

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”



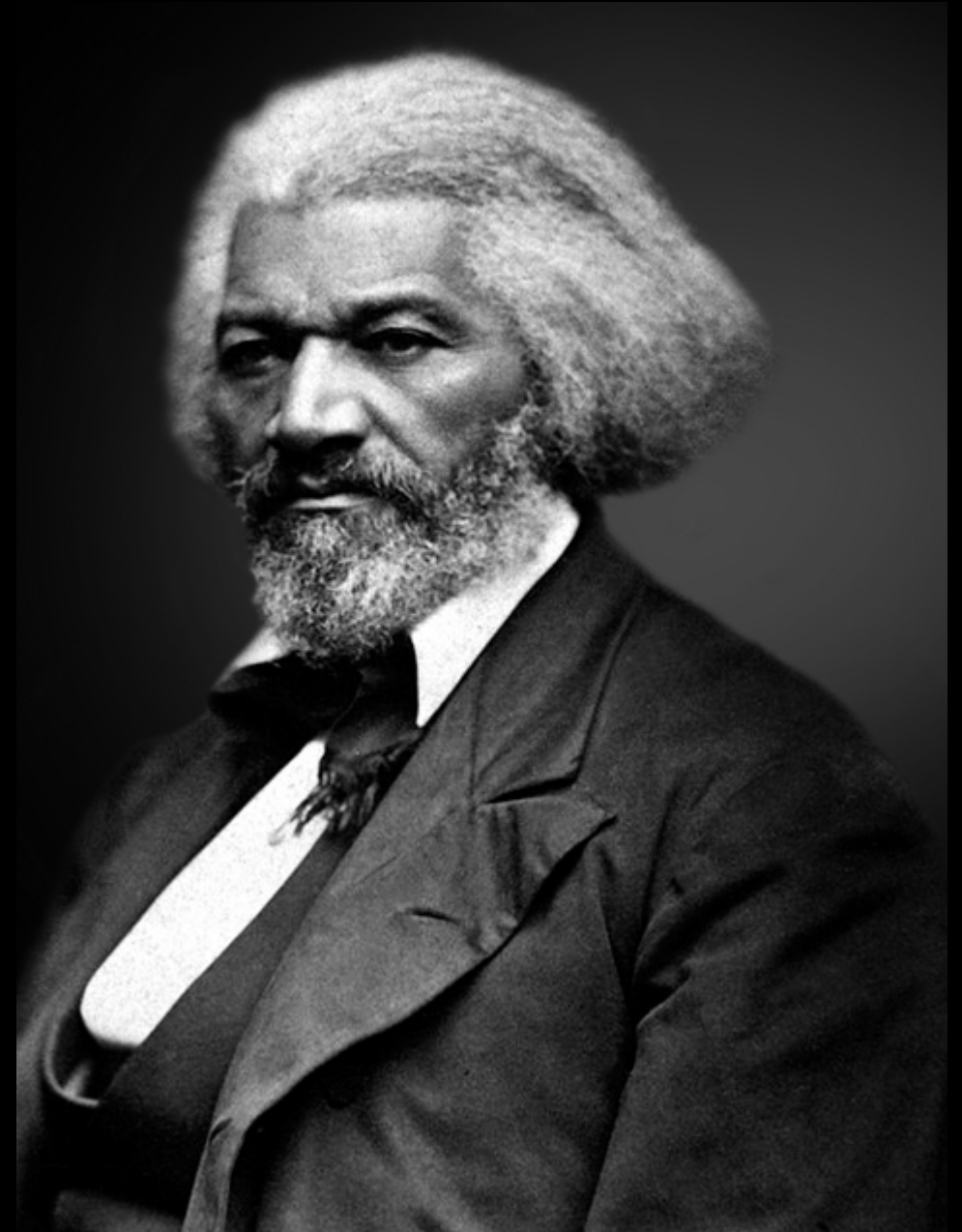
*Human rights are something you were born with. ...Human rights are the rights that are **recognized by all nations of this earth.***

“When you expand the civil-rights struggle to the level of human rights, you can then take the case of the black man in this country before the nations in the UN. You can take it before the General Assembly. You can take Uncle Sam before a world court. But the only level you can do it on is the level of human rights. Civil rights keeps you under his restrictions, under his jurisdiction. Civil rights keeps you in his pocket.”

