**UNA-SNY Program History - Race, Criminal Justice and Human Rights – March 2021**

Since 2014 the UNA-USA Southern NY State Division (UNA-SNY) has held annual consultations on Race, Criminal Justice and Human Rights, treating a large number of issues, including the school-to-prison pipeline. The Division has contributed reports and other materials related to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) [[1]](#footnote-1). That body monitors implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination [[2]](#footnote-2) by its State parties. The U.S. is a signatory to this treaty.

The Division and UNA-USA nationally also have submitted stakeholder (a.k.a., shadow) reports to the UN and the U.S. State Department as part of the Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights (UPR) by the UN Human Rights Council, [[3]](#footnote-3) in 2014, 2017 and 2020.  Those reports have reflected on recent policies and situations in the U.S. and the reporting by the U.S. to the UN on recommendations from the Council. See this footnote for details of the 2020 response. [[4]](#footnote-4)

***Latest news:***The U.S. Government, which submitted an initial response to 347 human rights recommendations to the UPR in March 2021, chose to accept 263 recommendations, note 67 and partially accept 17. Mainly these focused on civil rights/racial discrimination, migration/child separation policy, criminal justice reform, rights of Indigenous Peoples and treaties.

Reports prepared by UNA-SNY are available in the Resources section of [www.unasny.org](http://www.unasny.org). They and others submitted in 2019 through UNA-National for the 2020 UPR are available in the Human Rights section of the UNA-USA website, at [UPR C onsultation Reports – UNA-USA](https://unausa.org/human-rights/upr-reports/). [[5]](#footnote-5) In both cases they include but also go beyond the issues covered in this note.

The Division’s July 2014 Shadow Report covered the Race and the American Criminal Justice System. [[6]](#footnote-6)   Topics included (1) Overrepresentation of minorities among those arrested, charged, convicted, incarcerated and sentenced to death; (2) Racial and ethnic disparities in education, poverty, housing, health and exposure to crime and violence; (3) Criminalization of homelessness and its disproportionate impact on individuals belonging to national or ethnic minorities; (4) Progress made to end racial profiling and surveillance by law enforcement officials;  (5) Excessive use of force by law enforcement officials; and (6) Situation of non‐citizens, including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. These themes have run through many of the Division’s consultations. In December 2014 we wrote a Statement from the Board concerning the killings of Eric Garner and Michael Brown, “American Criminal Justice System Needs More Than Body Cameras.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

After its August 2015 consultation the Division outlined its findings in a letter to NY State Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson.[[8]](#footnote-8) Main topics were women and girls; the school-to-prison pipeline; and sentencing, prison and post‐incarceration. In November 2015 the Division updated its reply to the CERD Shadow Report, with details on the school-to-prison pipeline.[[9]](#footnote-9)

In August 2016 the consultation focused on what we can do about these important areas: 1. School to prison pipeline; 2. Community policing; and 3. Housing in relation to foster care and human trafficking. Pipeline subcategories included these: student achievements, information sharing, educational support, and de-facto segregation. [[10]](#footnote-10)

The August 2017 consultation dealt with “Protecting Freedoms of Speech and Assembly, and Finding Solutions for Youth in Crisis”. [[11]](#footnote-11) This responded to a letter to the U.S. Government from Special Rapporteurs on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, which related to proposed Bills criminalizing peaceful protests in 16 states in the U.S. [[12]](#footnote-12) Later in August 2017, following a white nationalist rally and rioting in Charlottesville, Virginia and elsewhere in the U.S., the CERD published a document addressing the U.S. administration entitled “Prevention Of Racial Discrimination, Including Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedures.” This analyzed the growth of white nationalism in the U.S., urged that the U.S. adhere to the terms of the CERD treaty, and recommended steps for the U.S. to take to reduce racism.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The 5th annual consultation, in 2018, dealt with “Where We Live: Domestic Violence and Children in Storage.” The children were immigrant children at the U.S.-Mexico border, many of whom were transported to agencies in New York. Led by former Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson, the meeting also discussed the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act, related to legislation in New York. A flier and videos are available. [[14]](#footnote-14) [[15]](#footnote-15)

In 2019 the Division and member chapters joined with chapters around the U.S. to treat topics related to the 3rd Universal Periodic Review. These included consultations on race, justice and human rights where we partnered with local organizations or chapters around the country. All were submitted to UNA-USA National for inclusion in an overall report. Specific consultations and reports included: (1) race, criminal justice and human rights[[16]](#footnote-16); (2) the rights of migrants, asylum seekers, & refugees and gender equality & combatting human trafficking [[17]](#footnote-17); and (3) immigrant children and human rights.[[18]](#footnote-18)

1. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cerd/pages/cerdindex.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://geneva.usmission.gov/2021/03/17/us-upr-1/?emci=5f3b9059-2d88-eb11-85aa-00155d43c992&emdi=7cf3446a-bb88-eb11-85aa-00155d43c992&ceid=9617379> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://unausa.org/human-rights/upr-reports/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/una_southern_nys_division_icerd_shadow_report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/una_snyd_statement_dec_10_2014__1_.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/letter_to_sen._ruth_hassell-thompson.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/una-sny_shadow_report_november_2015.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/final_report_race_criminal_justice_and_human_rights_10_11_16.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/protecting_freedoms_of_speech___assembly___finding_solutions_for_youth_in_crisis_-_2017__consultation_report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Opinion/Legislation/OL_USA_3_2017.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/int_cerd_ewu_usa_8285_e.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/flier_2018_consultation_8_8_18.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/video_links_2018.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/final_upr_stakeholder_report_race_criminal_justice_and_human_rights_upr.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/final-una-usa_upr_stakeholder_report_includes_queens.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. <https://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/final_upr_report-immigrant_children_and_human_rights_upr.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)