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Springwood's Book on Global Gun Culture Newly Relevant

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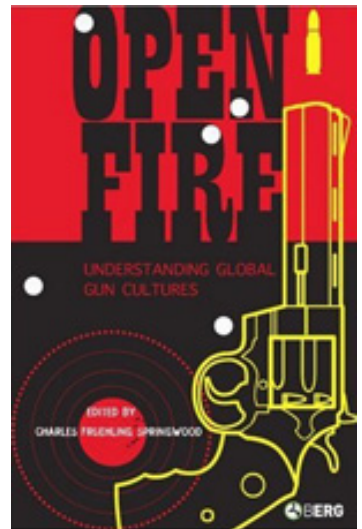
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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — In light of the current public debate on gun control, *Open Fire: Understanding Global Gun Cultures* (Berg Publishers, 2007), a book examining the social, political and symbolic significance of guns and their impact on societies around the world, is more relevant than ever.

Illinois Wesleyan University anthropologist Charles F. Springwood served as editor and a principal contributor to *Open Fire*.

"This is not a Second Amendment book; it is a book that seeks to shed light on gun culture and the violence associated with it by the peoples of the world," said Springwood. Until *Open Fire* was published in 2007, there had been very little investigation into what privately owned firearms meant to their owners and the impact of those meanings.

Open Fire explores and questions the firearm as the global icon of our times. Why do guns proliferate? What does it mean to shoot or to be shot? Who owns guns and who does not? How is a firearm, a manufactured thing, very different from any other object? Is there such a thing as a "gun psychology"? How are firearms regarded in places where they are largely non-existent? Is a gun a different thing when held by a white man? *Open Fire* is a collection of works from scholars around the world brought together by Springwood, who contributes his own insightful perspectives.



Charles F. Springwood

In *Open Fire's* introductory chapter Springwood recounts the capture of Saddam Hussein in 2003, and reveals that a small group of U.S. Army Rangers brought the Iraqi dictator's pistol to President George W. Bush. The significance of this pistol to the president, how he proudly shared it with select White House visitors, and what it symbolizes, is just one of the many interesting stories Springwood and his contributors use to reveal the meanings that firearms have to cultures around the world.

Springwood, who never owned or fired a gun himself until he undertook this project, notes that, "Guns represent everything from a hard-won symbol of individual freedom and an index of crime to play toys for children around the world and the means by which governments are overthrown. Regardless of one's views on guns their significance is something that we can all agree upon."

A professor of anthropology at Illinois Wesleyan, Springwood specializes in the politics and symbolism of cultural knowledge, including representations of race. His previous works include: *Team Spirits: The Native American Mascot Controversy* and *Beyond the Cheers: Race as Spectacle in College Sports*.

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