



**Testimony of the US Human Rights Network to IDPAD
Consultation on the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent**

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. To the Ambassadors from Chad and Costa Rica, thank you for your leadership. Thank you to all the delegates. I am Dr. Vickie Casanova-Willis, Executive Director of the US Human Rights Network, signatories to the civil society joint statement from the International Coalition for People of African Descent and ALDA, urging ECOSOC status for the Permanent Forum. I speak today to reaffirm the urgency of this Permanent Forum, on behalf of the countless millions of people of African descent past, present, and future - and our allies - based here in what many call “the belly of the beast”. As much of the world now sees via social media, in these yet-to-be-United States of North America, generations of horrific race-based human rights violations, exploitation, discrimination and disenfranchisement has led to mass casualties, mass incarceration, and massive inequities. **Lest We Forget** the sacrifice of blood, sweat, and tears of our ancestors whose very lives were stolen to profit global piracy at the highest levels of capitalist colonialism and indeed genocide – it is African peoples/African descendants who have paid the price for others’ wealth, virtually anywhere on this planet.

Let us remember 2021 as the sacred anniversary year it represents: 20 years since the [Durban 400](#), departed US shores for the [World Conference Against Racism](#) -- a coalition of descendants of formerly enslaved Africans and our freeborn African-descended cousins indigenous to the US, or born of the Caribbean, Central or South America -- united in their courageous interventions against global human wrongs... won an historic victory in the [Durban Declaration and Programme of Action](#) which for the first time, acknowledged the Transatlantic Slave Trade as the crime against humanity we have always known it to be. This launched a chain of events which brings us here today, including the International Year, and now [Decade](#),—for people of African Descent, ending just 3 years from now, with so much yet to accomplish. **Lest We Forget** the chains of our ancestors, but also the achievements, and the promises of Recognition, Justice, Development and...yes, Reparations which are owed for our stolen labor and stolen lives.

We support African Unity throughout the Motherland and Diaspora - and urge the U.S. to put down the magnifying glass and pick up the mirror: Free the aging civil rights [U.S. political prisoners](#); free the land; free the children by ratifying the [CRC](#) and [ESCR](#) treaties; and free all minds and hearts, to finally implement human rights *right* here at home. The international community can help make that a reality. An effective, independent, transparent and accessible **Permanent Forum on People of African Descent** is crucial. Thank you so much for your leadership; we stand ready to work together to that end.

Dr. Vickie Casanova-Willis, PhD USHRN Co- Executive Director vcasanova-willis@ushrnetwork.org