

**United States' Compliance with the International
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**

**A Cross-City Report on Obstacles to U.S. Implementation of the Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
& how Human Rights Cities Can be a Remedy**

NGO Shadow Report on the 10th -12th Periodic Reports of the United States for the
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The US Human Rights Cities Alliance works to build a network of local, national, and international human rights leaders and to support activists and organizers advancing the human rights city organizing framework. The Alliance promotes the development and sharing of knowledge about models and better practices for strengthening respect for human rights and dignity. A key goal is to help local groups make better use of global human rights standards, institutions, and movements to protect and promote human rights in local communities. Our work is guided by the Human Rights Cities [Statement of Principles](#) which advance "[people-centered human rights](#)" that emerge from the experiences and struggles of marginalized communities. Recognizing that "human rights don't trickle down, they rise up", we support communities organizing and acting together to bring human rights to bear at home. The following report involved a multi-year collaboration among human rights advocates in multiple cities, followed by focused work in several of the communities in our network to engage with the 2022 ICERD review of the United States and develop cross-city analyses and perspectives to report here. This is part of a long-term organizing strategy to engage local communities in work to press local, state and federal authorities to improve compliance with ICERD and related human rights obligations.

Executive Summary

To inform the work of the CERD Committee, this report presents recent evidence and scholarly analyses from cities across the United States that demonstrate leading obstacles to U.S. compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). We draw from the [Concluding observations from the 2014 7th-9th periodic report of the United States](#), focusing in particular on the continued and urgent need for the United States government to improve its response to the following [CERD Committee recommendations](#): 1) in **par. 5(a)** to adapt the legal definition of racial discrimination to include discriminatory effects, in accordance with article 1, paragraph 1, of the Convention; 2) in **par. 5(b)** to strengthen legal protections against discriminatory actions by private actors; and 3) in **par. 5(c)** to improve the U.S. system of monitoring and response to prevent and challenge situations of racial

discrimination. We illustrate—drawing from the work of human rights cities across the United States and around the world—how the human rights city approach can help to improve local action in conformity with CERD provisions and otherwise strengthen government institutions, civil society, and culture in ways that prevent discrimination and improve responsiveness to human rights abuse and neglect.

Part 1: Address institutionalized racism & discriminatory outcomes

1. ***Regarding CERD Committee Recommendation Par. 5(a): Prohibit racial discrimination in all its forms in federal and state legislation, including indirect discrimination, covering all fields of law and public life, in accordance with article 1, paragraph 1, of the Convention.***
2. In its May 16, 2022 submission to this Committee, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) argued that “The U.S. legal framework of civil rights and non-discrimination, which promotes legal equality as opposed to social equality, is insufficient to address historical harms and to otherwise guarantee the social, cultural and economic rights of racialized communities.”¹ The recent series of rulings from the U.S. Supreme Court highlights serious threats to a wide range of basic rights, including: reproductive rights; access to a healthy environment and freedom from environmental racism; and freedom from violence. These threats make it even more urgent that the U.S. government respond to the Committee’s recommendation to align its legal definition of racial discrimination in accordance with article 1, paragraph 1, of the Convention (par. 5) to address discriminatory impacts of policies rather than identifying discrimination solely in terms of intent. The U.S. must also heed the Committee’s general recommendation No. 32 (2009) on the meaning and scope of special measures in the CERD (par. 7).
3. The CCR’s intervention² built upon the work of abolitionist scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore in describing U.S. policy towards racialized minorities as a system of “organized abandonment.” This description aligns closely with our own observations of racialized inequities across many cities and communities. Scholars of cities and urban studies have likewise found a *long-standing, consistent, and predictable pattern of discriminatory outcomes in U.S. housing, education, policing, and regulatory policy that marginalizes and excludes Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in particular*. Such policies systematically diminish the ability of marginalized groups to thrive in U.S. cities and effectively disenfranchise Black Americans and other historically oppressed communities.
4. In his book *Manufacturing Decline*, Jason Hackworth demonstrates how U.S. urban policies from the mid-20th century to today effectively reallocate resources away from what are now known as “rust belt cities” to support economic development in suburban regions and in the (non-unionized) U.S. South and West. He shows how these long-standing policies produce “organized deprivation” of urban African American communities—essentially, the channeling of public resources to support elite interests and white privilege. Such policies have developed over

decades and are based upon racist ideologies and a politics of racial resentment that continues to preserve and advance the economic and electoral interests of privileged groups.

5. Throughout the latter part of the 20th century, organized deprivation involved disinvestment from industrial cities, incentivizing and subsidizing the flight of capital and (mostly White) people from urban centers. Hackworth documents how these policies were supported and justified by conservative ideologies that racialized and pathologized urban centers, fueling racial anxieties and resentment that helped to rationalize a shift away from government anti-poverty interventions toward anti-crime and free market policies as antidotes to urban decline.³ Capturing how racist ideologies have been integral to U.S. urban policies, Hackworth argues:

Detroit and other, similar cities have been othered—made into foreign, dangerous entities unworthy of empathy. With this ideational groundwork in place, conservatives have led the charge to deconstruct, privatize, and penalize the already deprived city...through...preemption of municipal autonomy [among other policies].⁴

6. The re-organization of federal funding in the 1970s shifted power away from municipalities and towards states through programs like the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), which provide less oversight and more room for abuse by local authorities.⁵ This shift simultaneously weakened the capacities of local authorities and residents to gain equitable access to federal resources and promoted conservative electoral prospects by fueling the urban-suburban/rural divisions that are often implicitly (if not explicitly) biased against African Americans.⁶ Moreover, these policies direct resources to policing, prisons, and support for downtown business development instead of to housing, schools, and drug treatment, in effect redistributing income upward. Hackworth describes the combination of these urban policies as “barely concealed acts of extortion.”
7. Tracy Neuman’s historical work echoes Hackworth’s conclusions, showing how, during the latter half of the 20th century, Pittsburgh’s corporate elite, organized through the Allegheny Conference, helped refine what are now common urban practices by organizing business interventions in urban development and planning processes through alliances among policy makers and organized business elites known as “urban growth coalitions.”⁷ Similar coalitions have shaped urban development in ways that favor elite interests in cities around the U.S. and world.⁸ These policies continue to systematically disadvantage low-income communities and heighten inequality in U.S. cities and regions. The continued growth of consumerist, services-driven urban economies further intensifies these inequalities, which in many places closely track race.⁹ In contrast, in places like Hamilton, Ontario, Neuman shows how federal policies supporting basic economic rights and equity helped to prevent elite local coalitions from pursuing the aggressive market-fundamentalist policies that produced such inequality in the United States.
8. In her research on U.S. housing policy and its impacts on African Americans, public health scholar Mindy Thompson Fullilove documents what she refers to as the “serial forced displacement” of African Americans—a long-standing pattern evident in cities like Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, New York and others.¹⁰ Fullilove’s research in Pittsburgh, Newark, and Roanoke, Virginia shows

the connections between the discriminatory, serial dislocation caused by U.S. housing policies and racially disparate health outcomes. She argues that the resulting “root shock” destroys the social networks and undermines the community cohesion that is key to human physical, emotional, social, and economic well-being.¹¹

