

Birth of a Nation

In the movie southern states lose the war against northern and the latter becomes the hero of American civilization. All one-hundred and ninety-two minutes fraught with anxiety over black bodies, profit, and money. There is no concern over the guns housed in Springfield, Armory—they stay in the hands of the right people. Massachusetts. That blue state makes more guns than Texas. New York ranks second. At the conference with the panel on violence speaker one talks about the rural poor and their fixation with guns, while speaker two says her cat was shot in 2008. The animal is still alive and the bullet remains lodged in its cat body. I've been advised not to use the word gun or rather I've been advised to refrain from writing too many gun poems—perhaps only one or two. I'm at a loss. One favorite book is all about hurricanes. Another about coal miners in Virginia. Each page of each text heavy with the weight water and dust. On Sundays, behind pulpits, preachers say ashes to ashes and dust to dust. One year after the cat was shot there was Case No. 0902260239. Imagine this: two policemen inside your home to retrieve the 9mm. bullet that went through the bedroom window, the door to the bathroom and the bathroom wall. You were standing in front of the window. It was nine in the morning. Let me say this again, it was nine in the morning. You were given the day off because the town shuts down for the rodeo where men dodge charging bulls. How does one refrain from telling the story? The policemen speak of shells littered down the street, rival gangs in cars blocks away. Then suddenly, before they leave, the cops get the Holy Ghost, say you were the one who came the closest. They say—yes—God has a plan for you.