

### RAC Reads Guide

#### **NPR *It's Been a Minute* - *Beyond Parkland: Oakland Kids Who Experience Gun Violence Every Day***

**Prepared by the Religious Action Center and Kathryn Fleisher**

Introduction: The following guide is intended to facilitate conversations about "[Beyond Parkland: Oakland Kids Who Experience Gun Violence Every Day](#)" – an episode of NPR's *It's Been a Minute* with Sam Sanders. *It's Been a Minute* is a weekly podcast that attempts to make sense of the world through conversation. This episode, from February 12, 2019, follows three Oakland teenagers from Castlemont High School as they talk about the gun violence that they encounter on a daily basis. Published almost exactly one year after the deadly school shooting in Parkland, Florida, podcast host Sam Sanders takes a deep dive into understanding why there are some high schools that experience gun violence regularly but don't receive national attention and support like the Marjory Stoneman Douglas students did.

RAC Reads is a program by the Religious Action Center to encourage reading groups that explore contemporary social justice topics in the context of Jewish teachings and values. The discussion guides are designed for families, congregations and communities. As such, not all of the facilitation tips and discussion questions may be applicable in all cases. Feel free to take from and adapt the information provided here as you structure your own conversations. We hope that this guide will spark engaging and challenging discussions among Reform Jews about the complexities of gun violence. For more information about the RAC's current work on gun violence prevention, visit our website at [www.rac.org](http://www.rac.org).

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What does the Jewish tradition teach us about the gravity of injustices that result in the loss of life? After hearing about the violence that the Castlemont students experience on a daily basis, how do you think you can turn that Jewish teachings about saving lives into an argument for gun violence prevention in the secular world?
2. Rewind to the 2 minute and 30 second mark and listen through the 3 minute and 45 second mark. Why are Jaclyn Corin's remarks so important and should we, as Jews who are (on a whole) middle/upper class, respond to such?
3. As Jews, do we have a greater responsibility to respond to injustices that impact our own community before we respond to injustices that impact other communities? Using your answer to the previous question, discuss if the Parkland shooting (which took place in a Jewish area and took the lives of Jewish students) deserves more, less, or the same amount of attention as the regular instances of gun violence that occurs in areas like East Oakland?

4. One the students stated: “There’s a very high percent of people that if they didn’t personally have a gun but if they needed to get a gun, they could get a gun. There’s a lot of guns.” Do statements like this alter your beliefs about any specific gun violence prevention policies such as stricter background checks, red flag laws, minimum purchasing age, or ammunition restrictions?
5. Rewind to the 6 minute mark and listen to the students’ remarks about the shooting of their Youth ALIVE program coordinator outside of their school. Was this story shocking to you? If so, considering this type of incident is not uncommon, why did you find their story shocking and what does that tell you about your own relationship to gun violence?
6. When asked about how they feel about the violence around them, one student provided the following answer: “It’s normal. It’s numbing. You don’t even feel the pain anymore.” Why is this significant? How do we ensure that we are not becoming numb to gun violence without also putting ourselves under too much mental and emotional stress to fight gun violence?
7. In the second half of the podcast, there is talk of the gun rental programs that used to exist in California of the 1980s. Upon hearing about these gun rental programs, Sam Sanders seems incredulous. Why is this notable? What does this show us about what change is possible?
8. California gun laws have markedly improved since the 1980s and 1990s, creating a more safe state where far less people die of gun violence. Some kids, however, are still very much at risk. How do we balance legal and social victories with an understanding that some communities and individuals have yet to see any improvements to their personal safety?
9. In the discussion about attention paid to mass shootings versus to daily gun violence, the host and his guest cite both race (victims mostly being white) and the nature of mass shootings being random occurrences as reasons why the American public tends to pay more attention to mass shootings than daily violence. Do you agree? Why or why not?
10. What are the different ways by which gun violence manifests? Why is it significant that there are so many different manifestations? Can we address them all at the same time?
11. In discussing violence intervention programs, Sam Sanders cites the complexities of lived experiences and stresses the importance of dealing with multiple issues at the same time in order to craft policies with a holistic picture of what communities and individuals are facing. What do we miss if we neglect to take a holistic view of daily gun violence?
12. The power of storytelling is prominent throughout this story. As Jews, we also believe in the power and importance of storytelling. Why is this notable and how do we use it to our advantage in our pursuit of justice?
13. The Jewish people believe in rehabilitation; in *teshuvah*. This same theme can be found throughout the podcast and in the discussion about disrupting patterns of violence. How do you see your Jewish values reflected in this approach?
14. A main theme of this podcast episode is supporting and enabling young people to do justice and acts of goodness in their communities. The gun violence prevention movement is also largely led by young people – including in the Reform Movement. How can you support young people in your own community to be successful in their peer-to-peer justice work?
15. Rewind to the 21 minute mark and listen again to the students speaking about how they feel about the Parkland tragedy. What was your reaction to their testimonies? What did the students make you consider in terms of the balance between listening to other communities and fighting for other communities?