

## Back against the Wall: Poverty and Legal Firearms

It is said that money cannot buy happiness, however it can provide necessary things like food, shelter, and especially safety. When money is scarce in a household or community, these important aspects of basic survival seem to disappear. Luxuries evaporate, every paycheck is used sparingly for only the most important items. In these situations, when advancement is difficult, crime flourishes from the easy pay it offers and it can lure the disenfranchised in, but those who refuse to give in are still stuck in the same area as those who do turn to crime. Those people end up creating danger for everyone else who lives there. In cities like Chicago or New York, impoverished neighborhoods like this are a too common reality and the law-abiding citizens there live in constant danger, trying to survive when at any time the prevalent crime can take away their meager wealth or even their life. When police can't be there the second your home is being robbed, seemingly not even the hour in these neighborhoods, only you are capable of defending your livelihood. The easiest way to do so is with a firearm and often the access to them is extremely limited for the poor. On top of the already steep price of the firearm, they also must pay for the appropriate licensing, fees, and go long periods of time without protection while their application is processed. Laws that seek to prevent gun crime and promote harder access to firearms do not prevent the criminals from obtaining them and only result in discriminating against impoverished law abiding citizens, costing them dearly.

For many of those in unfortunate circumstances, they merely that cannot afford the long period of time it takes to obtain the proper licensing, which is mostly spent waiting around. This applies to people like Carol Bowne, who was "Convinced that he [ex-boyfriend] intended to do her physical harm, she took out a restraining order, had security cameras installed at her home, and purchased an alarm system" (Cooke). Though it seems she had already done enough and gone to far lengths to protect herself, she felt she could do something more direct and resigned to purchase a handgun. In her state of New Jersey, she had to apply for a handgun permit before she could buy one, which usually takes up to 2 months. An average person like her, who works as a hairdresser with a friendly personality, obviously wouldn't be one to forgo the law even in her worrying situation so of course she filled out applications and waited patiently to buy her firearm legally. The unnecessarily long wait time spelled trouble from the start for her as she clearly felt her exposure to an immediate danger that wouldn't wait around for the government to approve her application, but between him and the government she made the choice to stay legal and risk months without protection. In this story's end, unfortunately for Carol she was all too correct, and she was stabbed to death by her former boyfriend in her own driveway before that permit ever came close to being cleared. Whether or not she could have used it fast enough to stop him

is left up to debate, but at the very least she would have had the chance to try and that is much more than she had against her ex-con ex-boyfriend. As always people have differing opinions though, such as the author from a Mother Jones article criticize States with low requirements, claiming the higher requirements as in Ms. Bowne's case are necessary. Respectably, instead of only critiquing the matter he actually tried the process in Utah himself and while reflecting on obtaining the concealed carry license he said, "I struggle to load more than a few [fake rounds of ammunition] before they're ejected halfway across the room. But that's not going to stop Utah from giving me a permit." (Murphy) believing that the lack of formal training required is irresponsible and will cause accidents for people who fumble in safety class or know nothing about firearms like him rather than truly help anyone defend themselves. However, with situations like Ms. Bowne's, and along with contrary statistical information from the CDC showing "Only 2 percent of unintentional firearm-related deaths were connected with self-defense.... some studies on the association between self-defensive gun use and injury or loss to the victim have found less loss and injury when a firearm is used" (Leshner), says Murphy's worry of accidents is unfounded in reality and the low requirements are certainly worth it if they could help those like Ms. Bowne.

