

Honorable Members of the Subcommittee on Crime and Federal Government Surveillance,

My name is Geneva Solomon, and I am deeply honored to testify before you today. My journey from victim to survivor to advocate has led me to this moment, where I am compelled to share my story and advocate for empowering women through responsible firearm ownership.

Imagine a childhood marked by emotional and verbal abuse, a place where your spirit is constantly torn down, and your self-worth diminished. Now fast forward to a time when you've broken free from that toxic past, earned a college degree, secured a great job, celebrated parenthood, and found love in marriage. Yet, in an unimaginable twist, you find yourself trapped inside your own home, forced to endure relentless verbal abuse, physical assaults, and unspeakable acts of violence, all while holding your precious toddler in your arms.

This harrowing ordeal is not a mere nightmare; it's a soul-crushing, demonizing reality that countless women endure. I am no exception. As a Black woman, this was not a matter of imagination; it was my lived experience.

After summoning the courage to end my marriage, the threats escalated, and I realized that I had to become my own first responder, responsible for my safety and that of my child. With no prior knowledge of firearms, I embarked on a journey to explore firearm ownership as a means of self-protection. Despite the daunting and unfamiliar path, my determination led me to research and educate myself, ultimately becoming a registered firearm owner.

Today, I proudly own Redstone Firearms, a store that embodies my transformation. Firearm ownership not only armed me with a physical tool but also with a profound sense of empowerment. It turned a woman who had once cowered in fear into someone who stands tall, even in the face of adversity. In my role as a firearm owner and educator, I've met countless women with stories like mine. Through education and proper training, they too discovered their inner strength, realizing that firearms, when handled responsibly, can be a tool of empowerment.

I've also noticed the glaring gaps within the firearms world, especially concerning African American women. To address this, I created an educational program in Los Angeles to introduce responsible firearm ownership. This initiative has empowered thousands, if not tens of thousands, across California, emphasizing that "No one is coming to save you." The thirst for knowledge and empowerment among Black women is growing, and I am proud to champion their cause.

Redstone Firearms continues to educate the Los Angeles community and advocate for concealed carry rights. Additionally, I have established a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting domestic violence survivors, offering education, counseling, clothing, shelter, and safe spaces.

However, despite these positive efforts, I stand before you today to express my grievances with the continued gun control rules that are being proposed and enacted in California. These rules disproportionately affect women, particularly Black women, and can potentially cost lives:

- **Waiting Periods:** In California, regardless of the reason, a person must wait 10 days to obtain their firearm. Imagine having to wait 10 days while in fear of your life, wondering if the next moment will be your last. If the process does not run perfectly in California, someone may have to wait 30 days to pick up that firearm.
- **Inconsistent Concealed Carry Laws:** There isn't a statewide standard on concealed carry in California, allowing each county to determine the speed of the application process. For instance, in Orange County, a more conservative county, you can complete all the requirements for a concealed carry license in 45-60 days. However, in Los Angeles, clients and women who are victims still wait for a concealed carry permit after 20 months of waiting.
- **High Costs:** The cost of firearms in California is higher than in other states. For victims of domestic violence who may have lost their homes or had to leave, these increased fees can pose a significant financial burden. Our Governor has introduced an additional "Sin tax" of 11% on top of the existing 9-10% tax on firearms and accessories.
- **Sensitive Places Rule:** This rule renders concealed carry permits nearly useless as most everyday activities are considered "sensitive places." This disproportionately affects Black women, as it restricts their ability to protect themselves while going about their daily lives.

These rules, can have unintended consequences that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, especially Black women. I urge you to consider the real-world impact of these regulations on individuals who seek to protect themselves and their loved ones from harm.

In closing, I remain committed to helping survivors find their strength and voice in the face of adversity. Firearm education, when coupled with responsibility, can

be a potent force for women's empowerment and self-defense. I am excited to announce the formation of my nonprofit and am dedicated to continuing this important work.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geneva Solomon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Geneva Solomon

Redstone Firearms

Co-Owner

National African American Gun Association, Member, Former Executive
Leadership Member