9. The City of Los Angeles exemplifies how historic systemic discrimination impacts current patterns of poverty and homelessness. As noted in [Los Angeles’ 2021 Voluntary Local Review](#) (VLR) of Progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, the rate of poverty among African Americans in Los Angeles is 24.6%, compared to a city-wide rate of 16.7%. The nearly 50% disparity has local and national causes, but as the city’s Mayor observes, they are part of a systemic wealth gap: “redlining and exclusionary zoning resulted in a city where today Black and Mexican-origin families hold 1/90th of the wealth of white families [in Los Angeles] on average.”¹² The city’s failure to address this injustice is reflected in lagging African-American homeownership (a key mode of building wealth), a problem that has worsened recently. In Los Angeles County, African American homeownership rates have fallen from 55% in 1960 to 46% in 2015.¹³ In the City of Los Angeles, as of 2022 there is a 17% homeownership gap between African American families (34.6%) and White families (51.7%).¹⁴ These interlinked wealth and homeownership gaps are apparent on the streets of Los Angeles: “Black people make up 9% of the population of LA County, but more than one-third of its population experiencing homelessness—an overrepresentation that is consistent demographically across other jurisdictions in the United States.”¹⁵ These disparities mean that African Americans are far more vulnerable to housing insecurity and displacement than White residents. In cities like Pittsburgh this has meant that over 10,000 Black residents were displaced from that city over less than a decade.¹⁶
10. Racial disparities in access to healthcare and in health outcomes provide another example of organized deprivation, representing major human rights issues in the U.S. today. In the City of Dayton, Ohio, for example, the life expectancy at birth for Black people is lower than in many developing countries.¹⁷ The top five causes of death for Black Daytonians are diseases caused or worsened by chronic discrimination.¹⁸ Racially-based inequalities in other social, economic, and civil systems contribute to ill health and make it difficult for Black Americans to be healthy.¹⁹ Dayton is the 15th-most segregated city in the United States, where extreme Black social isolation meets the criteria for “hypersegregation.”²⁰ The segregation present in Dayton today is a direct result of discriminatory policies that prevented Black people from full participation in the housing market by devaluing the price of real estate in historically Black areas while also preventing access to mortgages for Black people to move into areas with sustainable housing values. These policies, collectively known as *redlining*, literally mapped racial segregation onto the city and continue to impact where people live, with implications for their access to food, education, and health care. Maps of contemporary social vulnerability that tie demographic, economic, and health data correlate ominously with redlining maps used from the 1930s to 1970s.²¹
11. Infant mortality is another important index of the overall health of a society and how well it cares for its women and children. The infant mortality rate—the proportion of infants who die before reaching age one—captures the risks to newborns, but it is widely regarded as a broader indicator

of health, poverty, and socioeconomic well-being in communities that reflects among other factors the availability and quality of health services and medical technology.²² Ohio had the 9th worst infant mortality rate in the United States in 2017: 7 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births.²³ Montgomery County, Ohio, home of Dayton, has the fifth highest number of infant deaths in the state of Ohio.²⁴ Furthermore, the County's infant mortality rate has not improved over the last 25 years.²⁵ Public Health - Dayton and Montgomery County, the agency responsible for monitoring and addressing health across the city and county, emphasizes that "a clear racial disparity continues to exist with Black infants dying at a rate much higher than white infants."²⁶ In 2016, the Black infant mortality rate was 12.6 per thousand live births, *two and a half times higher* than the White infant mortality rate (5 per thousand live births).²⁷

12. Organized deprivation in cities effectively translates into lost healthy life years for African Americans especially. Inequitable distribution in the conditions and resources that predict good health outcomes means that, in cities like Spartanburg, South Carolina and elsewhere, residents with low income and Black residents suffer poorer health outcomes. In Spartanburg County there is significant racial inequity in infant mortality, inadequate prenatal care, low birth weight, and chronic health conditions and illnesses including diabetes, obesity, cardiac disease, and cancers. Black residents are less likely to have health insurance and more likely to seek care in emergency departments for primary care-preventable conditions. Compared to Whites, Blacks reported higher rates of adverse childhood experiences. Black Spartanburg residents had worse access to life-saving care and suffered higher mortality rates than White residents as a result.²⁸

Part 1-Recommendations

13. Our assessment of the historical and scholarly record, together with our work in diverse cities across the United States, lends solid support for the CERD Committee's 2014 conclusion (par. 5) that to fulfil its obligations under the CERD, the United States must change its legal definition of racism to provide *meaningful legal protection against the discriminatory effects*, not solely the discriminatory *intent*, of policies—it must adopt the "disparate impact" doctrine. U.S. urban policies generate consistent and continuing discriminatory outcomes that justify their classification as "organized deprivation and abandonment," which disproportionately harms African Americans and other racially marginalized groups.
14. Given these *long-standing, systematic, and well-documented patterns of racial inequity in U.S. cities*, the United States government must take up the CERD Committee's repeated recommendation in Par. 7:
 - a. *to adopt and strengthen the use of special measures, which is an obligation arising from article 2, paragraph 2, of the Convention, when circumstances warrant their use as a tool to eliminate the persistent disparities in the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, based on race or ethnic origin. In that regard, it recommends that the [U.S. government] take into account the Committee's general recommendation No. 32 (2009) on the meaning and scope of special measures in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Racial Discrimination.*

