-READING

In groups

- 1 The ifeminists believe that firearms could be considered "the great equalizer" for women. What do you think they mean by that?
- 2 Ifeminists believe that all human beings have a moral and legal claim to their own persons and property, and that any government regulation of such matters is wrong. Where do you think the ifeminists stand on the issues below? Prepare to argue your case in class.
 - a. abortion
 - b. gun control
 - c. government job programmes for women
 - d. government job programmes for ethnic minorities
 - e. gay marriages
 - f. killing a burglar in your house
 - g. euthanasia (mercy killing of a dying person in pain)

- 3 Now imagine that you are a devoted Christian, and consider your beliefs on the same issues. Which ones would you find unacceptable? Prepare to argue your case in class.

Why I Picked Up a Gun

by Tiffany Hyatt

May 13, 2003

In the fall of 2001 I remember driving home and passing a beautiful little house surrounded by crime scene tape. I wondered what happened, but didn't worry too much because nothing "really bad" ever happened in that part of town. Little did I know then, but the Baton Rouge Serial Killer had just left his first calling card.

Since that day, it has been almost two years and our city has been plagued by more violent murders of women than I have ever seen. There have been abductions, attempted abductions, women's bodies being dumped in Whiskey Bay, female college students stalked and brutally murdered, men dressed up as police officers attacking women in their homes, and worst of all, one woman was raped and beaten by men who actually are commissioned police officers. I was that woman.

This is my hometown, this is my life.

I am a 31-year-old single mother of four and I wake up every day afraid, and I fall asleep every night wondering if it is safe to close my eyes. Being a victim of an assault, combined with the mysterious killings, made me realize that my only recourse was to carry a gun and be prepared at all times. I was raised using guns for sport, but until now I had never learned how to use a gun for self-defense. I am now educated, trained and ready to defend myself and my family with deadly force.

Unfortunately it often takes a traumatic event to make most women even consider carrying a handgun, whether the traumatic event was experienced personally or to someone we know. As a survivor, I now encourage and promote women to train and educate themselves as armed members of the community in the hope of preventing more stories like my own. My motto is "it is better to have a gun and never need it, than to need a gun and not have it."

Before my life became centered around promoting female gun use for self-defense, I worked in the Emergency Room at two local hospitals. I have seen gun shot wounds up close and what damage a bullet can do to the human body, but far worse is seeing the woman or child

'calling card' visitkort
ab'duction bortførelse
stalk forfølge
co'mmissioned police officer politimand i tjeneste
a'ssault (her:) overfald
re'course tilflugt
en'courage opfordre
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co'mmunity lokalsamfund
E'mergency Room skadestue

who has been raped and beaten without a chance to defend themselves. I am grateful for those experiences because I think that is what gave me the strength to survive when I was raped and beaten myself. I vow I will never let that happen again!

I am now speaking out as loud as I can and to whom ever will listen. I tell women who are afraid of guns, who have never used or sometimes even held a gun – “if you follow the rules of gun safety, become trained so you can properly handle the weapon, and know the carry laws in your state, owning a gun can give you an advantage over an assailant that most women would not have without it.” But I also tell them that the gun should not be their only line of self-defense. Some of those suggestions are; carry a can of Mace, learn physical self-defense skills, always be aware of your surroundings, other everyday items can be used as weapons, and having a plan of self-defense in your home (similar to the type of plan you prepare if your house catches on fire). These are all things I tell women when they come into the gun store and firing range where I volunteer my time.

I firmly believe that girls should be taught as they are growing up, when, where and how to use a gun for self-defense. We as women are often taught that there will always be someone there to protect us, but that is far from reality. If I could make just one significant change to benefit the future women of America, I would make sure that little girls were taught self-defense before sex education in school, and the history of the Second Amendment would be taught along with lessons on gun safety. Knowledge is power. We have strayed too far from the origins that made this country great! Back then women were just as accustomed to defending the homestead as the men, where did we lose that pioneering drive of self-reliance? It is not lost, it is only asleep. I say WAKE UP LADIES! Arming yourself is your constitutional right, firearm education and training is your choice (I highly recommend it), but defending your life and the life of your children is your DUTY! Who can argue with that?