On a more broad scale of a city rather than a single individual's experience, an example of the legislation mentioned earlier is Chicago's long-lasting 1982 ban on handguns. At the time, these new laws were to outlaw the sale and ownership handguns within city limits that hadn't been registered prior to the ban. The end goal was to curb the evident and increasing gun violence in the city by theoretically making it more difficult for gang members to access handguns, as handguns were frequently used in gang-related homicides. Moved into action with good intentions as most of these similar bills are, the legislation was passed and it seemed to work. Handgun homicides dropped slightly for a few years afterward as they wanted, but then the hull ended. The rate began climbing and eventually "the number of murders in Chicago committed using handguns has been 40% higher than before the ban" (Watson). Whether or not the ban was the cause of the increase in murders is debatable and is a subject for another day, but with Chicago's murder per 100,000 people at 432 in 2010, the last year of the ban 28 years later, the legislation had certainly not done the city any favours (City-Data). The ones who live inside these desolate and dangerous areas of Chicago are the ones who must suffer the consequences of legislator's decision to take away their ability to defend themselves in failed attempts to lower violence. The reason for this ban was unsuccessful is because criminals do not obtain firearms by legal means, and even now, with no ban, criminals still deviate from the law and buy outside of the legal realm. Based on research done by Philip J. Cook, Susan T. Parker, and Harold A. Pollack in 2015 where they interviewed criminals incarcerated in Cook County jail, which consists of mostly Chicago criminals, the most usual route of obtaining firearms is through social connections not fraudulent gun stores, and that theft of legal firearms is best (Cook). Saying that these legal handguns are not stolen, and nothing is bought legally from gun stores, is showing that this ban did not have any chance in solving the problem it was put in place for. The laws made to prevent the gun crime most certainly did not result in lowering it, nor did it prevent

firearms from landing in the hands of criminals, meaning we should question their use and reason for existing.

These attempts at preventative measures did not hurt the criminals, but they did hurt the law-abiding citizens. Specifically the ones who are already worse off living in the poor areas of cities who had a difficult time affording a firearm prior to legislation. The "Melting Point" legislation in Illinois forbid the sale of an handgun whose important metal parts could deform at less than 800 degrees Fahrenheit. This was an attempt to keep cheap firearms out of legal dealers and thus lower the market to a criminal and make it more difficult to remove serial numbers from the firearm. As stated earlier most criminals do not purchase through proper channels, so the law's purpose is voided from the start, even it's claim to prevent serial numbers being filed off is ludicrous as the difference of a minutes work would still mean the number will be filed off. In taking cheap handguns off the legal market the law only succeeds in blocking those who wish to legally purchase firearms and cannot afford higher quality or more costly ones, and as Funk puts it, they "discriminate against the poor who cannot afford to purchase more expensive handguns.... will also make it easier for the criminals to prey on the poor citizens rendered defenseless to the extent that their legal access to a handgun is blocked" (Funk). Funk also recalls a similarity between today's Melting Point laws and Civil War's Tennessee gun bans. All handguns but the Army/Navy Revolvers commonly owned by Ex-Confederates were banned as an attempt to bar blacks from owning handguns since all cheaper handguns would now be off the market. These laws were in no way made to protect the public, transparently they were only created to relinquish firearms from blacks and poor whites. And at the very least unlike Melting Point laws it did succeed in its goal, whereas both block access the MP laws fail at its attempt to build a safer place. Even today with Illinois', and subsequently Chicago's, new laws allowing concealed carry they still do not take in mind the accommodation of the lower and working class peoples and prevent them from participating. The Illinois State Police describe the requirements of "16 hours of Concealed Carry firearms training provided by an ISP approved instructor. \$300.00 payable with a credit card or electronic check." (U.S Gov't) in order to be eligible for concealed carry. For someone living under or at the poverty line and working to maintain what little they have giving away 300 dollars is a huge sum that adds on to the equal cost for the gun itself and then they must sacrifice another 16 hours of their time. All of this is unnecessary and extremely tough on law-abiding citizens who only want to protect themselves and who then must survive 90 days without their protection as the State Police process their application (U.S Gov't).