15. Addressing long-standing and compounding harms to African Americans, Indigenous peoples and other groups facing racial discrimination in the United States requires various strategies, including educational and cultural work to improve public understanding of the historical practices of genocide, slavery, and Indigenous displacement and their ongoing impacts. U.S. officials must support local and national leadership that confronts political opposition to critical race theory and advances learning and public discourse grounded in historical truth-telling. U.S. engagement with the *Durban Declaration* and related global conversations on reparations is essential for creating the political possibilities for action to eliminate racial disparities tied to these historical human rights abuses.
16. To address entrenched, structural forms of discrimination such as health disparities, the legal doctrine of *special measures* acknowledges that additional and significant state action is necessary to correct historical abuse and set racialized minorities on a path to equitable outcomes. Adopting measures that merely seek to curb growing inequity will not reduce these persistent and interlinked racial disparities across multiple rights.
17. General Recommendation 32 contains extensive discussion of these issues, beginning with the notion of equality itself: “The principle of equality underpinned by the Convention combines formal equality before the law with equal protection of the law, with substantive or *de facto* equality in the enjoyment and exercise of human rights as the aim to be achieved by the faithful implementation of its principles.” With respect to the latter, *special measures* indicates the lengths to which states can and should go in ensuring full enjoyment of rights for all. Taking such measures is also required by the *disparate impact* doctrine, discussed above, and would help to broaden conventional notions of racial equality in the United States by focusing attention on outcomes and consequences of policies.
18. Coupled with *special measures* is the concept of *adequate advancement*, which General Recommendation 32 also defines expansively as implying

goal-directed programmes which have the objective of alleviating and remedying disparities in the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms affecting particular groups and individuals, protecting them from discrimination. Such disparities include but are not confined to persistent or structural disparities and de facto inequalities resulting from the circumstances of history that continue to deny to vulnerable groups and individuals the advantages essential for the full development of the human personality. It is not necessary to prove ‘historic’ discrimination in order to validate a programme of special measures; the emphasis should be placed on correcting present disparities and on preventing further imbalances from arising.
19. Global experiences shows that reparations to redress historic wrongs can be effective if carried out as part of a comprehensive truth-telling process. Indeed, as the UN Special Rapporteur on racism has recommended to states in her report to the UN General Assembly, “reparations for slavery and colonialism include not only justice and accountability for historic wrongs, but also the eradication of persisting structures of racial inequality, subordination and discrimination that

were built under slavery and colonialism to deprive non-whites of their fundamental human rights.”²⁹

20. We therefore urge the CERD Committee to recommend the United States undertake a truth-telling process that links historic wrongs to current racial inequities and defines how reparations can address systemic inequalities. Such a process requires a two-fold commitment: first, taking active responsibility for past wrongdoing by not just acknowledging but, more importantly, forthrightly addressing histories of exclusion and violence through substantive institutional reform of governmental entities; second, committing to repair, in part, consequences of past policies—through both material and symbolic actions as well as cultural/educational work to advance collective accountability for racialized exclusions and through substantive reparations targeted to redress systemic inequalities.
21. There are important examples of such reparations work beginning in places around the country, but national leadership is needed to support these and link them to national conversations and policy agendas. For instance, on June 1, 2022, the *Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans* issued its interim report to the California Legislature.³⁰ The report included preliminary recommendations in the following areas: enslavement, racial terror, political disenfranchisement, housing segregation, separate and unequal education, racism in environment and infrastructure, pathologizing Black families, control over creative culture and intellectual life, stolen labor and hindered opportunity, an unjust legal system, mental & physical harm and neglect, and the wealth gap.³¹
22. We recommend the immediate passage of H.R. 40, “Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act” (or subsequent versions) calling for reparations remedies.³² We also recommend other demands for reparations issued by the Movement for Black Lives, including “reparations for past and continuing harms. The government, responsible corporations and other institutions that have profited from the harms they have inflicted and perpetuated on Black people — from colonialism to slavery through food and housing redlining, mass incarceration, and surveillance — must repair the harm done.”³³

Part 2: Broaden protections against discriminatory acts by private actors

23. ***Regarding CERD Committee Recommendation Par 5 (b): Consider withdrawing or narrowing its reservation to article 2 of the Convention and broaden the protection afforded by law against all discriminatory acts perpetrated by private individuals, groups or organizations.***
24. In its submission for the recent Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United States, “The Growth of Corporate Influence in Sub-National Political & Legal Institutions Undermines U.S. Compliance with International Human Rights Obligations,” our multi-city network of human rights city organizers emphasized the need for much better regulation of corporate actors and their influence on local government policies and political processes.³⁴ Our work in different cities

reveals the widespread corruption of local democracy, corruption enabled by federal policies that fail to protect the rights of residents against the interests of corporate and other business actors. What is more, the corruption and weakening of democratic institutions exacerbates the ongoing disenfranchisement of African Americans in the U.S. polity.

25. The 2019 Final Report of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, [“The Role of Local Government in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights,”](#) cited the impacts of international financial institutions and of global policies that promote global trade, privatization, and investment by corporations as key obstacles to local human rights realization. Founded in colonialism and slavery, global trade and development policies tend to reproduce discriminatory outcomes—even where there are nominal efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion.³⁵ The U.S. government promoted and continues to promote policies that increase corporate power. These policies undermine the ability of local and regional governments in the U.S. and globally to make policies needed to protect the lives and well-being of people and communities—including policies that would improve compliance with the CERD.
26. In her [2017 report to the UN Human Rights Council](#), UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Adequate Housing Leilani Farha wrote,

The State must regulate, direct and engage with private market and financial actors, not simply to ensure that they do not explicitly violate rights, but also to ensure that the rules under which they operate and their actions are consistent with the realization of the right to adequate housing. States are obliged under international human rights to ensure that private investors respond to the needs of residents for secure, affordable housing and do not cater only to the wealthy or purchase homes simply to leave them empty (Par. 15).
27. Given the role of redlining and other discriminatory housing practices in creating and maintaining long-standing racial wealth inequalities and perpetuating disproportionate housing insecurity among African Americans and other racialized groups, this obligation to regulate private financial actors is particularly important to improving U.S. compliance with the CERD.
28. Corporate influence in local and national politics makes it difficult for cities and other subnational governments to address racial disparities in areas such as employment, housing, public utilities and services, gun violence, and environmental health.³⁶ By exerting pressure on politicians and political processes and using money to shape agendas and influence outcomes, corporations and business elites distort democratic processes in ways that marginalize citizen influence, allowing them to evade paying their fair share of taxes. This exacerbates racial and other divisions and inequities, contributing to persistent inequalities and disparate impacts on vulnerable groups, particularly African descendants and other peoples of color, indigenous peoples, and refugees and immigrants. Prevailing national and local policies have been designed to facilitate wealth accumulation for corporations and developers, often through displacement of urban residents.³⁷ The resulting disparities and disruptions generate disparate and often discriminatory outcomes and hinder efforts to address racial injustice and to build inclusive cities that support the needs of all residents.

