



The Mythic Meanings of the Second Amendment

Professor David C. Williams

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The Second Amendment, which concerns the right of the people to keep and bear arms, has been the subject of great debate for decades. Does it protect an individual's right to arms or only the right of the states to maintain militias? In this work David Williams offers a reading of the Second Amendment: that it guarantees to individuals a right to arms only insofar as they are part of a united and consensual people, so that their uprising can be a unified revolution rather than a civil war. Williams argues that the Second Amendment has been based on myths about America: the Framers' belief in American unity and modern interpreters' belief in American distrust and disunity. Neither of these myths, however, will adequately curb political violence. Williams suggests that the amendment should serve not as a rule of law but as a cultural ideal that promotes American unity on the use of political violence and celebrates their diversity in other areas of life.



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