

Primary Source Packet on Right to Bear Arms

Quote 1

*From Jefferson's First Draft*

“no freeman shall ever be debarred the use of arms.”

*From Jefferson's Second Draft*

“No freeman shall be debarred the use of arms [within his own lands or tenements].”

*From Jefferson's Third Draft*

“No freeman shall be debarred the use of arms [within his own lands or tenements]”

<http://tjrs.monticello.org/letter/1561> Extract from Jefferson's Drafts of the Virginia Constitution, Before June 13, 1776

Quote 2

“the people can not be all, & always, well informed. the part which is wrong [---] will be discontented in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceive. if they remain quiet under such misconceptions it is a lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty. we have had 13. states independant 11. years. there has been one rebellion. that comes to one rebellion in a century & a half for each state. what country before ever existed a century & half without a rebellion? & what country can preserve it's liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? let them take arms. the remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon & pacify them. what signify a few lives lost in a century or two? the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots & tyrants. it is it's natural manure.”

<http://tjrs.monticello.org/letter/100> Letter to William Stephens Smith, Paris, Nov. 13, 1787

Quote 3

"As to the species of exercise, I advise the gun. While this gives a moderate exercise to the body, it gives boldness, enterprize, and independance to the mind. Games played with the ball and others of that nature, are too violent for the body and stamp no character on the mind. Let your gun therefore be the constant companion of your walks."

<https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/firearms> Letter to Peter Carr, August 19, 1785