

Public Abstract

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The Fetishization of Firearms

in African-American Folklore and Culture

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ABSTRACT

The following work analyzes the fetishization of firearms across a number of different mediums including, the corporeal world, African-American folklore, film, and music. The overarching theme is that firearms are sometimes fetishized, meaning that they are sometimes used as ways of negotiating various aspects of identity. It examines a number of ways that guns are used across the aforementioned mediums that fall outside of their utilitarian uses. The majority of the evidence suggest that a significant amount of symbolic power is attached to guns regardless of the medium. Guns are used to signify different aspects of identity (i.e. gender, sex, and ethnicity) and they are also used to negotiate interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, the fetishization of firearms in the physical world mirrors ways that guns are fetishized in the other representational realms such as music, folklore, and film. The representational magnitude of guns indicate that they are often fetishized for real purposes including to navigate violent and often unpredictable environments.