When laws hurt the common citizen so badly and do nothing to protect them, nor hurt the criminals, I must ask what use they do pose? It is unfair for the government to discriminate against any citizen, especially against those who already struggling day-to-day and our laws as a nation should reflect the inclusivity and equality that used to appeal so much to those seeking a new life here. When we look at cities like Chicago we shouldn't think, as Mr. Colion Noir says, "Aren't you glad you don't live here?" (Noir) but rather how can we make it easier for them? Even if it's not the main solution of the poverty and crime, self-defense is not merely a luxury of

the wealthy, but an equalizer for all people, rich or poor. All these attempts to restrict access of firearms to criminals have only result in putting law-abiding and poor citizens at risk, who are the same people most of these laws seek to protect. We all have the right to defend life and property against those who wish to harm us, and I find that legislation as I've mentioned put the poor at an disadvantage they don't deserve. Everyone deserves the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

- Mary Hays: Intriguing title.
- Mary Hays: Please use standard essay format. Double space your papers.
- Mary Hays: This is an expletive construction. Here is a mini-lesson about why you should avoid them here: [http://grammarhelpenvisionrevision.blogspot.com/2013/09/constructions\\_9.html?view=magazine](http://grammarhelpenvisionrevision.blogspot.com/2013/09/constructions_9.html?view=magazine)
- Also, passive voice makes this wordy and indirect. See section W-3 of your handbook for help.
- Mary Hays: Which people? I know you probably mean the criminals, but grammatically it's not clear which people you're talking about here—the ones who refuse to give in or those who turn to crime.
- Mary Hays: ...any time... two words here.
- Mary Hays: Can you support this claim with source material? You should be able to find sources that catalog emergency response time by neighborhood.
- Mary Hays: passive voice.
- Mary Hays: Good acknowledgment of your source.
- Mary Hays: good paraphrase, but all of this is source material, so your citation should go at the end of your paraphrase.

- Mary Hays: Book, movie, and periodical titles should be italicized or underlined. Articles, stories, and other short works should be in quotation marks. See P5c, MLA4b & MLA5 in your handbook.
- Mary Hays: This is a little awkward. I think you are trying to say that it was RESPECTFUL of the author to try for himself to get a license so he would have more credibility.
- Mary Hays: This is a really long and confusing sentence. Can you simplify?
- Mary Hays: Good job of respecting the source by indicating to the reader where you made a change.
- Mary Hays: Does it really say this? The way I read the quote it's not including accidental deaths, like gun cleaning incidents or the recent killing of a toddler in our community when a teen was fooling around with a loaded gun. I think you need more discussion to make your point.
- Mary Hays: True.
- Mary Hays: Why? Saying this seems a bit like a cop out. Why not delve into the issue here? Why wait?
- Mary Hays: This sentence is confusing, some judicious editing and use of commas might help.
- Mary Hays: Confusing. WHO is saying this? Cook? (If so, you may simply need to untangle your previous sentence to show us.)

- Mary Hays: Who is "they?" the criminals? the guns? confusing.
- Mary Hays: This is a sentence fragment. Please see section G5 of your e-handbook.
- Mary Hays: Careful. It's = it is  
Its = the possessive form of it. Here is a web page that helps with sound alike words: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engage>
- Mary Hays: For help with possessive nouns and apostrophe use please see section P4 of your handbook.
- Mary Hays: Good use of signal phrase to show us where your source material begins. However, who is Funk? Why should we listen to this person? You could do more to introduce your source here.
- Mary Hays: Again, you need to put your citation after the end of your source material (which I think is right here). See me if you need further explanation.
- Mary Hays: your usage is a bit off here. You mean the laws were made to GET BLACKS AND POOR WHITES to RELINQUISH the firearms.
- Mary Hays: If this is short for Melting Point, then put it in parentheses the first time you use it, like this: ...unlike Melting Point (MP) laws.... Once you've done that, you can use MP without further explanation.
- Mary Hays: Are you suggesting that people don't need training to be safe? We have similar laws for operating motorcycles, don't we? You need to take a training course before getting a motorcycle license. Would you argue that this training is unnecessary? You may need some support from sources to claim the training is unnecessary.
- Mary Hays: good point.

- Mary Hays: Good point.
- Mary Hays: ...have only RESULTED...

- Mary Hays: You need a hanging indent. Also, don't put it in bold.

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