29. The Human Rights Cities Alliance UPR City Stakeholder Report cited the unprecedented bidding war between cities vying to attract Amazon’s much-touted second headquarters. Many cities offered billions of dollars of public subsidies to one of the world’s richest companies, and in most cases these bids were developed without meaningful public consultation and often in secrecy. Such transfers of public resources into private, corporate hands rarely generate the benefits promised, despite claims by many politicians that they are essential for local economic development. Scholarly analyses of public subsidies and incentives show only modest and limited benefits overall and many hidden—and potentially discriminatory—costs.³⁸
30. In recent years, several hundred—mainly African American—residents of Pittsburgh’s East Liberty neighborhood have been displaced as large tracts of affordable housing were demolished and replaced by luxury housing and retail developments.³⁹ Residents’ efforts to secure replacement housing and to establish effective measures for conducting and enforcing social impact assessments on new developments have not gained much ground, largely due to opposition from the business community.⁴⁰ Moreover, efforts by the city to improve racial equity—through, e.g., tenant protections, increased supply of affordable housing—have faced legal challenges from corporate developers and other elites.⁴¹
31. Corporate practices also negatively impact the environmental rights and health of African Americans and other racially marginalized groups. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lacks the regulatory authority and capacity to effectively protect residents by monitoring and regulating corporate pollution. Persistent failures of the U.S. government to adequately fund and empower this agency contribute to widespread racial disparities in environmental protection and health. The recent Supreme Court decision in *West Virginia et al. v. Environmental Protection Agency et al.* further weakens U.S. regulatory authority, thereby undermining its ability to comply with CERD provisions (as in CERD Committee Conclusions, par. 10(a)).
32. In January 2018, Premier Health Partners announced the closing and demolition of Good Samaritan Hospital, located in the majority African American west side of Dayton. Premier Health Partners is the largest private, nonprofit, comprehensive health care system in Southwest Ohio, with five hospitals, a network of outpatient and urgent care centers, and a reported revenue of over \$1.9 billion in fiscal year 2020.^{42,43} While closing hospitals in low-income African American neighborhoods, Premier Health Partners continues to expand services in affluent, majority White suburban areas.⁴⁴ Dayton activists came together to keep the Good Samaritan Hospital open, and their Clergy and Community Coalition (CCC) filed legal claims with the federal government based on evidence of the disparate impact of the closure on key health indicators, such as an increase in the Black infant mortality rate from 10.5% in 2018 to 14.1% in 2020.⁴⁵ Despite such evidence, the federal government concluded in March 2022 that there was inadequate evidence to support CCC’s claim that Premier Health’s actions constituted racial discrimination under U.S. law.
33. Such practices mirror those in other cities, including Pittsburgh, where “nonprofit” health system UPMC reported \$23.1 billion in 2020 operating revenue and yet closed or scaled back services in low-income and largely African American communities.⁴⁶ Public health researchers have linked

hospital closures and consolidations like these with increased racial and income-based health insurance disparities, and inequitable quality of life-saving services.⁴⁷

34. Another important aspect of public health in urban areas that is impacted by the failure of the U.S. government to effectively regulate private actors is in regard to gun violence and police brutality. In the former case, persistent failures to regulate the gun industry produce tragic results for everyone, but African American communities are most impacted, and in highly disproportionate ways. In the latter case of persistent police brutality and killings of people of African descent in the United States, we see this in large part as a result of the failure of the U.S. government to ensure that all local and state police organizations operate in ways that are consistent with U.S. international obligations and with national civil rights protections. Local police forces are largely governed and funded by state and local authorities, and disciplinary procedures are often restricted by provisions of labor contracts negotiated through the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), which is organized nationally. Efforts in many communities to hold officers accountable for abuses have largely failed due to the protections such contracts allow for officers who engage in abuses of human rights. Federal leadership is needed to hold these sets of private actors accountable to provisions of ICERD.⁴⁸
35. Useful and effective global guidelines exist for policing that enhances community safety without reliance on force and violence. U.S. policies promote policing and incarceration and neglect the mental health and other basic needs of residents, demonstrating the interdependence of gun violence and broader public health issues.⁴⁹ To meet its human rights obligations, the U.S. government must re-allocate substantial resources away from police and military forces and towards alternative strategies for enhancing community safety and well-being, which must also include stronger regulations of the gun industry.
36. Public health advocates and policymakers have long been calling for greater federal regulation and funding to support research on gun violence as a public health concern. Corporations have fought hard, however, to undermine efforts to understand and regulate the industry.⁵⁰ The burden of gun homicide falls heaviest on communities already facing structural disadvantages.⁵¹ Within cities, gun homicides are most prevalent in racially segregated neighborhoods with high rates of poverty and low educational attainment. Black Americans represent the majority of gun homicide victims and are ten times more likely than White Americans to die by gun homicide. Young Black men in particular are even more at risk. As Everytown Research concludes:
- Each day on average, 30 Black Americans are killed by guns and more than 110 experience non-fatal injuries. At least every other day, a Black person is shot and killed by police. ... Gun homicides, assaults, and [police shootings](#) are disproportionately prevalent in [historically underfunded neighborhoods and cities](#). This lack of funding intensifies our country's long-standing racial inequities.*⁵²
37. Also significant for human rights protection is that guns are associated with the growing wave of hate crimes, most notably the recent mass shooting in Buffalo, New York that targeted an African American community. Over 10,300 violent hate crimes in an average year involve a gun. The vast

majority of hate crimes are directed against communities of color, religious minorities, and LGBTQ people. In 2017, about 58 percent of reported hate crimes were motivated by racism, nearly half of which were motivated by bias against Black people.⁵³

38. To address the serious human rights challenges these weapons cause, it is essential to prioritize community- and evidence-based solutions to gun violence and their racial impacts. Ending restrictions on federal funding for public health research addressing gun violence—themselves reflections of distortional corporate influence—is key to developing comprehensive policy responses that will improve U.S. practices in regard to the ICERD.

