

**Human Rights on the Hill 2025**  
***Using global human rights tools to  
strengthen our cities & local democracy***

U.S.-Canada Human Rights Cities Alliance  
*Human Rights Learning & Action Convening*

**July 25-28, 2025**

Washington DC

2111 Decatur Place NW, Washington, DC 20008, Friends Meeting of Washington

At a time when cities are the front line of defense against the Trump administration's assaults on people's basic rights, human rights advocates from Washington DC, Alabama, Louisiana, Hawaii, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and South Carolina convened over 3 days to consider how local advocates and policy makers can utilize the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United States to lift up human rights concerns in their communities and solicit support from international allies. We heard from municipal, national, and international leaders about innovative ways that people are working across cities and internationally to mobilize pressure on U.S. leaders to improve U.S. compliance with international human rights laws. The workshop supported grassroots activists in developing networks, skills, and strategies for enhancing local engagement in global human rights processes to help U.S. residents hold public officials accountable to global human rights expectations.

***Special thanks*** to the American Friends Service Committee, Southern Poverty Law Center and the Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance for providing support for this meeting.

**Donations** to support this meeting can be made at <https://theglobalswitchboard.org/support/> (Select Human Rights City Alliance & type "DC human rights" in the notes.)

**Facilitation team:** **Lisa Borden**, Senior Policy Council, International Advocacy, Southern Poverty Law Center; **Joshua Cooper**, County of Maui's Office of Innovation & Sustainability, Chief Sustainability Officer; **Jackie Smith**, Professor of sociology, University of Pittsburgh & Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance (*all facilitation team members also serve on the U.S.-Canada Human Rights Cities Alliance Steering Committee*)

**Program**

**Friday July 25 5:00-7:00 PM- Welcome & introduction reception** (*Sponsored by Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance*) [Mission Dupont Circle](#), 1606 20th Street NW, Washington, District of Columbia 20009 P: 202-525-2010

**Saturday July 26: @ [Friends Meeting of Washington](#)**

9:00AM Arrival & Welcome

9:15AM Introductions of participants

9:30AM-10:15AM **Overview- human rights cities & N. America Human Rights Cities Alliance** [\(Slide presentation\)](#)

- Background on Human Rights Cities movement & People-centered human rights → Brief history of HRCA
  - What human rights cities do & why this is especially important today
- 10:30-11:15 AM **Local Governments and Human Rights**
- Robin Toma**, [County of Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations](#) & [International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies](#) (IAOHRA) *Why & how international and cross-city work is valuable*
- [Signs of Solidarity — LA vs. Hate](#)
  - [LACCHR proposed Strategic Plan for FY 2025-2030](#)
  - **Paul Gready**, Co-Director, [Centre for Applied Human Rights](#), University of York (UK), [UNESCO Chair](#), *Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Expansion of Political Space & Pl: [Art Rights Truth](#) - Can the Arts Save Human Rights? Human Rights Truth Claims in a Post-Truth Era (AHRC)*
- Joshua Cooper**, County of Maui's Office of Innovation & Sustainability Director & Human Rights Cities Alliance Steering Committee. *How local governments are engaging with the SDGs through Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) -and how local activists can support accountability for SDGs*
- [The UPR and the Sustainable Development Goals | UPR info](#)
  - [SDG Localization and the Voluntary Local Reviews](#)
- 11:30-12:45 **Cities and the UN human rights toolkit**
- Introducing some of the offices and special procedures & their relationships to local advocacy efforts*
- **Lisa Borden**, Senior Policy Counsel, International Advocacy, Southern Poverty Law Center
  - **Barbara Reynolds** [Working group of Experts on People of African Descent](#)
    - [Visit to United States of America, 19-29 January 2016](#)
    - 2024 Annual Report: [Fulfilling the economic, social and cultural rights of people of African descent in the age of digitalization, artificial intelligence, and new and emerging technologies](#) (A/HRC/57/70)
    - [The Second International Decade for People of African Descent](#)
  - **Dorothy Davis** [Congressional Black Caucus Institute Global African Diaspora Initiative](#) (CBCI)
  - **Terrance Winn**, Priorities, Intentions and Practical Exchanges (PIPE), Shreveport, LA, *presenting grassroots perspectives to UN bodies*
- 1:45 PM-3:00 PM **Overview of Universal Periodic Review & 2025 U.S. UPR** (Lisa Borden & Joshua Cooper)
- \*UPR history and significance as tool for human rights
- \*Civil society stakeholder submissions-strategy
- \*Geo-political context and the Trump administration uncertainties

