

HOW GUN CONTROL "WORKED" IN JAMAICA

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Those who stridently and self-righteously lobby for the seizure of all guns by the government in America, particularly women like Sarah Brady, Barbra Streisand, Senators Diane Feinstein and Barbara Boxer and Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy, would do well to study the results of forced disarmament in other countries.

I have personally lived through a government-instigated disarmament of the general public, and its subsequent, disastrous consequences: From 1961 to 1977 my father (who is a white American, as are my mother, sister and I) was stationed with his family and business in Kingston, Jamaica.

WE ALL IMMEDIATELY DISARMED OURSELVES

Around 1972, the political situation in Jamaica had so seriously deteriorated that there were constant shootings and gun battles throughout the city of Kingston and in many of the outlying parishes (counties). In years past no one had even had to lock their doors, but now many people hardly dared venture out of their homes. This was especially true for white people, and even more especially for Americans, because of the real risk of being gunned down or kidnapped and held hostage by Jamaicans, who had become increasingly hostile towards whites and foreigners. My father took his life into his hands every morning simply driving to work. Going to the market or to do a simple errand was often a terrifying prospect. The open hatred and hostility which was directed at us seemed ready at any time to explode into violence, and indeed did so towards many people on many occasions, often with tragic or fatal results.

The Jamaican government decided that the only solution to this volatile situation was to declare martial law overnight, and to demand that all guns and bullets owned by anyone but the police and the military be turned into the police within 24 hours. The government decreed that anyone caught with even one bullet would be immediately, and without trial, incarcerated in what was essentially a barbed-wire enclosed concentration camp which had been speedily erected in the middle of Kingston. In true Orwellian fashion, the government referred to this camp as the "gun court".

My father and all of our American, Canadian, British and European friends, as well as middle class Jamaicans of all colors (locally referred to as "black", "white", or "beige") knew that we were all natural targets of this kind of draconian government punishment. The relentless anti-American propaganda spewed forth by Michael Manley, Jamaica's admittedly pro-Castro Prime Minister, had resulted in the widespread hatred of Americans, British

and Europeans by many Jamaicans. Racial hatred of whites and "beiges", as well as class hatred of anyone who appeared to have money or property, were rampant.

Consequently, we all dutifully and immediately disarmed ourselves, and handed our weapons in at the nearest police station. It was either that or be sent straight to the gun court. Even after we had disarmed ourselves, we lived in deathly fear that the cops, not known for their integrity, and well-known for their hatred of whites and Americans, would plant a gun or bullet on our property or persons.

TERROR AND HELPLESSNESS

So there we all were — government-disarmed, sitting-duck, law-abiding citizens and expatriates. Anyone can guess what happened next: the rampant and unfettered carnage began in earnest. Robberies, kidnappings, murders, burglaries, rapes — all committed by the vast populace of still-armed criminals. Doubtless the criminals were positively ecstatic that the government had been so helpful in creating all these juicy and utterly defenseless victims for their easy prey.

We've all heard the phrase, "When guns are outlawed only outlaws will have guns." I can personally confirm that this statement is absolutely and painfully true, because that is exactly how the Jamaican disarmament worked. At the time of the disarmament order, I was away at boarding school in the United States. However, I remember vividly coming home for the summer. I remember the muted but pervasive atmosphere of tension and terror which constantly permeated our household, affecting even our loyal black servants, who worked for and lived with us, and whom we took care of. (Practically every household in Jamaica, except the very poorest, had live-in servants. There was no welfare or public school in Jamaica, so middle-class families became completely responsible for the well-being of their servants, who were considered to be part of the family, including taking them to the doctor, and helping to educate their children.)

I remember lying awake in bed at night, clutching the handle of an ice-pick I had put under my pillow, and listening to the screaming of car-loads of Jamaican gangs going by our house, praying that they wouldn't pick our home to plunder. The favorite tactic was for a group of thugs to roar up to a house, pile out, batter down the door and rape, steal, kill, kidnap ... whatever they felt like. They knew the inhabitants had been disarmed, and that they would be met with only fear and defenselessness. My pathetic ice-pick seemed incredibly puny, but it was all I could think of. Our family didn't even own a baseball bat. I remember lying awake thinking about how our beloved dogs were old and feeble, and that they could not protect us. And that I could not protect them either.