--Malcolm X

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



Human rights don't trickle down...
They RISE UP!

“Brothers and sisters, our democracy has been hijacked. Brothers and sisters, all electoral freedoms in this country are over so long as it's controlled by corporations. Brothers and sisters, we are not going to allow these streets to be taken over by the Democrats or the Republicans. Because it's all of us who have built this city, and we can tear it down unless they give us what we need.”

- Zach de la Rocha (Musician and activist)



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](#)

Universal Periodic Review

- **The 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.](#))*

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.

The UPR Process





- Open, wide-ranging discussion on key human rights issues
- Drafting of observations, recommendations, or suggestions for UPR Shadow Report for the U.S Review in 2020.
 - *In other words, what should the U.S. continue to do or do differently?*
- Raise awareness about both human rights and critical role of civil society in UPR process

Consultation Objectives

UPR Cities USA–“The 3 Cs”:

Steps for organizing local UPR Cities & Communities

- 1) **Collect** local testimony about human rights.
 - Interview residents or convene consultations with diverse/intersectional groups & residents about human rights issues in your community (i.e., meetings, collecting testimony, surveys, public forums, etc.)
 - Work with Local Human Rights/Human Relations Commissions + govt. allies
- 2) **Compile** summary reports of local human rights conditions. 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.
 - Local review processes can continue through 2019 & 2020
- 3) **Clamor!** Publicize the final UPR report and press local governments to implement recommendations. (September 2020)

Strategic Advantages of UPR for Local Organizing

- *Comprehensive* review of national human rights records- not just specific treaties or issues
- Promotes analysis of interconnected and indivisible nature of human rights (and links treaties & other international mechanisms)
- Encourages creative recommendations for addressing complex intersectional policies.
- Broadens public participation in human rights enforcement.

UPR Reports can draw from a wealth of international human rights instruments

- The [US Human Rights Cities Alliance](#) supports local organizers in their work to make connections between local needs and international human rights treaties and documents.

The following slides outline some key human rights resources for local groups.

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](#)
- Unofficial UN Country Visit on Water Rights ([Press Statement](#))
- [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#)
- ***Guide for advocates*** [“Engaging UN Special Procedures to Advance Human Rights at Home”](#)

When crafting local reports, activists can draw from prior UPR reports:

- **Prior UPR Reviews of US Human Rights Record**

- 2015 Official Report of the UPR Working Group of the UN Human Rights Council
- 2011 Official Report of the UPR Working Group of the UN Human Rights Council

Civil Society/Stakeholder Reports

- 2015 US Human Rights Network UPR Stakeholder Report
- 2010 Shadow Report- USHRN
- 2010 submission focusing on racial health disparities and discrimination

Sample recommendations from [2015 UN UPR Report to US](#)

- “Expedite the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child”
- “Pass legislation ... to prohibit ... life imprisonment without the possibility of parole on offenders who were children at the time of offending”
- “Pass legislation to ensure women receive equal pay for equal work”
- “Strengthen human rights education programmes and training for all civil servants, particularly for law enforcement and immigration officers, and combat impunity concerning abuses against defenceless persons”
- “Create a national human rights institution”

Sample Press Release & recommendations on political prisoners

[Here's an example of a press statement released by groups working to free COINTELPRO prisoners](#) to encourage action during the first UPR review of the United States in 2010. These claims still remain relevant in this third UPR review.

“The report recommends the United States follows the example of UN member states Germany, France, and Spain by immediately and unconditionally releasing all U.S. Political Prisoners/Prisoners of War [...and] initiate criminal investigations into the conspiracy to commit murder and the murder of political activists targeted by COINTELPRO.

In compliance with its human rights obligations, the United States must adopt measures to ensure the right of political prisoners/prisoners of war to seek just and adequate reparation to redress acts of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and to design effective measures to prevent repetition of such acts.”

Example/Proposal

UPR Cities USA-2019– Proposal Draft *Human Rights Vs. Corporate Power*

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)

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:*

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](#)