



Written by [Walter E. Williams](#) on January 2, 2013

Why the Second Amendment

Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., in the wake of the Newtown, Conn., shootings, said: "The British are not coming.... We don't need all these guns to kill people." Lewis' vision, shared by many, represents a gross ignorance of why the framers of the Constitution gave us the Second Amendment. How about a few quotes from the period and you decide whether our Founding Fathers harbored a fear of foreign tyrants.



Alexander Hamilton: "The best we can hope for concerning the people at large is that they be properly armed," adding later, "If the representatives of the people betray their constituents, there is then no recourse left but in the exertion of that original right of self-defense which is paramount to all positive forms of government." By the way, Hamilton is referring to what institution when he says "the representatives of the people"?

James Madison: "(The Constitution preserves) the advantage of being armed, which the Americans possess over the people of almost every other nation ... (where) the governments are afraid to trust the people with arms."

Thomas Jefferson: "What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms."

George Mason, author of the Virginia Bill of Rights, which inspired our Constitution's Bill of Rights, said, "To disarm the people — that was the best and most effectual way to enslave them."

Rep. John Lewis and like-minded people might dismiss these thoughts by saying the founders were racist anyway. Here's a more recent quote from a card-carrying liberal, the late Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey: "Certainly, one of the chief guarantees of freedom under any government, no matter how popular and respected, is the right of the citizen to keep and bear arms.... The right of the citizen to bear arms is just one guarantee against arbitrary government, one more safeguard against the tyranny which now appears remote in America but which historically has proven to be always possible." I have many other Second Amendment references at <http://econfaculty.gmu.edu/wew/quotes.html>.

How about a couple of quotations with which Rep. Lewis and others might agree? "Armas para que?" (translated: "Guns, for what?") by Fidel Castro. There's a more famous one: "The most foolish mistake we could possibly make would be to allow the subject races to possess arms. History shows that all conquerors who have allowed their subject races to carry arms have prepared their own downfall by so doing." That was Adolf Hitler.



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Here's the gun grabbers' slippery-slope agenda, laid out by Nelson T. Shields, founder of Handgun Control Inc.: "We're going to have to take this one step at a time, and the first step is necessarily — given the political realities — going to be very modest.... Right now, though, we'd be satisfied not with half a loaf but with a slice. Our ultimate goal — total control of handguns in the United States — is going to take time. ... The final problem is to make the possession of all handguns and all handgun ammunition — except for the military, police, licensed security guards, licensed sporting clubs and licensed gun collectors — totally illegal" (*The New Yorker*, July 1976).

There have been people who've ridiculed the protections afforded by the Second Amendment, asking what chance would citizens have against the military might of the U.S. government. Military might isn't always the deciding factor. Our 1776 War of Independence was against the mightiest nation on the face of the earth — Great Britain. In Syria, the rebels are making life uncomfortable for the much-better-equipped Syrian regime. Today's Americans are vastly better-armed than our founders, Warsaw Ghetto Jews and Syrian rebels.

There are about 300 million privately held firearms owned by Americans. That's nothing to sneeze at. And notice that the people who support gun control are the very people who want to control and dictate our lives.

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