

Addendum to the New York Times Review of **the Second**, by Carol Anderson, PhD,
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While this is very broad and complex subject, I'll keep my focus in the main on the Second Amendment's origins, the purpose and need to have "a well regulated militia" available to states.

Gn ownership in this country is beyond outrageous, The nation's gun owners, however, look to their rights as being fully protected by the Second Amendment of the Constitution that codified in 1792 "the right to bear arms".

The NYTIMES review of professor Anderson's recent book, The Second, is a well written update on the origins of the Second Amendment and *the type of history that we never learned in school* (high school or in undergraduate, or even graduate school). Historians' role today is to revisit tired *old myths* with new evidence and perceptions that formerly lay hidden unobserved or overlooked. Dr. Anderson's work is truly a necessary journey into those 'hidden areas' that were always visual yet not noted.

Following is what I didn't learn in my education as a young person; what historians didn't say then about the origins of The Second Amendment:

1619-1675: Slavery came to the shores of this country in 1619. African slaves were forced to work in colonial fields to produce products for export from the New World to the Old. Slave economy meant wealth for plantation owners, for slave ship owners, and bankers internationally. But, as slave populations grew and more were imported, the inhuman treatment of slaves and the subsequent fear of potential uprising among those slaves became an imminent concern for the white slave economy.

1675-1750: Colonial laws in the south (northern colonies were not as concerned) were passed in the late 17th century that forbid any black person to possess a weapon. Any black person, free blacks included, was to be whipped severely for any infraction. The laws only become more heinous and ubiquitous in the early and middle 18th century.

1750-1775: The obverse happened in southern colonies (parts of Delaware colony, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia) by the middle 18th century. All White males (18-45) were ordered to have a firearm available, and furthermore, directed to belong to a "slave patrol" or militia (aha! *the incipient need for a 'militia'*), that freely entered the huts of black slaves to search for contraband (firearms, weapons, or books). Further laws make these pre-revolutionary patrols required as part of white citizenship and community service; the fear of uprisings by black slaves intensified.

1775-1777: The American Revolution: Some may remember Crispus Attucks, a free black stevedore, killed in the Boston Massacre and honored in 19th century history books as a black man fighting for the upcoming war with Britain. However, while he stopped a British musket ball, having free black citizen in the revolutionary army *was highly discouraged by slave-owners*. The southern colonies were horrified that if free blacks handled cutlasses and muskets, they could present a model for slave resistance that could well wreck the entire, fragile edifice of the slave plantation industry (tobacco exports were fading, yet cotton was a coming wealth crop). Most American revolutionary military forces banned free blacks from military service, yet allowed them to haul supplies and handle logistics for the white American soldiers.

1777: In the South Carolina colony such a fear of slaves learning to handle and use weapons –even to protect the colony itself- caused the colonial government of South Carolina *not* mount a stout defense at the port of Charleston, thus literally surrendering to the British military. The colonialists reasoned that once slaves learned to become soldiers (75% of South Carolina’s population were Black slaves!), a future, massive uprising would become inevitable!

1775-1783: *Certainly not taught in history classes* (for me and most others), up to **25,000** slaves fled from the cotton fields across the colonial lines willfully into the hands of the British, fully supporting the British position against the colonial revolutionaries (Simon Schama, the contemporary British historian has written a number of volumes, well acclaimed, on this fact–virtually unmentioned in American histories). The terror felt by most slaveholders was palpable. Washington and Jefferson, Patrick Henry and many others clearly worried about these “losses” to their plantation economy and feared for their very lives.

1783-1791: At the end of the revolution (1781), the Continental Congress became the incipient nation’s first ‘national’ governing body. Composed of the 13 Colonies, its power to make rules, laws was limited to the whims of the representatives. The new States were hardly unified, nor sought a unifying focus; each State’s interests far outweighed a common purpose. Even when Washington first took office in 1789 (in New York), the federal budget was paltry, little money was available from the states to the federal government for defense, roads, even diplomatic relations with other, far greater powers. Then, in the summer of 1791...

1791... The Haitian Revolution overtook the world. The Haitian slaves of that plantation economy rose up and overthrew the French colonial government; thousands of white slaveholding families fled or were murdered. A black republic was initiated. This was an event so powerful and feared in the slave economy of America that the entire south feared that “the bacteria of black freedom” would soon arrive stateside. The Virginia delegation to the Continental Congress, then in the midst of drafting the fledgling Constitution insisted that in “a Bill of Rights” that “a well regulated militia” be written into the Constitution, and “the right to bear arms”, as James Madison, a slave-owner, said, must be an uncontested right throughout the land. The southern slave-owner knew that should slave uprisings occur in the south, a weak, indolent federal government would have little interest in aggressively putting down a rebellion. Haiti’s experience could easily become the American plantation’s experience. Madison and others even threatened to secede from the union of States, should this amendment *not* be inserted within the Constitution. Later that year the threat worked and it was codified into law. Each state (*meaning southern state* -most northern states didn’t expeditiously organize such a militia) then had a permanent right to establish “slave patrols”, “a well regulated (state) militia” to protect the plantation the slaveholder economy from the fear of black uprisings.

In Sum: The need to control and quickly subdue any slave uprisings, a constant fear of slaveholders was of paramount concern from the 17th century onward. That fear resulted in the southern colonies enacting laws that:

- Restricted slaves from having any weapons in their possession,
- Organized “slave patrols” composed of white citizens.

As the plantation slave economy grew, the fear of slaveholders only grew. The revolutionary war brought greater fear of total loss of the plantation economy with thousands of slaves fleeing to the side of the British. Within ten years after the revolution, the Haitian overthrow of the French plantation system cemented the judgment that the American south would be the next place for a massive blood-letting. Thus, realizing the nescient federal government would have less interest and few resources, Virginia slaveholders insisted under threat of succession that the Constitution insert an amendment encoding all (white) citizens “the right to bear arms”. The south gained the amendment, and “the militia” would be used not only to subdue black uprisings, but also – in the near future - aggressively attack Native American villages then seen as in the way of pioneers moving to the west.

Damien Wilson, Nov 22 for fellow Chaosians