

## Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

### RESOLUTION

#### DEATH PENALTY

2003

Whereas the Jewish scriptural tradition teaches that all human beings are created *B'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God) and upholds the sanctity of all life;

Whereas both in concept and in practice, Jewish leaders throughout over the past 2000 plus years have refused, with rare exception, to punish criminals by depriving them of their lives;

And whereas current evidence and technological advances have shown that as many as three hundred people (disproportionately from minority and poor populations) have been wrongly convicted of capital crimes in America in the last century, which underscores the Jewish concern over capital punishment since all human systems of justice are inherently fallible and imperfect –

Therefore, we resolve that the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association go on record opposing the death penalty under all circumstances, opposing the adoption of death penalty laws, and urging their abolition in states that already have adopted them.

Furthermore, recognizing the very real horrors inflicted on victims of violent crime by individual criminals, some of whom for reasons of circumstance or biology will never be able to safely interact in the public arena, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association urges the enactment of laws that mandate that some crimes be punishable by life imprisonment without parole.

In implementing the content of this resolution, the RRA agrees to

- A) Forward copies of this statement, on RRA letterhead, to appropriate federal and state officials;
- B) Join the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty as a national affiliate organization (pending their approval);
- C) Forward copies of this statement to our partner institutions and member communities in the Reconstructionist movement, urging the adoption of a similar stance in those settings as well; and
- D) Recommend that our members and their communities become educated on this issue, expressing an opinion to elected officials where appropriate.

for background information, please go to:

[pewforum.org/deathpenalty/resources/reader/13.php3](http://pewforum.org/deathpenalty/resources/reader/13.php3)