

# SUMMARY OF EAST COAST CERD STRATEGY SESSION

WASHINGTON D.C.  
JUNE 27<sup>TH</sup> 2008



*Facilitated by Ramona Ortega*

Hosted by Global Rights



## PARTICIPANTS

*Facilitator:* Ramona Ortega, USHRN

*Participants:* Eric Tars, National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty; Vania Leveille, ACLU; Michelle Jacobs, U of Florida Law School; Genora Reed, Global Rights; Marcia Johnson-Blanco, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights; Becky Smith, Law Project; Tong Lee, Rights Group, Thandabantu, USHRN; Ajamu Baraka, USHRN; Chavi Khanna, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Michelle Jacobs, Florida University, Ryan King, Sentencing Project; Virginia Davis, National Congress of American Indians; Heidi West, Global

*By Phone:* Andrea Ritchie, USHRN; Becky Smith, NELP; Rights Laleh Isphani & Jamil Dakwar, ACLU; Caroline Bettinger-López, Human Rights Institute;

## SUMMARY OF CERD FOLLOW UP TO DATE

- Chicago follow up meeting, National CERD Follow-up Call
- May 9 American Constitutional Society briefing of House staffers – speakers were Jamil Dakwar, Ajamu Baraka, and Marcia Johnson Blanco of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, the Heritage Foundation, Lisa Crooms moderator. Spoke about the CERD, the CERD Committee, why it is important for the US to engage with international treaties and bodies, why that should be part of U.S. agenda. Some substantive areas and recommendations, how Congress can take a role in implementing treaty obligations through legislation, education, monitoring compliance on a regular basis.
- HR 1055 – a Congressional resolution on CERD, sponsored by Congressman Hastings of the Helsinki Commission (previously posted to list serve) – now there is an effort to get more support for it.
- John Lewis introduced a resolution on the Senate side to sign onto CEDAW, Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- There have been subsequent conversations with Joe Biden’s office, Senator Kennedy’s staff.
- Congressional staffers are hungry for information, there is interest in doing more meetings with Senate staffers, Lashawn Warren (formerly ACLU), who works with House Judiciary Committee is interested in working to put together a hearing, Margaret Huang met with her recently to discuss.
- Additional hearings could be planned and planning a process for a more sustained monitoring mechanism in Congress over Executive branch in terms of

“I want us to be careful, the presidential election is not the conclusion, there are some illusions that things are going to get better in terms of oppression. I want us to hold whoever is in the Whitehouse accountable.”

TV Iverson

compliance with treaty obligations. There is a Human Rights and the Rule of Law subcommittee, there have been some contacts with Senator Durbin's staff about this, they have an interest in doing more in the future.

- Realistically nothing substantial can be done between now and January when there in the new administration. Now we could target staffers but not push for big bills that might not be passed in the coming months or year.
- Discussion of TRANSITION MEMOS that are already underway. Repro-Rights; Civil Rights (Wade Henderson) and ACS (through **Catherine Powell [Professor at Fordham, was hired by the ACS to prepare a transitional blueprint for human rights initiatives, take into account recommendations and experiences under the Clinton administration with the Inter Agency Working Group with treaty obligations.]**)
- Columbia Human Rights Institute is interested in helping move the recommendation that there be an agency or body that monitors human rights treaties – there are lots of models & mechanisms. Ejim Dike (HRP) is pushing local implementation and Rose Daitsman from Milwaukee is interested in setting the state and local level accountability mechanisms through human rights commissions.
- Special Rapporteur is still accepting submissions. He is willing to come back as an individual in October.
- A briefing on Native Women on the fill focused on violence against women, the US voted against the Indigenous Women's declaration. United Nations of Indian Tribes & Indian Congress passed a resolution in support of CERD. They are focusing on education through tribal leaders.
- National Law Center are preparing recommendations for next administration, and they cite CERD recommendations. Also used CERD recommendations in briefings to city council's opposing legislation making homelessness criminal. Almost got a repeal, on Minneapolis legislation. Groups talked to the SR in Minneapolis and could be a good example of solid legislation using CERD. Also working on litigation in St. Petersburg Florida, opposing a homeless-criminalization ordinance, the ordinance has been tabled.
- Victory in NYC, passing the family court act (NYC State), previously no civil ct. orders of protection unless married and with children. Columbia HR clinic brought this issue up in the CERD SR and it has now passed.
- Minnesota organizations have started organizing and doing popular education using all three treaties, creating a blue print for organizing. (see attachment)

- Stan Willis is asking people to lobby international Olympic committee and oppose Chicago as an Olympic site due to police brutality.

**Question: Do we need a transition memo from Civil Society Human Rights groups using the shadow report and getting sign on from working groups ?**

## **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION OF NATIONAL TASK FORCE**

The CERD Task Force was put together in 2007 to act as an ad-hoc coordinating body to assist in the coordination of the Shadow Report and the Geneva Delegation. It's members represented organizations that had previous experience in the shadow reporting process, in particular with CERD. While overall, there was much utility in having such a body, there were very important critiques of the usefulness of such tight coordination. In sum, there was agreement that a body, called a task force, is needed to assist in coordinating CERD follow-up, implementation, and oversight.

There was a discussion of the role of such a task force and its relationship to the USHRN. Ajamu Baraka of the USHRN clarified the relationship and defined it as a supporting role, meaning the work of the network is done through member organizations and that the central office is present to support that work. In addition he reiterated that the network is attempting to facilitate national partnerships that do not overburden individuals and organizations and to that end the USHRN will provide administrative support to this newly formed task force.

A discussion of the previous function and make-up of the CERD task force and the Shadow report working groups was followed by the pros and cons of keeping all 20+ issue area working groups and how they would feed into and or be represented on a national task force.