- *Brief background on UPR Cities 2020, CERD, & UN Special Mechanisms → what we've done for 2025 UPR*
- *Why local mobilization in global human rights accountability matters*

3:15PM-4:30PM

### **U.S. UPR review and beyond: Bringing human rights to your city**

*\*Preparing for Monday briefings*

*\*Lobbying for 2025 - timeline and strategy –why this matters and how folks can help support it*

- *September 25-26-NYC; November 10, 2025-U.S. Scheduled UPR review in Geneva & Report (Timing contingent on U.S. administration & expectations of U.S. refusal to participate)*
- *How movements can frame key recommendations & emphases*
- Post-UPR follow-up: How to translate national recommendations into local policy:
  - From 2020 Summary of recommendations for local contexts: *"Bringing Human Rights Home: Local Policy Recommendations from the UPR Final Report to the U.S. Government"* (HRCA, 2020)
- Strategies for making human rights matter in local politics
  - Public education & outreach
  - Work with local government agencies/ human rights commissions

### **Sunday July 27**

*Free time/ Work on UPR lobbying briefs and handout/s*

1:30-4:30PM

Optional: Meeting space reserved at Cleveland Park Community Library, 3310 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008

### **Monday July 28**

**Location:** Friends Meeting of Washington [2111 Decatur Place NW, Washington, DC 20008](https://www.friendsmeetingofwashington.org/)

9:00 AM Arrival

9:15AM Welcome and recap

*Preparations for meetings with delegates*

10:30AM **Ali Cain**, Human Rights Policy Officer, Delegation of the European Union to the United States

11:00AM-1:00PM *Briefing with international consulate delegates* (Chatham House rules: remarks shared by delegates are entirely confidential, no publicity or social media sharing)

1:00-2:00PM Informal networking / adjourn

## **Resources**

**Slide presentation**-Human Rights Cities Alliance 2025 Washington DC Convening

UN Human Rights advocacy:

- [A Global Human Rights Toolkit for U.S. Advocates](#)
- [Human Rights Cities Alliance UPR 2025 Toolkit](#)
- ["Bringing Human Rights Home: Local Policy Recommendations from the UPR Final Report to the U.S. Government"](#) Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance
- [UN Special Procedures & IACHR Statements on U.S. in 2025](#)

### **Short readings on human rights cities:**

The [Local Futures: Human Rights Cities](#) essay series is produced by teams of Human Rights Cities Alliance organizers and published in [Open Global Rights](#) in English, Spanish, and French. [The rise of human rights cities](#) introduces the series and discusses how cities are leading the way in advancing solutions to critical urban problems such as [affordable housing](#) and [state preemption](#). This week's essay, [Building translocal movements for global racial justice](#), shows how the legacy of grassroots organizing by Black communities and allies offers a blueprint for local-global organizing that can advance racial and global justice.

- [See more essays in this series](#)
  - [Cities and the human right to housing](#)
  - [How global human rights can help cities challenge state preemption](#)
  - [Building translocal movements for global racial justice](#)
  - [A national human rights institution for the United States: Can cities lead the way?](#)

### **Toolkits in progress:**

- [Global Toolkit for Local Human Rights Advocacy](#)
- [Recommendations for Bringing Human Rights Home](#) (*Summarizes recommendations from prior UPR, CERD, and EMLER reviews to help advocates integrate and select priorities and translate these into local advocacy.*)

### **Sample UPR Briefing "One-Pagers"-Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)**

These reports were submitted by SPLC and partner organizations for the 2025 UPR of the U.S.

- [Hate and Extremism](#)
- [Voting Rights](#)
- [Prison labor](#)
- [Juvenile Justice](#)
- [Solitary Confinement](#)

### **Human Rights Cities Alliance 1-pagers for 2025 UPR**

- [Tax policy](#)
- [Housing & homelessness](#)
- [Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#)
- [Human Impact of Homelessness Dayton](#)
- [Gentrification in Pittsburgh's Hill District](#)
- [Tax policies and universities impacts on cities](#)

### **Immigrant rights:**

**\*Note:** Our HRCA team did not generate a report on immigrant rights, but advocates in our meeting were working on this important area, and several leading organizations produced this: [Joint Submission of Coalition of Immigrant Rights Organizations to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review of the United States of America](#) –This report can shape our recommendations for improving protections for immigrants and the communities in which we live.