

RRA RESOLUTION TO END GUN VIOLENCE

Adopted at RRA Annual Meeting March 12, 2013

WHEREAS our nation has been shocked by an increased number of mass shootings, with the most recent horrifying events at the Sandy Hook elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut on December 14, 2012; and

WHEREAS eighty-three people, including eight children under the age of eighteen, die daily in the United States, as a consequence of gun violence (source:StopHandgunViolence.org); and

WHEREAS suicide is the leading cause of firearm death in the U.S. and more than half of all suicides in the U.S. are committed with firearms (Centers for Disease Control 2012); and

WHEREAS a disproportionate number of deaths by gun violence in the U.S. occur in urban areas in underserved and minority communities; and

WHEREAS we are called by the words of Torah: “Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor/*lo ta’amod al dam re’echa*” (Lev. 19:16) and by Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra’s commentary “that one not be joined with people of blood” warning against the complicity of silence; and

WHEREAS the Talmud raised awareness of the danger of weapons falling into the wrong hands and therefore set stringent guidelines not only for the sale of weapons, but also for the sale of material that could be used to make weapons: “We may not sell to them armament nor accessories of armament. Just as it is forbidden to sell weapons to an idol worshipper, so it is forbidden to sell them to a Jewish robber.... We may not sell thick pieces of iron to them. What is the reason? Because they can be flattened out and weapons made from them” (Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 15b-16a); and

WHEREAS today there are virtually no limits to the weapons and accessories that can be purchased legally (for example, the shooter in the movie theatre in Aurora, CO on July 20, 2012 had purchased an assault rifle, a shotgun, two pistols, a gas mask, body armor, gas canisters, explosives, and six thousand rounds of ammunition through on-line sales); and

WHEREAS we stand committed to working with our local, state, and national leaders to squarely address these issues and honor the victims, survivors, and their families;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association supports comprehensive action to end gun violence, including: meaningful legislation to limit access to assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines; to require criminal background checks for all guns sold in the U.S, to close the private sale loophole; and to limit how many guns someone can buy in one transaction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association supports efforts to ensure aggressive enforcement of firearm regulations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, with due recognition that criminal shootings are not necessarily tied to issues of mental health, the RRA takes this opportunity to affirm that every person in need should have access to quality mental health care.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association urges rabbis in a position to do so to invite political leaders, mental health experts, educators and other appropriate authorities to our communities to share views and develop action plans to stop gun violence.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association urges rabbis to organize programs for parents and children in our communities to address issues of violence that touch all of us and the choices we can make in our own lives to help create a more nonviolent society.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the RRA empowers the RRA Board to act on behalf of the RRA in joining the Association as appropriate to coalitions, projects, events, statements and other such activities as promote the goals of this resolution and support its aims.