I can barely describe the abject terror and helplessness I felt as both a white American and as a young woman during that time. Jamaica was then about 90% black. Although I was (and still am) an American citizen, my family had lived in Kingston for almost 12 years when this situation occurred, and I considered Jamaica to be my real home. Many of my friends were Jamaican. My first serious boy-friend was Jamaican. For all its faults, I loved this beautiful, suffering island dearly, and I felt like a stranger when I was away at school in America, where I was always homesick for Jamaica.

When we had first moved to Jamaica in 1960, my sister and I (both blonde and obviously white) had been able to ride our horses up into the hills, and, whenever we encountered local Jamaicans, their salutation to us was open and friendly, as was ours to them. As things deteriorated into the reign of terror, and then the government instituted overnight citizen disarmament, when we ventured outside our home, we almost always encountered hate-filled stares and hostile hisses of, "Eh, white bitch! Eh, look 'ere, white bitch!" and other unprintable epithets.

Jamaica was, in the 1970's, a country with at least 50% illiteracy and an illegitimacy rate of over 50%. If a Jamaican girl wasn't pregnant by the age of 15 or 16, she was often derisively branded "a mule", since mules, the offspring of horses and donkeys, are almost always sterile. Being a woman, let alone a white woman,

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in such a climate, especially after the disarmament of the citizenry by the government, was one of the most terrifying experiences one can imagine.

OUR HOUSEHOLD WAS DEFENSELESS

At that time, I had never held or fired a gun. I had rarely ever even seen a gun. No one in my family had ever learned about, used or even talked about firearms, except my father, who had been in the U.S. army. In our social circle, guns were deemed “unseemly” and “inappropriate” for polite society, and especially for young ladies. I had never given much thought to any of the Bill of Rights, let alone the Second Amendment. Yet we Americans all knew the Bill of Rights did not protect us in Jamaica, just as it hadn’t applied to us at our previous station in Singapore.

My dad had fought in World War II, however, and had brought back a Luger pistol, which he had taken with him to Jamaica when we moved there after having spent 6 years in Singapore. No law had prevented his bringing a gun to Jamaica in 1960. When my dad handed that pistol and all his bullets in to the police, I vaguely realized that he was no longer allowed by the government to protect my mom, my sister or me, or our household.

I was pretty confused at the time. Terrified of being kidnapped, raped, murdered, robbed, at the same time I was still mindlessly anti-gun, because the criminals all had guns, and the government had declared guns to be contraband, and we were all terrified of being hurt by bad guys with guns, all of which somehow meant that guns must be “dangerous” and “bad” and therefore should be banned, just as the Jamaican government had decreed. As white Americans, our status was that of permanent guests in a foreign and increasingly hostile country. In fact, after 6 years in Singapore, and 12 in Jamaica, we well knew how to strive to be “model guests”, which meant that questioning or challenging the Jamaican government’s authority was unthinkable — even when such government authority decreed that we be made helpless. None of us had any illusions about any “rights” to defend ourselves. We might have been able to do so with the government’s blessing in the good old days, before chaos and violence and racial hatred had taken over. But now it was different. Now we were white, visible, foreign, sitting ducks in a hostile black sea. And I was a white, visible, foreign, female sitting duck.

As obedient as I was to authority, I grasped that our household was defenseless, and that I as a woman was particularly defenseless. And I realized that, had my dad still had his pistol, I would have felt much safer. I even realized that I would be willing to pick up a gun if my life were threatened. For a person who claimed to be anti-gun, these feelings really confused me.