Part 2-Recommendations

39. **Strengthen regulation of corporate practices to bring them into compliance with national and international human rights laws and standards.** This can be achieved by various measures including:
- a. **Develop a human rights-based housing strategy**, with attention to the need to remedy historical discrimination in the housing sector. Housing security is essential to human dignity and community well-being and is thus a critical human right whose violation disproportionately harms African Americans and other racialized groups. The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, Leilani Farha, encouraged governments to be more pro-active in developing human rights-based housing strategies to ensure that they were serving the needs of all residents and remedying inequities.⁵⁴ The U.S. government should be encouraged to develop such a strategy at the federal level, and it must better support local and state governments in such work. This is essential for promoting human rights and well-being in cities, where racial disparities are most harmful and pronounced.
 - b. **Strengthen regulation of the gun industry** and use federal power to shift incentives to states to improve mental health and community well-being, community-controlled approaches to public safety, and to halt transfers of military equipment to civilian law enforcement.
 - c. **Implement fair taxation policies**, with attention to the need to remedy structural and historical discrimination. U.S. federal, state and local governments rely disproportionately on earned income, property, and sales tax. Income from wealth is less subject to taxation, and this system discriminates against working and low-income people of all races, and its effects are disproportionately felt by people and communities of color. A fairer tax system would improve racial equity while also enhancing the capacities of governments at all levels to improve their compliance with ICERD and other human rights obligations. Our assessment of local conditions shows the effects of recent decades of policies favoring small government and low taxes. Impoverished and under-staffed local agencies, many of which suffer from inappropriate/limited experience and skills and high staff turnover, cannot be effective at monitoring and enforcing human rights standards. The Keystone Research Center and PA Budget and Policy Center recently issued a [Fair Share Tax Proposal](#) that offers helpful guidance on ways to address this important challenge.

40. **Work with the international community to advance international treaties that hold corporations legally accountable to all international human rights laws and standards**, including the [draft treaty](#) to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises. The size and scale of today's multinational corporations make it impossible for most national governments—much less local ones—to monitor and enforce their compliance with human rights laws, and this problem must be addressed by the international community.
41. **Improve regulation of private entities that operate in public sectors such as health care and housing, social goods essential to the fulfilment of basic human rights and needs and essential to individual and community well-being.** In particular, private entities operating in the health and development (housing) sectors (among others) should be subjected to regulation and oversight to ensure that their activities do not have discriminatory impacts. They should further be required and incentivized to support U.S. compliance with CERD and other human rights obligations. Finally, private entities operating in public sectors (defined by the social nature of the goods they create, thus including areas like housing, public safety, and health care) must be accountable to the communities in which they operate; plans for reductions or other significant alterations of services and infrastructure should only be permitted in consultation with the community to ensure equity and continuity.

Part 3: Improve work to monitor, prevent, and challenge racial discrimination

- 42. *Regarding CERD Committee Recommendation Par. 5(c): Improve the system of monitoring and response by federal bodies to prevent and challenge situations of racial discrimination.***
43. As an alliance of human rights city organizers, we are convinced that improving U.S. compliance with this recommendation will require substantial efforts by civil society leaders as well as enhanced cooperation between community advocates and governments. Federal policies that help build capacities of residents to engage in community organizations and advocacy are essential for strengthening U.S. democracy, supporting community-driven problem-solving, empowering racially marginalized communities, and advancing racial equity.
44. The human rights cities movement is a growing global movement of community groups and individuals working together with local governments to help realize cities and communities where all people can live with dignity and enjoy their human rights. In addition to helping envision and advance policy alternatives, human rights cities involve significant efforts to promote human rights learning and change public and policy discourse, in order to build popular support for human rights as an overriding policy priority. At a time of deep national political division and extreme polarization in U.S. society, human rights city advocates are creating spaces where people learn about and from each other's experiences and come to appreciate diverse

perspectives and the need for respect and protection of everyone's human rights and dignity. Where political parties and elected officials have failed to provide leadership that unites Americans around a shared social purpose, human rights cities advocates are engaging communities in conversations about their needs and visions and about possibility for solidarity.

45. Human rights cities advocates help disseminate human rights principles, foster human rights learning, and otherwise support the development of local policies and practices that promote and protect human rights and the transformation of systemic racism. Human rights cities movements across the U.S. and the world have been coming together to share lessons and models for action and promote awareness of global human rights treaties and processes such as CERD and the Universal Periodic Review.⁵⁵ The Human Rights Cities movement is broad and encompasses diverse initiatives at the local level, including CEDAW cities, Child-friendly cities, and localization of the SDGs.
46. Below we provide examples of human rights city initiatives that demonstrate the potential for improving human rights protections in the United States.
47. In 2019-2020, our network of U.S. human rights city leaders launched the [UPR Cities](#) Project to help raise consciousness in U.S. localities about the UPR review process and to support local activists in efforts to prepare city-based stakeholder reports and otherwise engage communities in the Third Cycle of the UPR. Our first UPR Cities effort generated stakeholder submissions from the cities of Washington DC, Pittsburgh, and New Orleans, in addition to our multi-city report.⁵⁶ Our network also produced a summary of how the [Final Report of the UPR Working Group/USA](#) applies to local governments⁵⁷ and published articles to help broaden public awareness of the UPR review and civil society's role in it.⁵⁸ In addition to developing educational resources and toolkits to support local activism, we have worked nationally to develop strategic thinking about ways to build on this work as we improve the use of international human rights machinery in U.S. activism for human rights and social justice.
48. As part of the recent UPR process, we engaged the national network of human rights city organizers in efforts to engage with local and state authorities. In cooperation with the Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute and the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA), we helped support and promote a sign-on letter to engage local and state officials in learning about and supporting the UPR and its recommendations.⁵⁹
49. Human Rights Cities activists support community engagement with UN Special Procedures under the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We've been particularly engaged with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Adequate Housing and have helped promote awareness of key reports and publications among our communities and local officials. For instance, we helped disseminate the Special Rapporteur's "Blackstone Letters" on how the financialization of housing violates human rights obligations.⁶⁰ And in April 2022, Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance helped host former UN Special Rapporteur Leilani Farha to meet with city officials, housing advocates, students and other residents. We compiled [this report on the visit](#) to share with local officials and activists, highlighting insights and recommendations from

our discussions with Ms. Farha as well as links to learning resources and legal tools to help advance housing as a human right. Our national team continues to work in cooperation with Ms. Farha's organization, The Shift, and is currently helping circulate Farha's new [Directives on Financialization and Human Rights](#) to community activists and local officials.

