



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on September 30, 2014

Chicago's Gun Laws Prevent Poor From Defending Themselves

The West Garfield Park neighborhood in the South Side of Chicago is one of the deadliest places in the country, [according to the Washington Times](#).

Following receipt of information requested under the Freedom Of Information Act, the *Times* discovered that ZIP Code 60624 (which includes West Garfield Park) has, in the last month, "recorded more homicides, robberies, assaults, thefts and narcotics charges combined than any other ZIP Code in Cook County." In contrast, ZIP Code 60464 has experienced only one homicide in the last 10 years. The difference in demographics explains part of the reason why: West Garfield Park is nearly 96 percent black, whereas Palos Park is overwhelmingly white. Residents in West Garfield Park have an average income just barely above the poverty level, while residents in Palos Park live well, enjoying an average monthly income of more than \$10,000.



But perhaps the biggest demographic difference is the number of concealed carry permits in these two neighborhoods. Out of nearly 115,000 total residents in West Garfield Park, fewer than 200 have been issued concealed carry licenses, whereas in Palos Park more than 60 licenses had been issued to fewer than 5,000 residents there. Put another way, there are seven times more permits per capita in Palos Park than there are in West Garfield Park.

The *Times* also discovered that the top five ZIP Codes in Chicago with the most concealed carry permits are all "predominantly white, middle-class and are in areas that have low crime rates." But the most violent neighborhoods, all on the South Side of Chicago, are predominantly black and have the fewest concealed carry licenses as a percentage of the population.

The implication is clear. Said John Lott, president of the Crime Prevention Center and author of *More Guns, Less Crime*,

You really need to ask whether or not politicians are consciously trying to disarm certain groups of people. Why do they want a law that primarily disarms blacks and gives guns to the well-to-do whites? Don't they think it should be equal for everyone to protect their lives?

Whether Chicago's policies are deliberate or not is open to debate. What isn't is the onerous nature of those policies restricting the ability of a citizen to obtain a concealed carry permit. There is a fee of \$650, an incredible amount of paperwork, and the mandate to take a 16-hour course at a licensed gun



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range. As there are no licensed gun ranges in the city, and carrying an unlicensed gun on public transportation is prohibited, one can see the oppressive nature of these restrictions. And none of these take into account the cost of the firearm itself or the cost of tuition. As Shawn Gowder, a Southside resident, explained: "We need to arm ourselves and protect ourselves from these gangsters but we just can't afford to do it."

And that's just the beginning. There's a loophole in the law that allows local law-enforcement officials to deny permits for any reason, and the Cook County Sheriff's office has said that it will take maximum advantage of that loophole by denying as many of those applications as it can. Once denied, a citizen can request a hearing before a seven-person state review board; however, according to the *Times*, that board has denied more than 800 licenses without any explanation.

A black retired police officer, Sonny Brown, says these restrictions apply primarily to blacks:

Some people have a record, you know. It's called "driving while black." The politicians don't care if this saves lives or even consider the fact that when concealed carry goes up, violent crime rates go down. All they want to do is stifle our Second Amendment rights.

According to UCLA constitutional law professor Adam Winkler, these laws may not be racist, but they have the same effect. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, he said:

[The history of gun control in America] was a constant pressure among white racists to keep guns out of the hands of African-Americans because they would rise up and revolt.

This was confirmed when the state of Tennessee, following the Nat Turner slave rebellion in 1831, changed the language in its Constitution which originally read, "The freemen of this state have a right to keep and to bear arms for their common defense," to read, "The free white men of the state ... etc."

More than 100 years later, Florida Supreme Court Justice Rivers Buford, concurring in *Watson v. Stone*, which ruled against the state's anti-black gun act of 1893, wrote:

I know something of the history of this legislation. The original Act of 1893 was passed when there was a great influx of Negro laborers in this state drawn here for the purpose of working in turpentine and lumber camps.

The same condition existed when the Act was amended in 1901, and the Act was passed for the purpose of disarming the Negro laborers and to thereby reduce the unlawful homicides that were prevalent in turpentine and sawmill camps and to give the white citizens in sparsely settled areas a better feeling of security.

The statute was never intended to be applied to the white population and in practice has never been so applied.

Whether intended or not, Chicago's continuing heavy restrictions on the ownership of guns affects most oppressively those who have the greatest need to defend themselves: the poor black residents living in the South Side of Chicago.

In essence, Chicago's restrictions make them de facto racist gun laws.

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