“IT IS THE JOB OF THE POLICE TO PROTECT US”

At least eleven friends and acquaintances of my family were raped, kidnapped, murdered or robbed within about a year after the disarmament, and I believe it is a miracle that we are all still alive. I am convinced that many of these people would not have been victims had they not been disarmed by the Jamaican government. It was tragically ironic that the government had sold this whole disarmament program to us with the promise that: “We’re here to help you, and this is for your own good and safety.” Because of this horrid and indelible experience, and of my interest in and undying loyalty to the American Bill of Rights, I have made it my personal business to study the history of the Second Amendment. I have studied related topics, too, such as police responsibility to citizens. It is my belief that many people believe that disarmament is no big deal, because it is the job of the police to protect us. Particularly many women seem to believe this. The media and of government authorities continue to generate pervasive and corrosive propaganda aimed at creating a helpless and disarmed populace. I used to completely believe this propaganda, but I have learned the following realities:

1. The police have no legal duty to protect individual citizens, and cannot be held responsible if they fail to do so. Even if a citizen’s 911 call gets through to the emergency center, the police can simply choose not to show up, and the citizen has no legal recourse against the police. The courts have repeatedly

ruled on this. As the court wrote in *Bowers v. Devito*, 686 F.2d 616 (7th Cir. 1982): “There is no constitutional right to be protected by the state against being murdered by criminals or madmen. It is monstrous if the state fails to protect its residents against such predators but does not violate the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, or, we suppose, any other provision of the Constitution. The Constitution is a charter of negative liberties: it tells the state to let the people alone; it does not require the federal government or the state to provide services, even so elementary a service as maintaining law and order.” The U.S. Supreme Court, in *South v. Maryland*, U.S., ruled in a similar vein as far back as 1856.

2. The police carry guns primarily to defend themselves, not to protect us.
3. Because of items 1 and 2 above, we should all consider the police to be, essentially, historians. They show up after the crime has been committed and attempt to reconstruct and document the history of the crime. If the history is satisfactorily re-constructed, then the perpetrator is apprehended (if he can be found) and then (perhaps) prosecuted. This after-the-fact law enforcement does little good for the dead or wounded crime victims.
4. Women have a particular stake in preserving the right to bear arms. There is no way to describe the helplessness a woman feels when she is disarmed and made helpless by anyone. Add to that the rage she feels when the agency who is disarming her and leaving her at the mercy of rapists, murderers, goons and thugs, is a sanctimonious government telling her that it’s “for her own good”.

STUDY THE ISSUE CAREFULLY

Although there are many serious issues in today’s roiling political and social stew, I believe that preserving and restoring the Bill of Rights in general, and the Second Amendment in particular, is the most pivotal and basic issue to all Americans, and particularly female Americans, even if they don’t yet know it. The consummate idiocy propounded by some folks (including some women) that the Second Amendment exists only to protect sportsmen’s rights is particularly ridiculous relevant to women, most of whom don’t hunt, and who care more about being able to get a decent handgun for self-protection than a hunting rifle to pursue deer or elk.

Anyone who thinks the Bill of Rights is either “out of date”, “hokey” or “needs revising” — all of which I’ve heard from well-meaning but tragically ignorant and complacent Americans — should try living in a country which doesn’t have one. I have been there and done that, and I don’t want to go through it ever again — especially not in my own native nation. So I am dedicated to preventing today’s government nanny from turning, as so often has occurred in history, into tomorrow’s government despot.

Finally, I implore anyone reading this, particularly women, to likewise dedicate themselves to studying this issue carefully, and to likewise taking an active stance to preserve the Bill of Rights in general and the Second Amendment in particular.

“BAD AND TERRIBLE”

Postscript: As of the latter part of August of this year (1998), it doesn’t appear that the situation in Jamaica has changed much for the better. Many Jamaicans of all colors have immigrated to America to start businesses and to escape the hopelessness of the situation in their homeland. I recently spoke with a black Jamaican named Marcus, who has opened a wonderful Jamaican restaurant in Phoenix named Likkle Montego, where I can go and eat Jamaican food, and catch the latest news from my long-lost home. When asked how things are today in Kingston, Marcus simply shook his head: “Nottin’ change attahl, y’know. Everyt’ing still de same. Crime is still bad, mon. Gov’ment still de same. T’ings dere is bad and terrible, mon. Bad and terrible.”

And guns are still outlawed in Jamaica. Armed criminals still terrorize disarmed citizens, since still in Jamaica only outlaws (and the government) have guns.

Like the man said: Bad and terrible, mon. Bad and terrible.