50. Human rights city advocates in Hawai'i hosted a multitude of consultations on multiple islands covering imminent issues of intersectionality regarding racial discrimination with a focus on systems solutions to guarantee human rights for all. The Human Rights Cities model guided a proactive, participatory, process of engagement bringing human rights home. For example, the [Annual Human Rights Academy/ Advanced Summer Seminar on Peace, Environment, Human Rights and Global Justice](#), hosted by Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, United Nations Association, and The Good Group provides spaces for youth and elders to meet and learn about UN human rights mechanisms including the ICERD, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), popularizing ideas for how these can be used as tools for racial justice, equality and equity. Such work enables creative thinking about how people can be part of the everyday work needed to transform social relations in ways consistent with the aims of ICERD. In addition to learning and sharing ideas about land rights, self-determination, climate justice, and indigenous futures and food systems models, participants were inspired to use the CERD Early Warning Urgent Action to generate advocacy and actions furthering respect for ancestral remains and principle of *aloha aina*.

Part 3-Recommendations

51. **Create a National Human Rights Institution to help coordinate local and national implementation of international human rights obligations and good practices and improve local government knowledge and engagement in human rights governance.** Consistent with CERD Committee Conclusions (par. 6), establishing a U.S. national human rights institution is essential to achieve equity both within and across localities in the United States.
- a. Our experience with local human rights organizing leads us to believe that an NHRI is essential for the United States. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an inadequate substitute: its mission is exclusively limited to retroactively responding to negative discrimination against specific protected classes. Even in this limited sphere, it lacks the authority to provide accountability. Moreover, it is chronically understaffed and underfunded, and it lacks the political independence needed to carry out its tasks. In short, it does not constitute an NHRI and it does not conform with the Paris Principles.
 - b. A genuine NHRI would help to guide and support the local and state human rights agencies—including financially—and to coordinate federal policy on compliance with international human rights obligations. The federal government presently provides inadequate information, resources, and authority to local officials as they seek to comply with human rights standards and implement human rights standards.⁶¹ It often falls to community advocates—who are frequently volunteers—to educate local agencies and elected officials about their human rights obligations.

Furthermore, it is often activists who take the lead in monitoring and reporting on local human rights conditions—as our work here reflects. The U.S. government’s failure to provide resources and leadership on human rights is an abdication of its international responsibilities; the resulting vacuum undermines social cohesion and creates opportunities for those who now sow greater social division. The net result is a further erosion of U.S. democracy and institutions.

- c. Creating an NHRI in conformity with the Paris Principles would: strengthen the capacities of local governments to monitor and enforce anti-discrimination laws and other human rights protections; improve coordination and harmonization of local policing practices and disseminate guidance on best practices to reduce discrimination and other human rights abuses; improve local awareness of both national and international human rights laws and standards; and support civil society in promoting human rights protections “from below.” This in turn would help prevent discrimination and thereby reduce the financial, legal, and social costs associated with reactive, punitive approaches. An NHRI could, in short, begin to help address all of the shortcomings described here with respect to U.S. obligations under CERD.

52. Strengthen consultations with civil society (Par. 31) and increase efforts to promote public awareness of CERD and its review processes (Par.32), again in keeping with the recommendations of the CERD committee. This can be done through various measures including:

- a. Advancing local and national implementation of recommendations from the 2019-2020 Universal Periodic Review. The [Universal Periodic Review final report](#) to the U.S. government emphasized four major areas for action: 1) end structural racism and discrimination; 2) fulfill international human rights expectations and obligations (including the establishment of a national human rights institution); 3) advance gender equity; 4) strengthen protections for economic, social and cultural rights.⁶² All of these steps would help improve U.S. compliance with its obligations under CERD. Federal authorities must also do more to help state and local authorities both learn about the UPR process and know how their own work relates to those recommendations. In our experience, community advocates remain the main if not the only source of this information for local officials, and their work needs much more support from all levels of government.
- b. Improving public education and awareness of human rights and internationally accepted norms and standards. Greater public understanding and engagement in human rights is critical to improving respect for these rights by public authorities. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be taught in public schools as a matter of policy, and community capacities for human rights leadership and education must be supported financially and otherwise.

Conclusion

53. This review of U.S. compliance with ICERD comes at a critical moment in history when concrete action to confront the historical legacies of institutionalized racism and their ongoing impacts on people and communities is essential to the survival of U.S. democracy. The current political and social trends in the U.S. raise profound concerns about the future of human rights protection in the world’s third most populous country, which threatens human rights worldwide. On behalf of

all those struggling to protect and promote human rights across U.S. communities and elsewhere, we urge the CERD Committee to make bold recommendations to help support and strengthen popular movements for racial justice and human rights. Our experience demonstrates the potential of human rights cities as an approach to building community cohesion and expanding popular engagement in governance in ways that can transform systemic racism and help us realize the aims of the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racism and other human rights laws and standards.

End Notes

¹ [The Center for Constitutional Rights' List of Themes Submission to assist the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Review of the United States](#) May 16, 2022

² [The Center for Constitutional Rights' List of Themes Submission to assist the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Review of the United States](#) May 16, 2022

³ Hackworth, Jason. 2019. *Manufacturing Decline: How Racism and the Conservative Movement Crush the American Rust Belt* (Columbia University Press: New York). On the criminalization of the urban poor, see, e.g., Hinton, Elizabeth. 2016. *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge).

⁴ Hackworth, *Manufacturing Decline*, p. 114.

⁵ For instance, Pittsburgh advocates were forced to file a lawsuit over claims that the City misspent CDBG funds which were to be allocated to low-income neighborhoods, instead channeling them to general budgets for road repairs, street lighting, etc. ([Lawsuit alleging Pittsburgh misspent federal community development block grant funds unsealed](#) *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* Feb. 19, 2014.)

⁶ Hackworth, *Manufacturing Decline*, p. 120.

⁷ See, e.g., Molotch, Harvey L. 1993. 'The City as Growth Machine', *American Journal of Sociology*, 82: 309-32.

