



## Resolution to Clarify and Affirm NFTY's Stance on Gun Violence Prevention

Submitted to the NFTY General Board at Veida

February, 2016

### Background:

This year, 33,000 people will be killed as a result of gun violence<sup>1</sup>. A mass shooting is defined as four or more people being killed or injured and in 2015 alone there were over 355 mass shootings<sup>2</sup>. The number of incidences of gun violence in the United States is alarmingly high compared with other countries. An American is 50 times more likely to be killed by a gun than someone from the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the ongoing issue of gun violence relates to teens directly. More than 1 in 5 teens (ages 14-17) in the United States report having witnessed a shooting<sup>4</sup>, and in the three years since the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary, there have been at least 94 school shootings<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, though the rate of gun violence is lower in Canada than in the U.S., the fatal shooting on Parliament Hill in October 2014 demonstrates that gun violence knows no borders.

Since its creation in 1939, the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) has been a movement that has consistently worked to support the Jewish value of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world. NFTY first passed legislation related to gun violence prevention in 1988. Though the prevalence of gun violence has increased, and gun violence prevention has become an even more important social justice priority for NFTY, NFTY has not officially passed any legislation regarding its views on policy or legislative elements of gun violence prevention since 2000 when it passed the "Resolution Concerning Gun Control". NFTY's most recent stance on gun control is outlined by the historic resolution passed at 1999 Mechina titled "Resolution Concerning Preventative Youth Safety" and the 1988 resolution titled "Handgun Control". The first demands the "elimination of the manufacture, import, transportation, advertising, sale, transfer and possession of handguns, with limited exceptions allowed in instances such as the military, police, security guards and licensed and regulated pistol clubs." The second states "That the North American Federation of Temple Youth declare its support for Handgun Control; and, that NFTY send a letter in support of the Handgun Violence Prevention Act to both the House of Representatives and the Senate."

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<sup>1</sup> LaFrance, Adrienne. "America's Top Killing Machine." The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, 12 Jan. 2015. Web. 02 Jan. 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ingraham, Christopher. "What Makes a 'Mass Shooting' in America." Washington Post. The Washington Post, 3 Dec. 2015. Web. 02 Jan. 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Quealy, Kevin, and Margot Sanger-katz. "In Other Countries, You're as Likely to Be Killed by a Falling Object as by a Gun." The New York Times. The New York Times, 04 Dec. 2015. Web. 02 Jan. 2016.

<sup>4</sup> "Protect Children, Not Guns." The SAGE Encyclopedia of World Poverty (n.d.): n. pag. Children's Defense Fund, 10 Apr. 2014. Web

<sup>5</sup> "School Shootings Since Sandy Hook" Everytown for Gun Safety. Everytown, 19 Oct. 2015. Web. 02 Jan. 2016.



At NFTY Convention 2015 in Atlanta, Georgia, NFTY launched a campaign to end gun violence and dedicated itself to emphasizing gun violence prevention as a movement priority. NFTY has partnered with the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC) on several social action campaigns related to gun violence prevention including the first National Gun Violence Awareness Day and the “Wear Orange” campaign on June 2nd, and additionally the #WhateverItTakes one-day campaign with *Everytown for Gun Safety* on September 10, 2015. Most recently, NFTY supported the Reform Movement in successfully asking President Obama to take executive action related to gun violence prevention. In the past year, NFTY regions have escalated their focus on gun violence prevention with a combination of innovative programming, meaningful services, and relevant action. However, despite continued efforts, the unfortunate reality we have seen with gun culture has remained largely unchanged.

