



Winter 12-8-2006

Open Fire! New book sheds light on gun culture

Matt Kurz
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

Recommended Citation

Kurz, Matt, "Open Fire! New book sheds light on gun culture" (2006). *News and Events*. 3412.

<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/3412>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Open Fire! New book sheds light on gun culture

Dec. 8, 2006

Bloomington, Ill.—At a time when firearm violence captures the headlines daily, a new book, *Open Fire: Understanding Global Gun Cultures*, examines the social, political and symbolic significance of guns and their impact on societies around the world.

"By my count there are about 200 million privately owned firearms in the U.S., everything from pistols to assault rifles—that's nearly one for every man, woman and child in our country—yet there has been very little investigation into what these guns mean to their owners and the impact those meanings have," says Illinois Wesleyan University anthropologist Charles F. Springwood, 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."



Charles F. Springwood

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.

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 shares 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."

An associate professor of anthropology at Illinois Wesleyan University, 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*.

Open Fire: Understanding Global Gun Cultures (Berg Publishers; 256 pages; \$24.95 paperback) is due to be released mid-December 2006.

Contact: Matt Kurz, (309) 556-3181