⁸ *Remaking the Rust Belt: The Postindustrial Transformation of North America*. Neuman, Tracy. (2019). University of Pennsylvania Press.

⁹ *Remaking the Rust Belt*, p. 200; see also *The Next Shift* Winant, Gabriel. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021.

¹⁰ Fullilove, Mindy Thompson, and Roderick Wallace. 2011. 'Serial Forced Displacement in American Cities, 1916–2010', *Journal of Urban Health*, 88: 381-89.

¹¹ *Root Shock: How Tearing up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It, 2nd Edition* (New Village Press: New York, 2016).

¹² (Garcetti, State of the City Address, City of Los Angeles, 2021).

¹³ (Melany De la Cruz-Viesca, et al. "Fifty Years After the Kerner Commission Report: Place, Housing, and Racial Wealth Inequality in Los Angeles". The Russell Sage Foundation *Journal of the Social Sciences*, 2018).

¹⁴ (see "The Black homeownership gap in Los Angeles" at <https://stacker.com/california/los-angeles/black-homeownership-gap-los-angeles>).

¹⁵ Per a Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority report, (<https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=2823-report-and-recommendations-of-the-ad-hoc-committee-on-black-people-experiencing-homelessness>)

¹⁶ <https://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2021/08/16/census-data-2020-pittsburgh-black-flight-allegeny->

[county-baldwin-marshall-mckeesport-munhall-penn-hills/stories/202108160085](https://www.county-baldwin-marshall-mckeesport-munhall-penn-hills/stories/202108160085)

¹⁷ [“The State of Black Dayton: Opportunities Lost”](#)

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act over fifty years ago, minority healthcare remains separate and unequal. Segregation still survives and thrives in the Dayton region. The disparate medical treatment of minority patients is, to a large extent, the product of geography. Chandra, Frakes, Malani, “Challenges to Reducing Discrimination and Health Inequity Through Existing Civil Rights Laws,” National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, (June 1, 2017), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC56545297>.

²⁰ Suater, Comen, and Stebbins, 16 Most Segregated Cities in America (Jul. 21, 2017), <https://www.yahoo.com/news/16-most-segregated-cities-america-192040383.html>, <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2015/05/18/hypersegregated-cities-face-tough-road-change>

²¹ <https://dsl.richmond.edu/socialvulnerability>

²² Ashley L. Seybold, MPH, CHES, Perinatal Periods of Risk Analysis: A method for analyzing and investigating fetal and infant deaths to address local causes and existing disparities, Montgomery County, Ohio 2012-2015 (Jan. 2018), p. 5.

²³ Ibid at 7.

²⁴ <https://www.daytondailynews.com/news/local/infant-mortality-rate-too-high-montgomery-county-health-officiala-say/M8OzWjKRgF8ZawiMaqVf6H>

²⁵ Dawn L. Ebron, MS, MPH, CPH, Perinatal Periods of Risk Analysis: A method for analyzing and investigating fetal and infant deaths to address local causes and existing disparities, Montgomery County, Ohio 2008-2011 (Nov. 17, 2015).

²⁶ Seybold.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ [The Spartanburg Racial Equity Index: A Review of Predictors and Outcomes](#) Kathleen Brady, PhD, August Metropolitan Studies Institute at USC State, 2018.

²⁹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and racial intolerance, A/74/321,, 21 Aug, 2019, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/259/38/PDF/N1925938.pdf?OpenElement>.

³⁰ <https://oag.ca.gov/ab3121/reports>

³¹ <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/ab3121-interim-report-preliminary-recommendations-2022.pdf>.

³² <https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/reparations/hr40/>

³³ <https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/reparations/>

³⁴ [“The Growth of Corporate Influence in Sub-National Political & Legal Institutions Undermines U.S. Compliance with International Human Rights Obligations”](#) US Human Rights Cities UPR Stakeholder Submission, October 2019.

³⁵ See, e.g., Hackworth, Jason. 2021. 'W.E.B. Du Bois and the urban political economy tradition in geography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 45: 1022–39; Shor, Francis. 2020. 'The Long Life of US Institutionalized White Supremacist Terror', *Critical Sociology*, 46: 5-18; Gotham, Kevin Fox. 2000. 'Racialization and the State: The Housing Act of 1934 and the Creation of the Federal Housing Administration', *Sociological Perspectives* 43: 291-317.

³⁶ For instance, in the [Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on his mission to the United States of America](#) (May 2018) Philip Alston observed: “The visit of the Special Rapporteur coincided with the

dramatic change of direction in relevant United States policies. The new policies: (a) provide unprecedentedly high tax breaks and financial windfalls to the very wealthy and the largest corporations; (b) pay for these partly by reducing welfare benefits for the poor; (c) undertake a radical programme of financial, environmental, health and safety deregulation that eliminates protections mainly benefiting the middle classes and the poor; (d) seek to add over 20 million poor and middle class persons to the ranks of those without health insurance; (e) restrict eligibility for many welfare benefits while increasing the obstacles required to be overcome by those eligible; (f) dramatically increase spending on defence, while rejecting requested improvements in key veterans' benefits; (g) do not provide adequate additional funding to address an opioid crisis that is decimating parts of the country; and (h) **make no effort to tackle the structural racism that keeps a large percentage of non-Whites in poverty and near poverty.**" (Par. 6, emphasis added).

³⁷ Peck, J. (2015). Austerity Urbanism: The Neoliberal Crisis of American Cities. *City Series*. New York, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung: 1-25.

³⁸ See, e.g., Good Jobs First: <https://www.goodjobsfirst.org/>; See also: [Do costs outweigh benefits of subsidizing firms to move to a county?](#) Brookings Institution, July 13, 2020; [Pittsburgh's Affordable Housing Crisis: Is Privatization the Solution?](#), Daniel McClymonds, Jackie Smith and Connor Chapman. University of Pittsburgh University Center on Social and Urban Research, March 2022.