WHEREAS, NFTY is a Jewish movement which is a group of people working together to advance our shared Jewish values;

AND WHEREAS, two of NFTY’s fundamental principles are Tikkun Olam meaning “repairing the world” and Tzedek meaning “justice”, which places an obligation on NFTY-ites to do whatever we can to ensure that the world we live in is safe;

AND WHEREAS, the words of the Torah say “Do not stand idly by where your neighbor's blood is shed” (Leviticus 19:16);

AND WHEREAS, our Jewish tradition teaches the sanctity and value of every human life;

AND WHEREAS, in the past, NFTY has taken a stance on many social issues, and acted on that stance in a way that has had a major impact not just for members of the movement, but throughout the United States and Canada as well;

AND WHEREAS, NFTY’s history is largely defined by taking stances on issues like the Olympic Boycott of 1980, the Vietnam War in 1971, LGB Equality in 1984, reproductive rights in 1997, and capital punishment in 2002<sup>6</sup>;

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<sup>6</sup> NFTY Resolutions Encyclopedia:

[http://www.nfty.org/kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item\\_id=360&destination=ShowItem](http://www.nfty.org/kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item_id=360&destination=ShowItem)



AND WHEREAS, taking such stances has become an integral part of what defines NFTY as a movement;

AND WHEREAS, gun violence is an issue that touches all nineteen regions of NFTY, as it is seen both in the United States and in Canada, as with the fatal shooting in Ottawa in October of 2014;

AND WHEREAS, at Mechina in 2000 NFTY passed a “Resolution Concerning Gun Control” which encouraged regions to “make it a priority to have open-forum discussions within families and communities on the danger of guns”;

AND WHEREAS the 2000-2001 NFTY action theme was titled “Beating Out Swords Into Plowshares: Gun Control and Gun Safety” which encouraged regions and temple youth groups to program on gun control and gun safety in the United States and Canada;

AND WHEREAS, in 2014 NFTY passed a resolution titled “NFTY Responds to Gun Violence” which stated “that NFTY must commit itself to pursuing ways of inspiring our membership to activate around this issue that has caused too much pain and anguish in our society”;

AND WHEREAS, the above resolution did not mention any political stance NFTY has on elements of gun violence prevention;

AND WHEREAS, on June 2, 2015 hundreds of NFTYites participated in the first National Gun Violence Awareness Day in partnership with *Everytown for Gun Safety*;

AND WHEREAS, NFTY led the charge within the Reform Movement to urge President Obama to take executive action and watched as he did so on January 5, 2016;

AND WHEREAS, NFTY has partnered with the “Do Not Stand Idly By” campaign, an interfaith campaign which strives to engage citizens, law enforcement leaders, public officials, and investors to use their purchasing power to pressure gun manufacturers to make safety and responsible sales their highest priority;



AND WHEREAS, our partners, the Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ), in 2013, reaffirmed their commitment to gun control by passing a “Gun Violence Prevention” resolution which called for members of the WRJ to “(1)urge the immediate enactment of legislation that would: require background checks for all gun sales, make gun trafficking and straw purchasing a federal crime, and ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines; (2) oppose legislation that would: arm teachers and/or put weapons back in schools except for licensed security personnel and force states to recognize the conceal-carry permits of other

states; (3) Support state legislation to limit conceal and carry permits, to require safety locks for guns, would require background checks for all gun sales, make gun trafficking and straw purchasing a state crime, and would ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines; and (4) Continue to educate constituencies, congregations, and communities to become knowledgeable advocates for strong gun violence prevention measures; and work jointly with temple youth groups to the same end”;

AND WHEREAS, our parent organization, The Union for Reform Judaism (previously the UAHC) passed a resolution in 1999 on “Ending Gun Violence” which (1) Calls upon every congregation to organize a gun control advocacy effort and urges every congregant to write to his or her representative and senator demanding that effective gun control be enacted during the next congressional session, (2) provides every congregation with a copy of the RAC’s legislative action guide to implement their strategy for addressing gun control advocacy, (3) Urges congregations to extend personal invitations to elected officials to appear in the congregation to explain their position of gun control, (4) urges congregants to become involved in broader anti-violence coalitions in their local communities that press for effective gun control at all levels;

