

# ***Film Review: ‘Assaulted: Civil Rights Under Fire’***



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**VARIETY**

***A surprisingly non-shrill and sobersided documentary that is also unabashedly pro-gun ownership.***

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*Joe Leydon (<http://variety.com/author/joe-leydon/>)*

Provocatively framing the ongoing gun-control debate in terms of self-defense and historical precedent, the aptly titled “[Assaulted: Civil Rights Under Fire](http://variety.com/t/assaulted-civil-rights-under-fire/) (<http://variety.com/t/assaulted-civil-rights-under-fire/>)” is unmistakably and unabashedly pro-gun ownership, but surprisingly non-shrill and sobersided as it builds its case against what documaker [Kris Koenig](http://variety.com/t/kris-koenig/) (<http://variety.com/t/kris-koenig/>) clearly sees as unnecessary, if not unconstitutional, government restrictions on firearms. Pic likely won’t reach beyond its presumed target audience of ticketbuyers already in sync with its underlying message, but it could attract a more diverse viewership, and perhaps even change a few minds, in ancillary venues.

Effectively narrated by rapper-actor Ice-T in a manner that suggests a blunt-spoken community college professor addressing a freshman civics class, “Assaulted” draws on testimonies from a disparate group of talking heads — including academics with doctoral degrees, a multiethnic assortment of outspoken community activists, and the leader of a pro-gun LGBT group known as the Pink Pistols — to fashion a narrative that is equal parts cinematic op-ed and history lesson.

Interviewees insist that legal safeguards for gun ownership date all the way back to 17th-century England, and argue, persuasively, that many post-Civil War laws regulating who could and couldn’t purchase firearms in the U.S. were designed primarily to keep guns out of the hands of ex-slaves.

The most fascinating section of the film — one that may impact even those most supportive of gun control — asserts that only the threat of retaliation by armed African-Americans kept Ku Klux Klansmen from attacking some black communities in the Deep South during the 1950s and ’60s civil-rights movement.

“Assaulted” also supports claims that gun-toting individuals may be the last best defense in times when “the thin veneer of civilization” breaks down, noting how armed residents of Koreatown protected their community during the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Pic is somewhat less convincing — due in no small measure to Koenig’s use of cheesy looking re-enactments — when it recounts the efforts of armed citizens to ensure a fair vote count in Athens, Ga., during a disputed 1946 election.

Koenig mostly avoids the debate over high-capacity magazines — still a hot-button issue in the wake of tragic events in Newton, Ct. and Aurora, Colo. — and doesn’t offer much in the way of counterpoint to those who maintain gun registration is the first step toward confiscation. Still, “Assaulted: Civil Rights Under Fire” comes across as too thoughtful and well researched – in short, too reasonable — to be easily dismissed as mere agitprop.

## **Film Review: 'Assaulted: Civil Rights Under Fire'**

Reviewed at AMC First Colony 24, Sugar Land, Texas, June 23, 2013. MPAA Rating: PG-13. Running time: 79 MIN.

## **Production**

(Documentary) A High Top Releasing release of a Dead Patriot Films production. Produced by Kris Koenig, Anita Ingraio, Eric Katzenberg, Jonathan Fischer. Executive producers, Walter Fletcher Jr., Nye Liu, Nabil Khattar, Geoff Arrobio.

## **Crew**

Directed, written by Kris Koenig. Camera (color/B&W), Koenig; editor, Jonathan Fischer; music supervisor, Greg Debonne; sound, Justin Krause.

## **With**

Ted Nugent, Chris Cheng, Dan Gross, Bobbie Ross, Alan Gottlieb, Eugene Volokh, Adam Winkler, David Kopel, Margot Bennett, Margot Bennett, Gene Hoffman, Thomas Boyer. Narrator: Ice-T.

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