Currently there are roughly 22 issue area working groups that were formed to work on the shadow report. Of those, roughly half are continuing to work on CERD follow-up and are actively working together. There was consensus that some of the working groups could be folded into each other or otherwise combined. This process can happen through the CERD list-serve.

There was consensus that the TF should help to coordinate the One-year report back to the CERD committee and future shadow reports under CERD. In addition there was agreement that there should be a liason between the working groups and the TF, similar to the role that Andrea has been playing. Other expertise that was expressed as being a priority on the TF: International experience, congressional experience, grassroots constituencies, and specific voices (gender, LGBT, and Indigenous).

Eric Tars, cautioned that the one-year-report back is only as useful as we make it and that the committee does nothing in particular to acknowledge the document, so we need to lobby to make it significant.

The ACLU's lobbyist, Vania, reminded us that we need to keep an eye on the larger landscape in Washington and to figure out strategically how we lobby on CERD and how to integrate CERD into a larger federal strategy.

There was special request that this national TF or one of the working groups deal with the Durban Review.

- In sum, the Task Force recruitment process will insure inclusion of different sectors and issues and that various skills sets (identified below) will be represented
- The TF will have a multi-prong national strategy that supports the work of the working groups and takes on tasks that are national in scope

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TASK FORCE

- Coordinate working group communications and actions
- One-year follow up and Shadow Reporting forward
- Technical Assistance to organizations
- Develop a National Set of Priorities
- Coordinate International Advocacy Efforts (Durban etc.)

## RECOMMENDED RECRUITMENT AND NOMINATION PROCESS

There was a general consensus that we would like to make the recruitment and nomination process as transparent and wide-spread as possible. Everyone agreed that we would like to reach beyond the “usual suspects” but realize there is a need for some historical memory and experience. The recommendation is that we have a general set of principles in forming the TF and there will be an effort to make sure the TF is diverse in several aspects, including region, organizational size, racial and gender diversity, etc. If we want that we need some centralized planning—We would need to recruit, but does it make sense to bring them in now?-What are selling now—outreach committee.

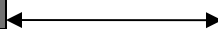
Action Item:

Set up a recruitment and nomination committee to develop some outreach materials and to generate a list of candidates. This committee can also vet the nominations as they come in.

# RECOMMENDATION OF STRUCTURE FOR NATIONAL CERD TASK FORCE

The following captures the recommendations from the EC Strategy session for a national task force. The categories represent areas of “expertise” that have been proposed. The rationale for each category is explained below.

NATIONAL CERD TASK FORCE	
Area of Expertise	Rationale
Technical Assistance Trainer	Education and outreach will need a training component and the TF will be able to offer TA to groups interested in CERD implementation
Grassroots Organizer/organization	Prioritize recruitment and outreach to small-mid size grassroots social justice organizations
Communications	Media and communications is particularly important and this person can assist in working with working groups and national TF
<b>Paid Liaison to Task Force</b>	<b>Paid staff of USHRN to assist in administrative tasks and coordination and communication between TF and working groups</b>
Legislative Policy	D.C. 2009-2010 will be in important moment to influence legislation related to CERD and we need someone who is working on the hill or has close connections
International Advocacy	Develop connections to international NGO's, keep up to date on international gatherings, coordinate U.N. advocacy efforts including Shadow Reporting and One-yr. follow up.
Gender Integration	Represent integration of gender aspects of CERD work
LGBT	Represent integration of LGBT aspects of CERD work
Indigenous Peoples	Represent integration of Indigenous rights aspects of CERD work



Each Issue Area Working Group Chair will report out to Liaison on TF to ensure representation of Working Group issues and to ensure effective two-way communication

## SUMMARY OF WORKING GROUP DISCUSSION

There was minor discussion of Issue area working groups, in particular the development of new groups and the consolidation of old groups. In particular, there is a sense that there needs to be a coordinated effort to consolidate groups, generate “descriptions” of working groups and nomination of Chairs where one is absent. Outreach to Associations In addition a collaboration between working groups to reach out to other leading national organizations such as league of municipal cities (National Conference of Black Educators, etc.)

## NEW WORKING GROUPS

Federal Policy:

Acting Co-Chairs: ACLU (Vania and Jamil)  
with/ Genora + Marcia +Ryan + Eric Tars

*Working Group description and work-plan over next couple of months.*

- Work with others on ERPA and integrating CO language into other progressive pieces of legislation, including the Dignity Act.
- Setting up meetings with congressional reps, including LaShawn, Raven group, etc. Working with Connors staff, to put together a one-year reporting oversight hearing.
- Federal working group’s job is to think about the transition. What did he say...look at the record...what did he say and how do we integrate it into the campaign to elevate our issues. We have homework to do.
- Before Callie left she spoke with the Helsinki commission to do some education with staffers on the treaty obligations.
- Center on Law and Poverty are using CO and CERD pre-amble in every piece of legislation that goes out, creating a “public record” and interpretive mechanism for the future.
- Submit testimony for hearings that are related to CERD
- Ensuring that organizations and government staffers have copies of the relevant sections of the shadow report so the document is being used.
- Develop a transitional Memo on HR

State and Municipal Implementation:

Acting Co-Chairs: Ejim Dike, Human Rights Project, Columbian Human Rights Institute  
*Suggestions for work*

- Stop and frisk in local neighborhoods

- State and local HR's commissions and getting them to go look beyond fair housing and employment.
- Mobilize and integrate HR and CERD into organizing efforts around work and immigration

International Advocacy

*Sub group on Durban*

Acting Co-Chairs: Ramona Ortega, Ciudadao Global + Janvieve Williams, Latin American Caribbean Community Center, Michelle Jacobs, Florida University

Student Outreach & Education Working group

Chair: Allison Garren, National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty