

Grassroots Globalism:

*Using International Processes to Advance
Human Rights in Cities & Communities*

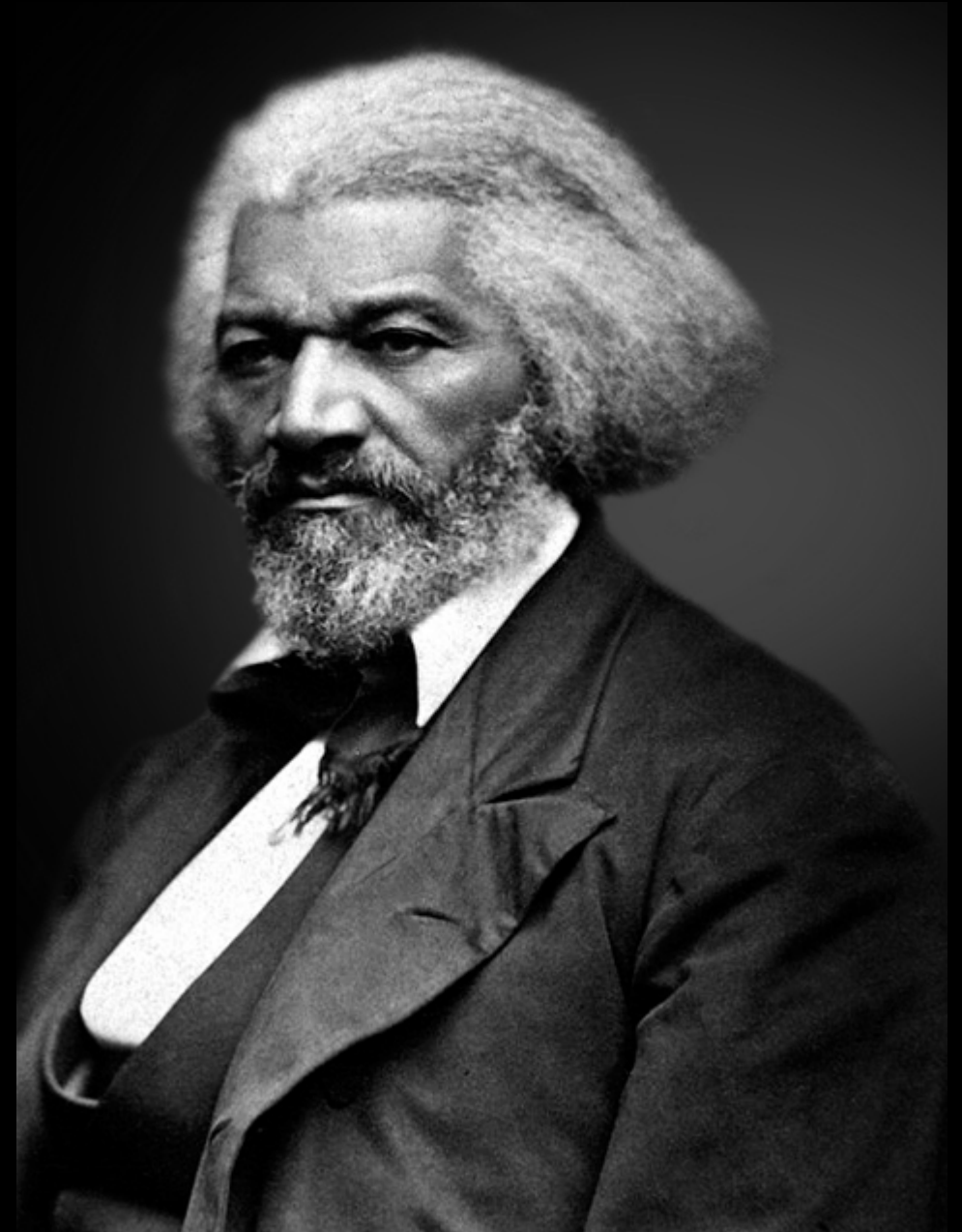
“Human rights were just empty words,
written in treaties which people weren’t
familiar with, and therefore didn’t seek to
claim or implement.”

–Susana Chiarotti, Chairwoman of Human Rights City Rosario (Argentina).*

[*From: “Human Rights Cities of the World”](#)

Power and those in control
concede nothing...without a
demand.... Each and every one
of us must keep demanding,
must keep fighting, must keep
thundering, must keep plowing,
must keep on keeping things
struggling, must speak out and
speak up until justice is served
because where there is no
justice there is no peace.

—Frederick Douglass





“We have the words, now we need the music- and the music is action.”

--Bella Abzug 1920-1998

Bringing Human Rights Home

“[C]ity and county governments have an appropriate and legitimate role in affirming the importance of international law in communities as universal norms and to serve as guides for public policy”

U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2014

*Bringing Human Rights Home**

“State and local authorities are on the front lines of ensuring equality, combating discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, gender identity and sexual orientation, and enabling equal access to affordable housing, healthcare and education... When state and local actors integrate human rights, they join a global community of local governments worldwide that have increasingly drawn from the human rights framework to benefit their work and their communities.”