AND WHEREAS, in 2000, our rabbinic organization, the CCAR passed a resolution “Ending Gun Violence” which dedicated its members to: (1) organize a gun control advocacy effort, and urge their congregants to write to their Representatives and Senators demanding that effective gun control be enacted during the current Congressional session; (2) utilize the Religious Action Center's legislative action guide to implement their strategy for addressing gun control advocacy; (3) take a leadership role by extending personal invitations to elected officials to appear in the congregation to explain their positions on gun control; and (4)become involved in broader anti-violence coalitions in their local communities that press for effective gun control at all levels;



AND WHEREAS, there is a gun culture in America including the utilization of toy guns marketed to children which mistakenly emphasizes that guns are something to play with and not a weapon to be taken seriously.

AND WHEREAS, the sixth commandment reads “Thou shalt not murder”;

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that NFTY actively support efforts to strengthen gun violence prevention in North America;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY encourages open forum discussion of gun violence and all encompassing topics that are included in it and the effect that gun violence has on teens in North America;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY work toward decreasing the amount of gun violence deaths by advocating for stricter gun purchasing laws, including supporting congressional action to close the gun-show loophole;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY rededicate itself to the 2014 resolution titled “NFTY Responds to Gun Violence”, and the implications of the 2000 resolution titled “Resolution Concerning Gun Control” and the 2000-2001 action theme “Beating Our Swords into Plowshares: Gun Control and Gun Safety”;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY continues to be an active participant in the annual Gun Violence Awareness Day on June 2nd;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY, in following the ideology of the “Do Not Stand Idly By Campaign”, support efforts to innovate and research child-proof and theft-proof handguns -along with a variety of other gun safety technologies;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY continue to partner and stand with other sects of the Reform Jewish movement related to gun violence prevention policy;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY continue its pledge from Convention 2015 and actively support any federal or state legislation that would require universal background checks and legislation that seeks to expand background checks;



AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY also actively support any federal or state legislation that would make gun trafficking and straw purchasing a federal crime;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY actively support any federal or state legislation that would ban the manufacture, import, transportation, advertising, sale, transfer and possession of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY actively support any federal or state legislation that would ban the manufacture, import, transportation, advertising, sale, transfer and possession of semiautomatic weapons, with limited exceptions allowed in instances such as military and police;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY actively condemn any legislation that would arm teachers and/or put weapons back in schools except for licensed security personnel;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY additionally actively condemn any legislation that would force states to recognize the conceal-carry permits of other states;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY specifically support the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' (now the URJ) 1999 resolution on "Ending Gun Violence";

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY support the Central Conference of American Rabbis' (CCAR) 2000 resolution on "Ending Gun Violence";

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY support the Women of Reform Judaism's 2013 resolution on "Gun Violence Prevention";

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY not purchase or utilize any toy or mock guns in its North American programming;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that the 19 regions of NFTY be encouraged to adopt a similar policy for their events;

AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that NFTY refuses to "stand idly by".



Respectfully Submitted,

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#### **Addendum A: NFTY's "Handgun Control" Resolution- 1988**

*Resolved:*

That the North American Federation of Temple Youth declare its support for Handgun Control; and, that NFTY send a letter in support of the Handgun Violence Prevention Act to both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

#### **Addendum B: NFTY's "Resolution Concerning Gun Control"- 2000**

*Resolved:*

That NFTY commits to spreading awareness of gun violence and taking concrete steps to end gun violence and that NFTY strongly urges education and programming on gun violence in such areas as suicide prevention, domestic violence, and other gun-related issues in Temple Youth Groups (TYG) and regions, and that the 2000- 2001 NFTY SAVP compose and send out a letter outlining NFTY's position on gun control as to better inform NFTYites about where their organization stands and that in addition another letter explaining NFTY's stance on guns, specifically addressed to NFTYites families, will be sent out to every regional advisor and that it will be the responsibility of each regional advisor to distribute these letters to all families hosting NFTYites during regional and TYG events and encourage the host families to abide by the NFTY policy, and that regions make it a priority to have open-forum discussions within families and communities on the danger of guns to promote awareness and understanding of the growing problem.

