



## SAFETY FOR BLACK FIREARMS OWNERS IN MODERN AMERICA

From the Black Union soldiers who took up rifles against the confederate Army during the civil war, to Black sharecroppers who fought back against the Klan, to the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, guns have played an important historical role in the self-emancipation and self-defense of the Black community. Black leaders from Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman to Fannie Lou Hamer and Martin Luther King Jr. all advocated for (and practiced) Black gun ownership for purposes of self-defense against white racist terrorism. With the number of white supremacist terror groups and hate crimes rapidly on the rise in the United States, there is understandably renewed interest in Black gun ownership for self-defense.

The decision to own a gun for self-defense is one that comes with many responsibilities, questions and safety considerations. For Black gun owners, these are made more demanding by the racist nature of law enforcement in the United States. The following pamphlet is geared towards addressing some questions and concerns newer Black gun owners may have about gun safety.

Two essential aspects of gun safety are gun storage, and gun handling. (see inside)



**BLACK  
LIVES  
MATTER**  
SACRAMENTO

**Phone:** 916-581-0061

**Police Abuse Hotline:** 916-581-0118

**Email:** [sacramento@blacklivesmatter.com](mailto:sacramento@blacklivesmatter.com)

**Website:** [www.inciteaction.com](http://www.inciteaction.com)

**Twitter/Instagram:** @blmsacramento

## Black Lives, Black Bullets



A Practical Guide for  
Black Armament and  
Community Defense

## GUN STORAGE TIPS:

- Your most important gun storage responsibility is ensuring that children cannot encounter loaded firearms. Effective precautions must be taken to avoid the possibility of tragic accidents.
- Unloaded firearms can be secured with a firearm locking device to make them inoperable.
- Unloaded firearms also can be stored in a locked cabinet, safe, firearm vault or lockable storage case.
- Similarly, Ammunition should be stored under lock and key, separately from firearms.
- Always re-check firearms carefully and completely to be sure that they are still unloaded when you remove them from storage.

## GUN HANDLING TIPS:

- Treat every firearm as if it were loaded at all times.
- Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and do not point a firearm at anything you are not prepared to destroy.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot and do not shoot until your target is visible.
- Be aware of both your target and what is behind it. Keep in mind how far your shot may travel if it misses or passes through your target.
- Don't rely on your firearm's safety device. Always treat the gun as if is engaged to fire.
- Learn the mechanical and handling characteristics of the firearm you are using. Each gun is unique and knowing its capabilities and issues is essential to being a proficient shooter. It is important to practice regularly with the gun you use for self- defense.
- Always wear appropriate ear and eye protection while shooting.
- If you pull the trigger and the gun does not fire, handle with extreme care.



## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR BLACK GUN OWNERS:

**Know gun laws.** The vast array of Federal, State and Local gun laws can be confusing. And many of them were written and passed with explicitly racist, anti-Black intent. Black gun owners should therefore be extra-well versed in gun laws. Be aware that many in law enforcement would be all too happy to catch you on a technicality. A brief summary of California gun laws can be found at: <https://www.gunstocarry.com/gun-laws-state/california-gun-laws/>

**Never assume** that because your gun ownership is lawful and responsible that police will not see it as a threat. Countless police shootings have proven that police all too often consider Black men armed and dangerous even when they are not. And Black people bearing arms often elicits a response of panic on the part of law enforcement--even when it is perfectly legal, responsible and justified.

**Be aware** that in the United States, mainstream gun culture such as that espoused by the NRA is deeply rooted in white supremacy. Countless shooting ranges around the state are epicenters of hateful, reactionary politics. To stay safe and comfortable while practicing, it's important to find Black-friendly spaces. Be sure to check reviews and if possible have allies scout locations before going to shooting ranges.

It is also generally legal to target shoot on Bureau of Land Management-administered public lands, as long as it is done in a safe manner, without damaging natural resources. A guide to where it is legal to target shoot can be found here: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/recreation-programs/recreational-shooting/california>

While shooting on Bureau of Land Management lands can afford a degree of peace and seclusion while you practice, reaching such spots often requires traveling through remote and overwhelmingly white-occupied parts of the state. Always organize in advance, be extra vigilant, travel with friends and keep allies informed where and when you will be traveling.