

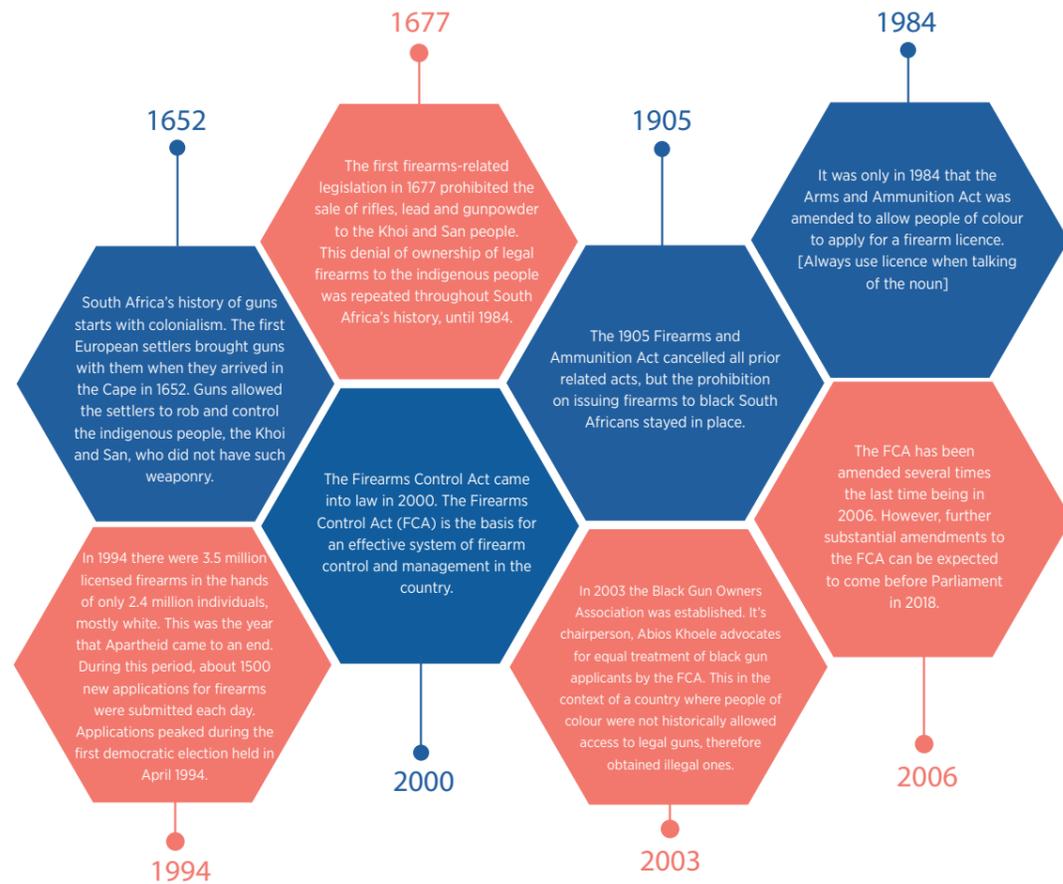


THE HISTORY OF GUNS  
IN SOUTH AFRICA

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# GUN CONTROL

**TO GET YOU THINKING...**



Source: A nation without guns? The story of Gun Free South Africa by Adele Kirsten

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

Take a look at the timeline graphic. In what ways have guns been used to gain and maintain political power in South Africa?

Do you think guns should play a role in a democratic state? If yes, what kind of role?

- Discuss the history of guns in your own lives:
- When do you first remember encountering a gun? Was it in the movies, cartoons, books, the news or a first-hand experience?
  - In those instances, who had the guns and how were they using them?
  - What were the common factors?

If you don't think guns have a place in a democracy, give reasons for your stance.

