



## Exercising the Right

### African-Americans and the Second Amendment

The *Christian Science Monitor* ran an informative article on July 11 that explored the issue of gun ownership for self-defense within the black community. The article featured Phillip Smith, a man who at one time didn't appreciate the importance of gun ownership but is now a leader in his community on the issue. Smith, who is in his 50s, grew up in California but moved to the South in 2002. In his time in California, he recalled gun ownership being frowned upon in the black community, but that was not the case when he moved to Atlanta. Smith said that many black families had firearms for sport and, to some extent, self-defense. Smith eventually became a strong advocate for gun rights and even founded the National African-American Gun Association, which currently has around 20,000 members.

Smith told the *Christian Science Monitor* that "in the last 18 months the racial tone of the country has tilted in a direction that is alarming, at a minimum." (The article did veer into the typical misinformation peddled by the mainstream media that pushes a false narrative that the election of President Trump is somehow causing a rise in "hate crimes" and that minorities are arming themselves in order to defend against this alleged threat.)

The *Christian Science Monitor* did accurately state that legal gun ownership is much higher among whites than blacks. Only 19 percent of black households report guns in the home, which is less than half the 41 percent of white households that report having a gun in the home. Polling also shows that roughly 60 percent of blacks favor stricter gun control, while it is practically the complete opposite for whites, with 61 percent of whites expressing support for expanding gun rights.

Smith mentioned that he encountered a lot of opposition in the black community to his organization, which he said some saw as a regression to Black Panther tactics of the past. The *Christian Science Monitor* then took a trip back through time to the 1960s and recounted how "the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense movement" marched into the California state capital back in 1967, which then resulted in a backlash. The California legislature soon passed legislation that prohibited open carry in the state. The bill was eventually signed into law by then-Governor Ronald Reagan who, as most of us know, would eventually run for president as a big supporter of protecting and defending gun rights.

But Smith disassociates from any comparison to radical groups such as that and, conversely, even tried to distance himself from stances of President Trump or the National Rifle Association, which are controversial in the black community. Smith says he struggles with trying to convince other blacks that gun ownership is a right they have as a U.S. citizen. "I'm trying to let everyone know that you have the right — not the God-given right, but the right as an American — to carry a gun.... We have things to overcome in the black community in terms of what you believe you have a right to do as a citizen.... My job is to convince people that it is not radical to have a gun ... to protect your family."

### Intruder Gets Airlifted by Helicopter

WKYT reported out of Kentucky on June 23 about an intruder who got himself shot with a shotgun and airlifted by a medical helicopter. Laurel County sheriff's deputies responded to the call of a home break-in and shooting shortly after 10 a.m. Authorities found a homeowner who said that he shot a man whom he caught breaking in to his house. The homeowner reportedly fired a shotgun at the suspect, hitting



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him in the torso. The badly injured suspect fled into a wooded area behind the house. Police searched for the suspect, and a stray dog's barking caught their attention. Police moved closer and found the 40-year-old suspect hiding by a tree.

The injured suspect was later identified as Otis Kemp of Corbin. Due to the severity of his injuries, a medical helicopter was called in to transport him to the University of Kentucky Medical Center in Lexington. Kemp received treatment and is expected to survive. Police recovered stolen property in the yard and on Kemp's person. Kemp was later charged with multiple felonies, including burglary in the first degree, theft by unlawful taking, criminal mischief in the first degree, evading police, and third-degree terroristic threatening.

## **Thief Tries Robbing a Gun Store With Pepper Spray**

The *New York Post* reported on June 28 about a robber who followed through on an incredibly stupid idea. The man walked into a Bensonhurst-based sports store that sold guns for sport and approached an employee behind a display case. The suspect asked the employee if he could see some of the guns. The employee, later identified as a 60-year-old former Marine named "Frank," sensed that something was not right and asked the suspect for his gun permit. The suspect reached into his pocket as if he was retrieving his wallet when he suddenly pulled out Mace and sprayed it in Frank's face. The suspect then used a hammer to smash the glass display case and began stealing the guns. Frank ducked down behind the counter, his eyes stinging from the Mace, and grabbed a nearby firearm, which he then aimed at the suspect. Frank fired the gun, but owing to his vision being impaired by the Mace, he was not sure if he hit the suspect, who ran from the store and is still being sought. Blood was recovered at the scene which police believe belongs to the suspect, but investigators are not sure if the bleeding was due to being shot or if the suspect cut himself on the glass when he was trying to steal the guns from the broken display case. Authorities collected evidence at the scene, and the investigation is ongoing.

Friends of the employee involved in the incident had only nice things to say about the man. Sixty-six-year-old Harry Taggart told the *New York Post*, "Frank is a really decent guy.... He's the kind of guy you would want in your neighborhood. I'm glad he did that. The man doesn't bother anybody. He respects everyone. "

— Patrick Krey



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