[Source: Bringing Human Rights Home: How State and Local Governments Can Use Human Rights to Advance Local Policy](#)

UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (2006)



Universal Periodic Review

- **UPR Process** was launched by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006 to provide for periodic examination of the human rights performance of all 193 UN Member States. It represents a significant strengthening of international human rights procedures. ([More info.](#))

Strategic Advantages of the UPR Process:

- **Comprehensive** review of national human rights records- vs. specific treaties or issues
- Promotes analysis of **interconnected and indivisible nature of human rights** (and links treaties & other international mechanisms)
- Encourages **creative recommendations** addressing complex intersectional policies.
- Broadens **public participation** in human rights enforcement.

Universal Periodic Review

The next UPR of the United States:
April 2019 through September 2020 (*final UN report*)

UPR Cities Project

Organizers in cities across the United States will mobilize local consultations to assess the state of human rights in their communities. They will identify both achievements and pitfalls & generate and promote specific recommendations for both local and national authorities to strengthen human rights in the United States.

UPR Cities USA-2019: Steps for local organizers

- 1) Conduct community consultations** about the state of human rights in your locale.
 - Consultations with diverse/intersectional groups & residents about human rights issues in your community (i.e., meetings, surveys, public forums, etc.)
- 2) Compile lessons from consultations** into a 5 page summary report. Name key problems/challenges as well as positives/progress. Use this to report to local officials and press for local responses.
 - Deadline is Sept. 15, 2019 for submissions for national stakeholder report.
- 3) Publicize the final UPR report** and press local governments to implement recommendations. (September 2020)

Treaty Bodies & International Observances

*The United States has ratified the following international human rights treaties, which makes the US government subject to periodic reviews of its performance. [The US Human Rights Network](#) helps support and link grassroots efforts to report on local human rights practices and to hold public officials accountable to international commitments. **Treaty Bodies have made a number of recommendations to the US regarding supporting state and local human rights implementation.***

- International Covenants on Civil and Political Human Rights
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention Against Torture

Other international mechanisms for use by Human Rights Cities

- [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (2015) “2030 Agenda”
- New Urban Agenda (Habitat III, 2016)
 - Recognition of the **social function of land**
 - **progressive realization of the right to adequate housing for all;**
 - prevent arbitrary **forced evictions**
 - Centering needs of **vulnerable groups**
 - enabling the participation and **engagement of communities** and relevant stakeholders
- [International Decade for People of African Descent](#)

United Nations Special Rapporteurs & Expert Working Groups

- **Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing (Est. 2000)**
 - [UN Special Rapporteur visit to US](#) (2010)
 - 2018 Letter to US and Global Investment Firms ([Link to campaign](#))
- [Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty \(1998\)](#)
 - [2018 Report on US Country Visit](#)
- [Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health \(2002\)](#)
- [Special Rapporteur on the right to food](#)
- [UN Expert Working Group on People of African Descent](#)
- ***Guide for advocates*** [“Engaging UN Special Procedures to Advance Human Rights at Home”](#)

Example/Proposal

The Human Right to Housing

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing: *Housing is a RIGHT, not a commodity*

- Calls for: “*a transformation of the relationship between the State and the financial sector, whereby human rights implementation becomes the overriding goal, not a subsidiary or neglected obligation.*”
- Calls for tax and welfare overhaul to support **social housing**
- **Calls on states to subordinate business** and trade law to human rights obligations
- In letters to the United States government and the Blackstone Investment Group L.P., named marketization of housing and speculation as human rights violations. #MaketheShift

See: UN Special Rapporteur on Housing 2018 Report to the UN Human Rights Council: [Human Rights Based National Housing Strategies](#); 2017 HRC Report, “[Financialization of housing and the right to adequate housing](#)”

Example/Proposal

UPR Cities USA-2019– Proposal Draft

Human Rights Vs. Corporate Power

Proposal to emphasize in our UPR Cities stakeholder/shadow report the recommendation that the **US government take concrete steps to hold corporations accountable for human rights obligations**. Specifically, the US government should:

1. Heed the [recent letter shared by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing](#) to counter the trend of speculation and growing commodification of housing. **Local governments** should ensure that local policies are consistent with the legal analyses in this letter.
2. **End privatization of basic needs provision such as water, energy, transit, health care, & banking**, and support remunicipalization of public services;
 - [Remunicipalisation of public services in Europe](#) (Public Services Int'l, 2011)
 - [Here to stay: Water remunicipalisation as a global trend](#) (Transnational Institute, 2015)

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Human Rights Vs. Corporate Power

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3. Implement the [Ruggie Principles](#) framework on business & human rights (proposed to UN Human Rights Council, June 2008)
4. Adopt, without delay, the [Accountable Capitalism Act \(S.3348\)](#) or similar legislation aimed at curbing corporate abuses of human rights.
5. Ratify the [Draft treaty to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises](#). Local governments should also be encouraged to pass local ordinances based on this treaty;
 - [Read full briefing: Ending corporate impunity](#)
 - [Civil Society Initiative for a UN treaty on Human Rights and TNCs](#)