**RESOURCES**

- > A brief history of guns in South Africa
- > Gun Free South Africa
- > South African Military History

**DID YOU KNOW?**

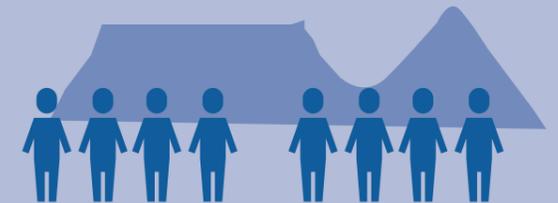
**AT THE TURN OF THE 19TH CENTURY (1801) AFRICA'S INTERACTION WITH EUROPE WAS DOMINATED BY THE SLAVE TRADE. DURING THE SLAVE TRADE EUROPEAN IMPORTS AND TECHNOLOGIES ENTERED AFRICA. GUNS MADE UP A LARGE PORTION OF THESE IMPORTS.**

Read more about: guns for slaves

**WHITE SETTLERS DEFEATED POWERFUL AFRICAN KINGDOMS WITH THE FORCE OF FIREARMS. IN THE BATTLE OF BLOOD RIVER IN KWAZULU-NATAL IN 1838, SETTLERS MASSACRED 3000 ZULU SOLDIERS IN 3 HOURS. ONLY 3 SETTLERS WERE WOUNDED. THE ZULU SOLDIERS USED TRADITIONAL WEAPONS, SUCH AS SPEARS.**

**CAPE TOWN HAS THE HIGHEST RATES OF MURDER, ROBBERY AND PROPERTY-RELATED CRIMES IN SOUTH AFRICA. PEOPLE IN CAPE TOWN HAVE TWICE AS EASY ACCESS TO ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND FIREARMS THAN ANY OTHER CITY IN SOUTH AFRICA.**

The State of Urban Safety in South Africa Report



**SINCE 1994**

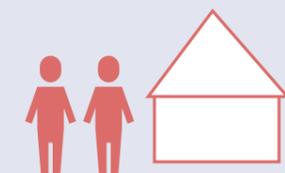
**HOMICIDE RATES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**HAVE REMAINED AMONG THE HIGHEST IN THE WORLD DESPITE A CONSISTENT DECLINE ELSEWHERE.**

Small Arms Survey



**HANDGUNS, WHICH ARE REVOLVERS AND PISTOLS, ARE LIGHT, DURABLE, RELATIVELY CHEAP AND EASY TO COVER-UP AND CARRY. THEY NEED LITTLE EXPERTISE TO OPERATE. PEOPLE WHO COMMIT CRIMES AND PEOPLE WHO KEEP A GUN IN THE HOME FOR SELF DEFENSE, CHOOSE HANDGUNS.**



A nation without guns? The story of Gun Free South Africa by Adele Kirsten

## DID YOU KNOW?

A HISTORY OF ARMED VIOLENCE, GENERATIONAL POVERTY AND INEQUALITY ARE LINKED. COUNTRIES WITH THIS HISTORY ALSO EXPERIENCE DEEPLY ROOTED FORMS OF ARMED VIOLENCE AND RISK REMAINING TRAPPED IN CYCLES OF UNDER-DEVELOPMENT.



THE UNITED NATIONS IMPOSED AN ARMS EMBARGO ON SOUTH AFRICA DURING APARTHEID IN 1977 AND TIGHTENED IT IN 1986. THIS MEANT THAT SOUTH AFRICA WAS NOT ALLOWED TO TRADE IN ARMS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. ONE OF THE MAIN RESULTS OF THIS HAS BEEN THE GROWTH OF THE MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR SOUTH AFRICAN ARMS INDUSTRY. THE ARMS SANCTIONS WERE LIFTED IN 1994.

A nation without guns? The story of GFSA

“Gun violence is the most dramatic indicator of the social crisis in South Africa today.”

PROFESSOR JACKLYN COCK,  
PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, 12  
SEPTEMBER 2007

A nation without guns? The story of GFSA

## DEFINITIONS

### WHAT IS COLONIALISM?

The policy or practice of getting full or partial political control over another country by occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it for profit.

Source: What is colonialism?

### WHAT IS APARTHEID?

A system of institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa between 1948 and 1991.

Source: What was Apartheid?

### WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

A form of government in which people choose leaders by voting. Democracy is sometimes referred to as “rule of the majority.”

Source: What is Democracy?

Democracy is...

### WHAT IS GUN CONTROL?

Laws that control how guns are sold and used and who can own them.

