
Review of Caroline E. Light. *Stand Your Ground: A History of America's Love Affair with Lethal Self-Defense*, by Caroline E. Light (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017).

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Stand Your Ground: A History of America's Love Affair with Lethal Self-Defense by Harvard Professor Caroline E. Light offers a historical view of the evolution of America's gun rights ideology from basic self-defense promised to American citizens in the Second Amendment, to the beginning of the gun rights movement, to the NRA and the current gun lobby in Congress. The book explains how the controversial issue of stand-your-ground has been a leading justification for some gun rights activists today to arm and defend themselves against threats and not face prosecution for using deadly force.

Light uses historical references to give readers an understanding of how gun advocates justify the use of stand-your-ground today in America. These justifications have become so prevalent that stand-your-ground self-defense laws have been adopted in thirty-three states today, with over thirteen million civilian citizens currently registered and licensed to carry concealed firearms. She also goes into the idea of "good guys and bad guys with guns." Light argues that faith in "good guys with guns" relies on the entrenched belief of certain Americans that "bad guys with guns" are a threat to all. Because of this belief, there has been a sharp increase in the number of firearm sales over the last 10 years.

Light also traces the history of white America's attachment to racialized, lethal self-defense by unearthing its legal and social complexities. She reviews the history of the "castle laws" of the 1600s, which gave white men the right to protect their homes and the right to claim justifiable homicide in certain situations. She also reviews the brutal lynching of "criminal" black bodies during the era of Jim Crow in America. Light notes how today the NRA has become so radicalized that it has evolved from being a sporting organization for responsible gun owners to one of the most powerful lobbies in the country. Finally, she brings light to the rise of mass shootings in schools and public places and the question of gun control for citizens that are not responsible gun owners. This is really brought home in her discussion regarding stand-your-ground and situations deemed as "life-threatening," such as with the tragic fate of Trayvon Martin in the George Zimmermann case.

Light's study provides a critical historical view of the evolution of American citizens' right to bear arms, as originally stated in the Second Amendment to the Constitution. It also shines a light on the mindset of American gun owners and how the notion of guns rights evolved over many years. Again, the issue of stand-your-ground is one that definitely deserves serious examination today. Light's book gives a great perspective on the history that led to present day events.