

‘Don’t shoot, won’t shoot’: A qualitative look at gun discourse among black Detroiters

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The legal debate over guns in the United States is often framed in terms of ‘gun-nuts’ or those in favor of gun law liberalization versus ‘gun grabbers’ or those pushing for gun reform. However, this all or nothing rhetoric neglects the experiences of one group above all others, the black and brown voices of inner-city America. Using interview data with black residents of Detroit the nuances of the gun debate and the practice of gun carry is explored. Results indicate that the regular experience with gun violence and the criminal justice system has significantly shaped the discourse surrounding guns and gun carry being used by inner-city residents. In particular, gun ownership and carry is not framed in terms of constitutional rights or the traditional duty to protect “hero” narrative that dominates the media, but rather focuses on self-preservation not only in regards to violence, but also in terms of the criminal justice system.