³⁹ Black Homes Matter, Pittsburgh Fair Development Action Group, January 2016. At: https://prrac.org/pdf/Black_Homes_Matter-Pittsburgh.pdf

⁴⁰ <https://pennplaza.wordpress.com/2018/06/10/ppsa-statement-on-the-city-planning-commissions-resolution-of-concern/>

⁴¹ For instance, in Pittsburgh, City measures to regulate practices that produce discriminatory outcomes—by requiring landlords to use rental registries, banning housing discrimination based on source of income (i.e., housing vouchers), and promoting affordable housing through measures such as inclusionary zoning—have faced well-funded litigation by interested private parties. Landlords and their associations fight and often win cases that overturn local attempts to promote affordable housing and prevent discrimination.⁴¹ This chills legislative initiatives and advocacy on behalf of human rights and equity and prevents fulfillment of U.S. commitments under CERD.

⁴² <https://www.premierhealth.com/about-premier/about-us>.

⁴³ <https://www.fitchratings.com/research/us-public-finance/fitch-affirms-premier-health-partners-oh-at-a-outlook-remains-negative-20-09-2021>.

⁴⁴ Since 2019, Premier has spent at least \$25 million to construct four health centers in majority white areas and to this day has no medical facility in a majority Black community.

⁴⁵ <https://phdmc.org/report/community-health-improvement-plan>.

⁴⁶ <https://triblive.com/news/health-now/despite-pandemic-upmc-rakes-in-record-high-23-1-billion-in-2020-revenue/>; In 2010 UPMC closed Braddock hospital, once a community hospital that long served a community with a large African American population and more recently it has scaled back needed services in McKeesport, another area with a high concentration of African Americans and low income residents (See "[Elite Hospitals Have an Epidemic of Greed](#)." Phillip Longman and Udit Thakur, *Washington Monthly*, July 6, 2020).

⁴⁷ "[Hospital Consolidation And Racial/Income Disparities In Health Insurance Coverage](#)," Robert J. Town, Douglas R. Wholey, Roger D. Feldman, and Lawton R. Burns. *Health Affairs* 26, no. 4 (2007): 1170–1180; 10.1377/hlthaff.26.4.1170; <https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/healthcare/hospital-access-explains-53-racial-disparities>.

⁴⁸ Numerous studies have documented the ways police contracts negotiated through the Fraternal Order of Police undermine transparency and accountability in cases where officers are accused or involved in violence against suspects (see, e.g., [Performance Audit Pittsburgh Bureau of Police](#). Report by the Office of the City Controller and

Citizen Police Review Board, May 2022; Alliance for Police Accountability. (2021). [Reimagining Public Safety in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County: A community vision for lasting health and safety](#)) There is also evidence that greater transparency reduces racial disparities in police actions. Following nationwide protests in 2020 protesting the killing of George Floyd and demanding attention to the problem of racialized police violence, a study of 17 cities found a notable reduction in racial disparities in police arrests, which is attributed to heightened public scrutiny to the problem (Wang, Xiaohong, The Effect of Black Lives Matter Protests on Racial Disparities in Nonfatal Police-Civilian Interactions (July 8, 2022). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4158042>).

⁴⁹ UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ["Agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality"](#) (A/HRC/47/53), June 2021.

⁵⁰ [Business As Usual: How High-Volume Gun Sellers Fuel the Criminal Market and How the President Can Stop Them](#). Everytown Research and Policy, November 12, 2015; [The Long, Failed History of Gun Control Legislation](#), Joel Brown, *Boston University Today*, May 25, 2022

⁵¹ [Invisible Wounds: Gun Violence and Community Trauma among Black Americans](#) Everytown Research and Policy, May 27, 2021.

⁵² [Gun Violence in America](#), Everytown Research and Policy, January 26, 2022; [Impact of Gun Violence on Black Americans](#), Everytown Research and Policy, 2022.

⁵³ [Impact of Gun Violence on Black Americans; When the Shooting Stops: The Impact of Gun Violence on Survivors in America](#) Everytown Research and Policy, February 3, 2022.

⁵⁴ [Report on effective human rights-based housing strategies](#), 15 January 2018, UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context (A/HRC/37/53).

⁵⁵ See, e.g., [Local government and human rights: report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (2019); UN agencies are also increasingly working with civil society leaders to promote the localization of human rights through, for instance the [World Human Rights Cities Forum](#) in Gwangju, [United Cities and Local Governments](#), and the University of Graz's Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at Local and Regional Levels, which hosts the UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security and promotes research and dialogue on the localization of human rights across UN agencies and between academic and activist communities (<https://www.humanrightsgolocal.org/>).

⁵⁶ [The City of New Orleans highlights problems of racial discrimination, environmental justice, and housing & economic justice; Racial inequity at the core of human rights challenges in Pittsburgh; Washington DC: UPR Stakeholder Report: Capitol city addresses lack of statehood and voting rights, entrenched inequality, and affordable housing](#); U.S. Multi-city report: ["The Growth of Corporate Influence in Sub-National Political & Legal Institutions Undermines U.S. Compliance with International Human Rights Obligations."](#)

⁵⁷ ["Bringing Human Rights Home: Local Policy Recommendations from the UPR Final Report to the U.S. Government"](#) U.S. Human Rights Cities Alliance, UPR Cities Project, 2020.

⁵⁸ ["Bringing Human Rights Home: New Strategies for Local Organizing"](#) By: Jackie Smith & Joshua Cooper, [Open Global Rights](#), August 2019; [Corporate Influence Threatens Human Rights in Communities Nationwide](#) *National network of cities files report to UN Human Rights body on corporate power and local human rights challenges*. By Jackie Smith, [Common Dreams](#) October 28, 2019.

⁵⁹ [Strengthening State and Local Human Rights Promotion and Protection](#) Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review of United States of America-Third Cycle.

⁶⁰ Here we describe how the letters were used in local organizing: Smith, Jackie, and Emily Cummins. 2019. ["UN to U.S. Government: Do Better on Housing."](#) *Shelterforce*, June 3, 2019. On the legal significance of the Blackstone

letters, see: Birchall, David. 2019. 'Human rights on the altar of the market: the Blackstone letters and the financialisation of housing', *Transnational Legal Theory*, 10: 446-71.

⁶¹ Columbia HRI & IAHR, [CERD Shadow Report: The Need For Effective Federal Outreach And Mechanisms To Coordinate And Support Federal, State And Local Implementation Of The Convention](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/USA/INT_CERD_NGO_USA_17794_E.pdf), June 2014, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/USA/INT_CERD_NGO_USA_17794_E.pdf.

⁶² Pittsburgh's Human Rights City Alliance produced this [summary of UPR recommendations geared towards local governments to assist local officials and community advocates seeking to implement the UPR recommendations.](#)