

THE 2014 NATIONAL SUMMIT ON RACE DECLARATION ON VIOLENCE IN THE CHICAGOLAND AREA AND BEYOND

THE CRISIS

For many years, gun violence has devastated the lives of thousands in the Chicagoland area, now known as the national epicenter of gun violence. Chicago, although significant, is but one example of the gun violence happening in many of our communities across the country. Daily, individuals are confronted with “turf wars,” domestic violence, drug-related altercations and merely being in the wrong places at the wrong times, where guns become the means of problem resolution. Far too often, this madness is culminating in the loss of life, especially for many innocent children.

This violence must be interpreted against the backdrop of a city maintaining gun laws that perpetuate the easy access and proliferation of firearms, as well as a natural culture of violence. Gun-related injuries and deaths are at epidemic proportions. The extreme loss of life is placing a heavy spiritual and emotional weight on generations of Black families and communities. As though they live in a war zone, children are becoming traumatized by the fear of indiscriminate violence.

- The City of Chicago had over 415 murders in 2012—considered a new norm and tolerant number.
- Of the 2,400 murders between 2008 through 2012 in Chicago, half are youth under 25, and nearly 500 were under 18-years-old.
- 80% of children killed in violence die in Black and Latino/a neighborhoods.
- In July, Chicago experienced days where over 20 people were victims of gun violence.
- According to Chicago Police Department, Chicago has the highest number of gang members of any US city.
- Violence is an outward symptom of the hopelessness many feel because of lack of resource and opportunity.

We ask, “Why are instances of individual murder and ‘mass murder’ in majority white communities treated as acts of mental illness, and in Black and Latino communities accepted as the norm? Why are these incidences of gun violence thus engaged differently?” We are confident that if the victims of violence at such epidemic proportions were white children or from higher income communities, there would be national outcries and demands for assistance and effective strategies implored beyond more police presence.

THE CALL

As we gather in Chicago, we, the general assembly of the 2014 National Summit on Race, express our outrage at the cursory attempts to put small bandages over large

wounds that do little to relieve economically challenged people, and youth without jobs and skills training opportunities.

We know that gun violence and the increased arming of civilians in Chicago and this nation, is reflective of deeper unresolved issues of race and class inequities as this nation spirals downward in fear and denial of a changing landscape.

We know that affirming the human dignity of persons and making basic structural changes in discriminatory systems can make a difference; providing more educational options, recreational facilities, and economic development opportunities in communities have worked to curb violence and hopelessness in the past.

The Summit, therefore, calls for tangible action steps that address issues of economic limitation, educational disparity, and community destabilization that all help produce the contemporary culture of violence.

THE DECLARATION AND RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Gun violence unjustly robs children of their rightful opportunities, experiences and futures; and

WHEREAS, Gun violence is a major contributor to the disintegration and destruction of the family; and

WHEREAS, Gun violence creates consistent cultures of fear, anxiety and threat within communities and neighborhoods nationally; and

WHEREAS, Gun violence continues the work of genocide against its communities; and

WHEREAS, Gun violence is an outward symptom and manifestation of the spiritual, mental and emotional soul violence that appears rampant within our current context:

Now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, by the 2014 National Summit on Race, in special convening assembled in Chicago, Illinois on August 5-8, 2014, that the Summit vehemently stands against gun violence, in its myriad forms, within the Chicagoland area and other communities across this nation; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the 2014 National Summit on Race sets out to continue the work of collaborating with various faith leaders, activists, intellectuals and other concerned persons to severely lessen its powerful effects; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the 2014 National Summit on Race calls for targeted resources and committed efforts to disrupt the indiscriminate selling and distribution of guns, the proper tracking of guns, in our respective communities and for the development of databases that focuses on the sources of gun distribution; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the National Summit on Race specifically calls for targeted resources to create more job and educational opportunities for communities most impacted by violence and neglect, and to help create a culture in which persons and families more adequately have what they need to survive; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the National Summit on Race specifically calls for educational institutions to take more seriously the social, emotional and academic needs of children from under-resourced and trauma-filled backgrounds; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the National Summit on Race specifically calls for the funneling of critical group resources, such as farmer markets and health clinics, back into communities that have heretofore had them stripped; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the National Summit on Race calls for a more deeply-rooted culture of teamwork, support, collaboration and respect to combat youth feelings of pain that result from the many forms of “parentlessness,” as well as feelings of disrespect that are aided by an adult culture that is quick to stereotype and turn away from genuine relationship-building.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the 2014 National Summit on Race, a convening of thought leaders, advocates and activists, commit to do all we can and speak truth wherever we are in an effort to lessen the destruction of human life through gun violence experiences by African- and Hispanic-descended populations and others in the Chicagoland area and around this nation.

FINALLY RESOLVED, That the National Summit on Race calls for a commitment of leaders at local, state and national levels for this call to action in response to the gun violence permeating all of our communities.