#### **Addendum C: NFTY's Action Theme "Beating out Swords Into Plowshares: Gun Control and Gun Safety"- 2000-2001**

*Resolved:*

That the 2000-2001 NFTY Action Theme be entitled "Beating Our Swords Into Plowshares: Gun Control and Gun Safety", and that the NFTY Social Action Vice President compile a packet containing information, resources, programs, and action projects on gun control and gun safety, and that all NFTY temple youth groups (TYGs), and regions be strongly encouraged to program and act on the theme of gun control and gun safety, and that the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism ("RAC") be formally thanked for their longstanding commitment on behalf of all Reform Jews, young and old, to gun control and gun safety.

And that NFTY continue to adhere and press forward regarding the implementation of its 1999 Mechina "Resolution Concerning Preventative Youth Safety" because it demands for the "elimination of the manufacture, import, transportation, advertising, sale, transfer and possession of handguns, with limited exceptions allowed in instances such as the military, police, security guards and licensed and regulated pistol clubs."



#### **Addendum D: “NFTY Responds to Gun Violence: Part 1” - 2014**

*Resolved:*

That NFTY must commit itself to pursuing ways of inspiring our membership to activate around this issue that has caused too much pain and anguish in our society; and, that each of NFTY’s 19 regions will find an engaging way to memorialize and commemorate those affected by gun violence in their region; and, that each region will create and participate in one or more of these experiences by NFTY Convention 2015.

#### **Addendum E: WRJ “Gun Violence Prevention” Resolution - 2013**

*Resolved:*

Given the danger we all face from the proliferation of guns in the United States, the Women of Reform Judaism, reaffirms its commitment to gun control and calls upon all its American sisterhoods to:

1. Urge the immediate enactment of legislation that would:
  - Require background checks for all gun sales.
  - Make gun trafficking and straw purchasing a federal crime.
  - Ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.
2. Oppose legislation that would:
  - Arm teachers and/or put weapons in schools, except for licensed security personnel.
  - Force states to recognize the conceal-carry permits of other states.
3. Support state legislation to limit conceal and carry permits, to require safety locks for guns, would require background checks for all gun sales, make gun trafficking and straw purchasing a state crime, and would ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.
4. Continue to educate constituencies, congregations, and communities to become knowledgeable advocates for strong gun violence prevention measures; and work jointly with temple youth groups to the same end.

#### **Addendum F: UAHC Resolution “Ending Gun Violence” - 1999**

*THEREFORE, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations resolves to:*

1. Call upon every congregation to organize a gun control advocacy effort and urge every congregant to write to his or her representative and senator demanding that effective gun control be enacted during the next congressional session;
2. Provide every congregation with a copy of the Religious Action Center's legislative action guide to implement their strategy for addressing gun control advocacy;
3. Urge our congregations to extend personal invitations to elected officials to appear in the congregation to explain their position on gun control; and
4. Urge congregants to become involved in broader anti-violence coalitions in their local communities that press for effective gun control at all levels.



## **Addendum G: CCAR Resolution “Ending Gun Violence” - 2000**

*BE IT RESOLVED, that the Central Conference of American Rabbis call upon its members to:*

1. Organize a gun control advocacy effort, and urge their congregants to write to their Representatives and Senators demanding that effective gun control be enacted during the current Congressional session;
2. utilize the Religious Action Center's legislative action guide to implement their strategy for addressing gun control advocacy;
3. take a leadership role by extending personal invitations to elected officials to appear in the congregation to explain their positions on gun control;
4. become involved in broader anti-violence coalitions in their local communities that press for effective gun control at all levels, and
5. urge members of congregations to participate in the million mile march against gun violence of May 14, 2000 on the Mall in Washington, DC.