

Stand Your Ground: A History of America's Love Affair with Lethal Self-Defense

Caroline Light

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Stand Your Ground

A HISTORY OF AMERICA'S LOVE AFFAIR
WITH LETHAL SELF-DEFENSE



Caroline E. Light

"In this brilliant and timely history of 'the well-armed citizen,' Caroline Light reveals the logic—and lunacy—of the perceived reasonableness of lethal force in America and the collective myth of the ideal, gun-toting savior against the threat of the 'other.'"

—PATRICIA WILLIAMS, professor of law at Columbia Law School

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Caroline Light : Stand Your Ground: A History of America's Love Affair with Lethal Self-Defense before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Stand Your Ground: A History of America's Love Affair with Lethal Self-Defense:

7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Everyone should read this bookBy CustomerThis terrific book

helped me understand the variable ways that people have experienced the stand your ground phenomenon through our history. As an older, white male, I do not always think of the gender and racial aspects of this tradition. Of course, women and people of color have experienced this very differently than I have. I appreciate a new level of understanding just how we've gotten to this otherwise incomprehensible point.

5 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Urgent, crucial book: why the 2nd Amendment doesn't work the same for everyone

By M. Reiche

This thoughtful, balanced, deeply researched book is a powerful weapon in the fight against the view that gun violence is strictly contemporary, mysterious or inevitable, and a symptom of the equal franchise of rights in the United States. As a historian, Light brings scrupulous attention to bear on the ways in which laws travel through time and intersect one another: laws about self-defense and what constitutes a man's "castle" operate together with laws about who may own property and who is considered a full citizen to create a situation in which, even if legal texts about lethal self defense have no language about race, the way that law enforcement, the judiciary, and the public perceive force has everything to do with race and gender.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS NOT: A polemic against gun ownership.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS: A mirror that shows us the origins of our unjust system of armed citizenship.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Must Read

By Carrie Kilgore

I was frankly blown away by the history presented here, having been previously unaware of just how closely gun proliferation has been entwined with sexism and racism. The US now has 4 percent of the world's population and between 40 and 50 percent of privately owned guns. There are more guns in the US than people. But those weapons are in the hands of an increasingly small percentage of the US population. Meanwhile, women, non-whites and LGBT are increasingly LESS safe. This is essential reading for anyone wondering how we got here. Highly recommended.

A history of Americas Stand Your Ground gun laws, from Reconstruction to Trayvon Martin

After a young, white gunman killed twenty-six people at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in December 2012, conservative legislators lamented that the tragedy could have been avoided if the schoolteachers had been armed and the classrooms equipped with guns. Similar claims were repeated in the aftermath of other recent shootings after nine were killed in a church in Charleston, South Carolina, and in the aftermath of the massacre in the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. Despite inevitable questions about gun control, there is a sharp increase in firearm sales in the wake of every mass shooting. Yet, this kind of DIY-security activism predates the contemporary gun rights movement and even the stand-your-ground self-defense laws adopted in thirty-three states, or the thirteen million civilians currently licensed to carry concealed firearms. As scholar Caroline Light proves, support for good guys with guns relies on the entrenched belief that certain bad guys with guns threaten us all.

Stand Your Ground explores the development of the American right to self-defense and reveals how the original duty to retreat from threat was transformed into a selective right to kill. In her rigorous genealogy, Light traces white Americas attachment to racialized, lethal self-defense by unearthing its complex legal and social histories from the original castle laws of the 1600s, which gave white men the right to protect their homes, to the brutal lynching of criminal Black bodies during the Jim Crow era and the radicalization of the NRA as it transitioned from a sporting organization to one of our countrys most powerful lobbying forces.

In this convincing treatise on the United States unprecedented ascension as the worlds foremost stand-your-ground nation, Light exposes a history hidden in plain sight, showing how violent self-defense has been legalized for the most privileged and used as a weapon against the most vulnerable.

The author is a keen legal analyst, deftly examining obscure cases that underlie this historical narrative...A weighty consideration of the cultural politics behind disturbing flash points like the death of Trayvon Martin.

Kirkus s

Lights readable account deserves strong notice by those seeking understanding of the roots of todays polarizing debate over gun laws.

Booklist

Light makes a compelling case that appeals to self-defense throughout American history have never been an equal-opportunity recourse...Light does not shy away from historical facts that popular memory and contemporary debates often erase. She unsparingly describes how many white suffragists supported extrajudicial violence to protect white chastity, and likewise calls attention to the under-acknowledged role of armed self-defense by black Americans during the sixties and seventies.

The New Inquiry

A timely and far-reaching new book...Light deftly analyzes how this lop-sided treatment has survived, in our legal system and also in the distortions that help define the historical memory of white America...Its far from obvious that repealing Stand Your Ground laws would break that loop. As Light shows, the right to claim the protective mantle of self-defense has never been equally distributed in America. Stand Your Ground laws may be stark symbols of that reality, but they didnt create it. Stand Your Ground didnt kill Martin or keep Zimmerman out of jail. And it didnt protect Peterson. Truly facing the problems of violence in America will mean following Lights lead and digging deeper.

Peter C. Baker, Pacific Standard

A powerful new book...studded with striking statistics and sobering facts.

Nina MacLaughlin, The Boston Globe

While some may believe that the prevalence of stand-your-ground narratives is a new phenomenon, Caroline Lights Stand Your Ground is timely and sharp, and a potent antidote to historical amnesia. Light reminds us that these defenses are as old as the republic; they have always protected those with privilege and jeopardized those at the margins.

Mark Anthony Neal, author of New Black Man

In this brilliant and timely history of the well-armed citizen,

Caroline Light reveals the logic and lunacy of the perceived reasonableness of lethal force in America and the collective myth of the ideal, gun-toting savior against the threat of the other. Patricia Williams, professor of law at Columbia Law School Caroline Light traces the history of self-defense in America from the early republic to the present and reveals how gun-use policies have consistently compromised the contours of our democracy. Paying careful attention to the roles of race and gender in structuring gun control politics, Light ultimately provides us with a profound reflection on belonging and exclusion in American society. Essential reading. Elizabeth Hinton, award-winning author of *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* Provocative and original. Mike The Gun Guy Weisser, author of the *Guns in America* series About the Author Caroline Light is director of undergraduate studies in the Program in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Harvard University. She is the author of *That Pride of Race and Character: The Roots of Jewish Benevolence in the Jim Crow South*.