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WHILE-READING

In groups

- 1 What are Hyatt's reasons for devoting her life to promoting female gun use for self-defence, and for carrying a gun at all times?
- 2 Do you agree with her choice to carry a gun at all times? Why/why not?
- 3 Hyatt states that “I have seen gun shot wounds up close and what damage a bullet can do to the human body, but far worse is seeing the woman or child who has been raped and beaten without a chance to defend themselves.” Do you agree with her about one thing being worse than the other? Why/why not?
- 4 What is Hyatt's motto?
- 5 What do you think Hyatt's motto expresses? Discuss the relevance of the words below one by one in relation to the motto. You do not have to agree in the group. Prepare to discuss your views in class. Look up the words you do not know.
 - common sense – fear – a sense of duty – ignorance – streetwise realism – paranoia – wisdom – ideology – responsibility – self-confidence – anxiety – lack of judgement – a greed for power – delusion
- 6 Hyatt states that “We have strayed too far from the origins that made this country great!” What is she talking about? For inspiration, see “The Declaration of Independence”.
- 7 “Knowledge is power.” In the text, teaching the Second Amendment and gun safety are mentioned as examples of knowledge. What other examples of knowledge could you think of that might create a safer society? For inspiration, see “The Second Amendment Myth & Meaning”.

POST-READING

- 1 Hyatt states that “... defending your life and the life of your children is your DUTY! Who can argue with that?” Can you argue with it? Write a letter of a 100 words to Tiffany Hyatt, in which you sum up possible counter-arguments for NOT carrying a gun. For inspiration, see “The Second Amendment Myth & Meaning” and “Don't Buy a Handgun”.

Don't Buy a Handgun

"IF YOU'RE TRULY CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR PROTECTION,
GET A DOG"

Bowling for Columbine



Michael Moore's book *Stupid White Men* is the forerunner of *Bowling for Columbine*. When the September 11 attacks occurred in New York City (2001), the first 50,000 copies of *Stupid White Men* lay printed and ready for distribution by the publisher, HarperCollins. HarperCollins decided not to release the book unless Moore made some major changes, because of its critical approach to President Bush and his administration. Moore refused to rewrite his book. The news of the dispute reached the public, and eventually, the book was released. It was sold out within hours, and hit the #1 on the Amazon.com bestseller list the next day.

PRE-READING

- 1 Moore: "How did you get a gun?"
Young man: "I stole mine."
Moore: "Where did you steal it from?"
Young man: "From a friend of mine. His dad owns a bunch of guns."
Moore: "What were you doing with stolen guns?"
Young man: "We went down to Detroit to try and sell them, 'cause I can get like a buck fifty a pop for a 9 mm."
Moore: "[...] Who did you try to sell them to?"
Young man: "Anybody that would really want them. Mostly gangs and stuff like that."
Moore: "Gangs in the city of Detroit?"
Young man: "Yeah."
Moore: "Black?"
Young man: "Predominantly, yeah."

According to this quote from Moore's interview how might the young black men of the inner city get a hold of guns?

- 2 **Statistics on the Internet.** Are young black males in the large cities in America more likely to get killed with guns? Visit the homepage of the *American Bureau of Justice Statistics* (Google search *BJS + gov*). Search for "**Homicide trends**" and note down the trends with regard to the categories of

- Age, gender and race
- Weapons trends
- City size

If you have more time, search for **Firearms and crime**, and find out how many percent of offenders got their guns from an illegal source. Prepare to present your results in class.

from *Stupid White Men*

by Michael Moore

2001

Don't Buy a Handgun

What sense does it make to have a gun in the house? If it's for hunting, then it's simple: keep your rifle or shotgun unloaded and locked up in the attic until hunting season.

