

**Workgroups**  
**with Salimah Hankins & Mary Gerisch**

- I. What are Human Rights?
  - A. Human rights are rights that we all have simply because we are human.
  - B. They are the basic claims that we have to dignity and respect without regard to our race, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexuality, age, religion, (dis)ability, language, income, immigration status, or other statuses. Human rights include civil, cultural, developmental, economic, environmental, political, sexual, and social rights.
  - C. They are inalienable and inherent
- II. What is a Human Right?
  - A. Examples of human rights (to name a few) include the right to:
    1. Housing
    2. Health
    3. Education
    4. Food, water, sanitation
    5. Freedom from discrimination
    6. Freedom from torture
    7. Freedom of expression
- III. Human Rights Movement in the United States: A Brief History
  - A. Addressing the idea of American exceptionalism – America is unique in that we believe we uphold human rights around the world and do not infringe on human rights within our own country. Clearly, this is not the case. There have been many human rights domestic rights movements within the United States. The US does not recognize the human rights violations within the US.
  - B. Highlighting human rights activists within the US History or present (not exhaustive list) Their advocacy efforts are human rights principles
    1. Malcolm X appeal taking the
      - a) Took the fight to the United Nations
      - b) Debate on the condition of black people in the US and around the world. In Cairo he petitioned the heads of African states to bring the debate to the UN. Focused on the idea that the US, due to its

history and political structure, cannot solve its own human rights issues and MUST be internationalized (so that the oppressed aren't dependent on their oppressors for justice). It is important to use an International human rights model to address human rights issues!

2. Cesar Chavez

- a) Accomplished and asked for fair wages, safe from harm, and acknowledge their dignity.
- b) Movement embodied human rights principles

IV. Human Rights Movement in the United States: Current Human Rights Movement

A. The movement for human rights in the US continues today through organizations such as yours and USHRN consolidates the human rights issues and presents it to the UN

1. Hearing on CERD, Geneva, United Nations

B. Examples of PAD going to the UN to discuss the human rights violations they face in the US

1. Ron Davis, father of Jordan Davis, Sybrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin, and Jahvaris Fulton, Trayvon's brother went to the UN to address the human rights violations and injustices they have faced

2. They use a human rights framework to address their local issue. Other groups do this as well!

V. Opportunity to Engage: UPR

A. The next big opportunity to Engage with the United Nations, is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

1. UPR will occur May 2020!

2. UPR created in 2006. All world countries agreed to adopt this new mechanism to address human rights in each country equally and they're reviewed in the same way.

B. In order to make sure that countries, including the United States, are actually upholding these human rights, that they would be subject to a review of their human rights record every five years. This is what the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UN-UPR) is.

VI. What is the UPR?

A. The UPR is a unique mechanism of the Human Rights Council (HRC) aimed at improving the human rights situation on the ground in each of the countries that are members of the United Nations (called UN Member States).

B. Designed to ensure that countries, including the United States, are upholding/respecting human rights. Their maintenance of human rights is reviewed by other countries in the world based on information presented from US civil society stakeholder reports

1. During this process, the US government typically submits reports to the UN explaining everything they are doing to uphold human rights in the US. Then, US Civil Society (grassroots activists, advocates, non-profit organizations, etc.), submit “stakeholder” reports.
- C. Most expansive review process (can include guidelines from these sources- not an exhaustive list).
1. Anything in the UN charter is fair game to use/base HR review on to discuss your issue
  2. Anything in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  3. Convention Against Torture
  4. Anything UN agency discusses/global goals
- D. These stakeholder reports typically explain what is actually happening on the ground with various human rights (ex. immigration, gentrification, environmental justice, LGBTQIA rights, etc.). They are straightforward and USHRN has a template
- E. This typically contradicts what the U.S. governments says that it is doing.
- F. Then the UPR Working Group at the UN, and other countries can question the U.S. government on issues outlined in the stakeholder reports.
- G. The result of each review is reflected in the UN Final Report of the Working Group, which lists the recommendations the U.S. [State under review (SuR)] will have to implement before the next review.
- H. Think of UPR as “uniting people for rights”. UPR allows everyone to have a voice in public policy (you can be an individual or group with a common concern)

## VII. Why Internationalize Your Issue?

- A. Provides a global platform to tell your story, beyond the local context. Story-telling can change hearts and minds.
- B. Increases pressure on federal, state, and local governments by uplifting your issue. And, taking it out of the hands of the violators.
- C. Reports that you submit are included in the various UN final reports and may even include recommendations on your issue.
- D. Using a human rights framework can create a shared sense of moral authority around your issues.
- E. It can educate others about your issue and draw in supporters and allies.
- F. Focus: between July and October is stakeholder reports. Organize in working groups based on issues you are most patient about. USHRN will submit these reports which will be first hand identification of HR violations within our communities. It’s a chance for you to become a policy maker by suggesting policies that will improve the human rights conditions within the US. Our report may contradict what the US will submit in January. Exciting factor – our report

will challenge what the US report. In May, there will be a committee that will review, pose questions and suggestions to improve the HR conditions in the US. Their suggestions may come from your suggested policies from your report.