Source: What is gun control?

## WHY WOULD ANYONE HAVE A GUN: MYTHS AND FACTS

### MYTHS

All South Africans were always equal before the eyes of the law when applying for a gun licence.

Police are here to protect and serve the population and should use their guns as they see fit.

As a civilian gun owner, if you feel threatened shoot first, ask questions later.

Gun control laws won't work because only those who obey the law will follow gun laws, criminals will not.

### FACTS

Historically, people of colour could not apply for a gun licence until 1984. In that year the Arms and Ammunition Act (No. 75 1969) was amended to allow people of colour to apply for a firearm licence.

Members of official state institutions, such as the **South African Police Service** or National Defence Force, do not have to follow many of the rules that apply to ordinary gun owners. Even so, they have a duty to use their guns in a controlled manner:

- when on duty, they must carry a handgun in a proper holster
- at the end of a period of duty, they must return their firearms to the designated place of storage
- when traveling with a firearm, they must carry the firearm in a secure place

There are certain circumstances when an employee of a state institution may have special permission to:

- have the firearm in their possession after working hours
- store the firearm at their home and/or
- carry the firearm outside the premises of their work place

Note, the above situations are not the norm, and require special permission.

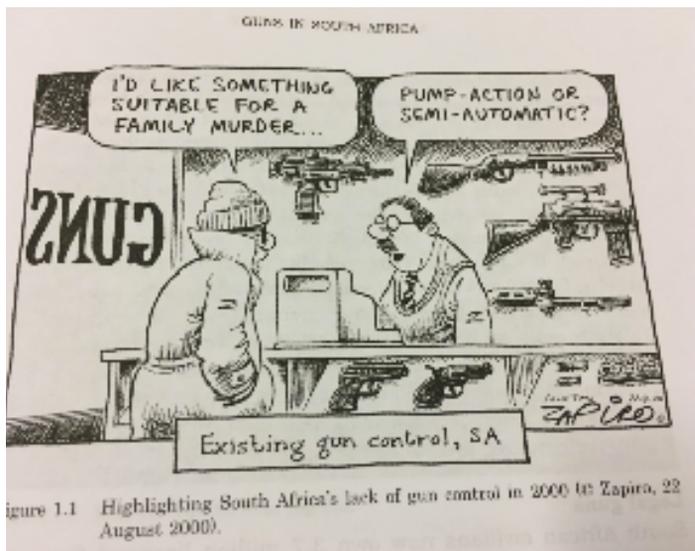
The gun owner must be in a situation where he/she feels that their life is in immediate and direct danger in order to shoot.

Stricter gun controls means that legal guns are not that easy to get, thus reducing the pool of guns. Remember, almost all illegal guns started out legally.

“Guns are the greatest threat to human rights in our democracy.”

ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU ON  
THE RELEASE OF THE TRC REPORT,  
SUNDAY INDEPENDENT  
(1 NOVEMBER 1998)

## TO GET YOU THINKING



### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Looking at the cartoon, discuss the ways gun control can reduce gun violence.
2. Discuss what kinds of gun laws you would like to introduce to your community to reduce gun violence.
3. Besides introducing stricter gun laws, can you think of other ways that gun violence can be reduced?

## DIFFERENT WAYS TO TALK ABOUT THE HISTORY OF GUNS IN SA

These questions can help guide your radio shows and outreach.

They are angles to the bigger topic of gun control.

You have many examples of how to develop your outreaches and radio shows from previous guides. Use them to expand on some of the angles below.



How have guns and power been linked in South Africa?



Guns have complex symbolic meanings in South Africa. Pre-1994, the AK47 was a symbol of resistance and revolution for freedom fighters. For many white people and white farmers, the rifle was a symbol of the army, nationalism and protection against the “swart gevaar.” Are guns symbols for anything these days? If yes, what are they?



Are gun laws the only way to reduce gun violence? If not, what are more ways to stop violence?



Historically, South Africans experienced racial discrimination in the issuing of firearm licences in South Africa. That means people of colour could not access legal guns and instead obtained illegal ones. Is this relevant today? Are people of colour more likely to continue the illegal ownership/use of guns?