- 5 If you're thinking of buying a handgun for protection, on the other hand, let me give you a few statistics. A member of your family is twenty-two times more likely to die from gunfire if you have a gun in your house than if you don't.

- The idea that having a gun is the only way to ensure "home protection" is a myth. Fewer than 1 out of 4 violent crimes is committed while the victim is at home. Among all the instances when guns are fired during a break in while the owner is at home, in only 2 percent are guns used to shoot the intruder. The other 98 percent of the time, residents accidentally shoot a loved one of themselves – or the burglars take the
15 gun and kill them with it.

- Nonetheless, we have almost a *quarter-billion* guns in our homes, owned – that is, introduced into society – by white people. Each year about 500,000 guns are stolen, mostly from these same white people in the suburbs. And the vast majority of those guns end up in the inner
20 city, sold cheaply or traded for legal or illegal goods and services.

These white guns have caused an enormous amount of death and suffering among African-Americans. Gunfire is the number one cause

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of death among young blacks. Black men between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four are almost six times more likely to be shot to death than white men in that same age group.

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No African-American owns a gun company. Cruise through the part of your town where African-Americans live: there are no gun factories there. At prices that range from several hundred to several thousand dollars, most African-Americans can't afford to buy a Glock, Beretta, Luger, Colt, or Smith & Wesson. No black guy owns a plane that's smuggling automatic weapons into the country.

All of this is done by whites. But sooner or later, thousands of these legally purchased guns end up in the hands of desperate people who live in poverty and who live with their own set of fears. To introduce guns into this volatile environment – which we white people have done little to improve – is a deadly proposition.

So if you're white, and you'd like to help reduce the number one cause of death among young black men, here's the answers: Don't buy a gun. Don't keep one in your house or car. No guns laying around means no guns stolen to be resold in poor black neighbourhoods. Wherever you live, chances are that crime is at an all-time low. Chill out, sit back, and enjoy the good life an uneven-playing-field has given you. If you're truly concerned about your protection, get a dog. Bad guys generally don't want to tussle with a crazy barking animal with sharp teeth.

You don't need a gun.

WHILE-READING

- 1 What is Moore's attitude to private ownership of weapons?
- 2 According to Moore, why is it a "myth" that a handgun is good for self-defence in the home?
- 3 Why do you think he uses statistics to try to prove the myth wrong?
- 4 What are "white guns", and what is the problem with them, according to Moore?
- 5 Why would some neighbourhoods be so-called "volatile" environments?
- 6 Why does Moore choose the subject of "white guns" when discussing the problem of gun deaths in America, instead of, for instance, a call for stricter gun control?

- 7 Moore states that "Gunfire is the number one cause of death among young blacks." Discuss the following list of possible conclusions to his statement.

- a. Black people are more violent than white people.
- b. Moore is wrong to portray black killers as victims.
- c. Black people are more desperate than white people.
- d. Society should work on the social problems in black inner city neighbourhoods.
- e. White people should feel responsible about the problem with "white guns".
- f. Society should restrict ownership of guns for all citizens.
- g. Society should do more to disarm young black men.
- h. Gun ownership and race issues are two separate things, and there is no logic in combining them this way.

POST-READING

- 1 Read the following quotation taken from an article by David Horowitz, an American political and cultural commentator. Look up the words you do not know.

"A gun – do I really have to spell this out? – is an inanimate object. It takes a human brain to pull the trigger. Firearms don't kill people. Sociopaths do. If young black males abuse firearms in an irresponsible and criminal fashion, why should the firearm industry be held accountable? Why not their parents? Why not themselves?"

- a. Write down one argument which supports Horowitz's statement above, beginning "I agree with Horowitz because ..."
- b. Write down one argument which speaks against Horowitz's statement above, beginning "I disagree with Horowitz because ..."

- 3 Compare Moore's arguments in "Don't Buy a Handgun" with those of Tiffany Hyatt in "Why I Picked Up a Gun". Prepare to present your results in class.