- G. These reports help uplift your issue. As an engaged stakeholder, you can expose US for their violations against your issue! It is important that YOU to tell your own narrative of your issue area vs allowing US to state their story on your issue area.
- H. This process brings advocates together from diverse areas as collaborators and resources, etc
- I. UPR empowers everyone to participate and have a voice in their government.

#### VIII. Next Steps: Engaging in the UPR

- A. Visit our UPR page at [upr2020.org](http://upr2020.org)
- B. Join a Working Group by reaching out to the co-facilitator whose info is here: [upr2020.org/join-a-working-group](http://upr2020.org/join-a-working-group)
- C. Attend the next webinar on August 7th for more details on UPR and Stakeholder reports
- D. We are moving forward with the UPR process with webinars and more information. The upcoming webinars and process will only be open to USHRN members.
- E. Membership is on an annual basis dependent on paying the reasonable membership fee.
- F. Non-Exhaustive List of Working Groups
  - a) Children's Rights
  - b) Access to Legal Systems
  - c) Health Issues
  - d) Housing
  - e) Immigration
  - f) Indigenous Peoples
  - g) Information Access
  - h) LGBTQ Issues
  - i) People of African Descent
  - j) Prisoners Rights
  - k) Sexual Rights & Gender Justice
  - l) Students & Education
  - m) Women's Rights
  - n) Workers Rights
  - o) Police Violence & Racial Discrimination
  - p) Political Participation & State Violence

2. Some of these groups need co-facilitators! The co-facilitator will take the lead (USHRN will support you).
3. Working groups: meet and decide co-chairs, provide support and info to working groups, help organizations submit their stakeholder report to the UN and participate in submitting a joint working group report to the UN (longer)
4. UPR Working Group report - 10 pages long
5. UPR Individual report – 5 pages long

G. Five phases:

1. Preparation phase: discuss HR and UPR, and what we hope to achieve by engaging with UPR process
2. Interaction phase: Get stakeholder reports and submit to the governments who will evaluate the US
3. Consideration phase: Take place in May, the governments will question the US and provide recommendations
4. By 2020, USHRN will put pressure on the US government to abide by the UPR suggestions by organizing campaigns around various recommendations
5. Implementation: one-year campaign to utilize the universality of HR and bring the US to the court of the world's public opinion

H. USHRN is organizing advocacy under UPR via working groups. Working groups are based on issue areas! You can join multiple working groups. If you are interested in starting a new working group , please email Salimah.

I. It is important to engage in UPR because the current administration is infringing upon the rights of its citizens the world is taking notice. We need to secure and protect our rights now more than ever!

IX. Importance of Workgroups: “They connect the bike spokes”

A. Workgroup interactions roll together to make the principles move further in claiming rights

1. Workgroups function to focus and combine different organizations under the same issue to advocate for the specific issue as a unit

B. Without the rim, the wheel of activism cannot roll smoothly. Workgroups are the rim connecting organizational spokes

1. This facilitates consolidated communication/message between multiple human rights groups and the government and helps shift the balance of power from the government to the people since UPR provides an opportunity for the civil society to be heard on any violations or issues they reported

C. From here...to there...and then back here!

1. Workgroups mobilize and consolidate a unified report based on their issue topic and submit it to USHRN who will submit it to UPR
2. Puts pressure on the US government from other governments who question information in the report
3. Allows the people-centered report to hold the US accountable

X. Intro to workgroups

A. What do you produce in a working group?

1. Workgroups are issue based groups comprised of multiple organizations that focus on the same issue
  - a) Meet periodically to accomplish advocacy goals
2. 5 page Stakeholder report - per organization
3. 10 page coalition report
4. Report from the working group as a whole
5. 1 pager for each organization with a human rights framing that can be used as an advocacy tool

XI. Thank you for attending! This is the second webinar in a series of webinars intended to focus on UPR which will occur in May 11th, 2020. The UPR report will be adopted on September 2020. There are two webinars scheduled a month. Dates will be released in a follow up email. Please be sure to renew your USHRN membership. The next webinars will be theme based webinars such health - they will be an in depth look on how to write a stakeholder report.