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The United States underwent on November 5, 2010, its first Universal Periodic Review, a process established in 2006 through which all 192 United Nations members are assessed on their record of human rights. The review offered unique opportunities for legal advocates in the United States to engage with grassroots constituencies, domestic and international human rights advocates, the international community, and U.S. government officials about human rights issues not adequately covered by legal and political frameworks in the United States. In four years the United States will return to the United Nations to be assessed on its progress as measured against the recommendations in its first Universal Periodic Review. In the intervening years the legal services community can collaborate with the broader human rights community to see that progress is achieved and the rights expounded upon at the United Nations in Geneva become a reality in the United States.

Here I describe the United States’ first Universal Periodic Review and, in broad terms, the recommendations that came out of it from the viewpoint of my role as a consultant and senior coordinator of the Universal Periodic Review Project of the United States Human Rights Network. Then, drawing upon my earlier experiences as a legal services attorney for migrant farmworkers, I outline some ways in which legal services attorneys and community-based advocates can draw upon the narratives of their clients to translate the lofty rhetoric heard at the United Nations into concrete policy recommendations that truly advance human rights for the working poor and unemployed.

I. The Universal Periodic Review

The Universal Periodic Review originated in the founding document of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The United Nations General Assembly mandated the Council “[u]ndertake a universal periodic review, based on objective and reliable information, of the fulfilment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments in a manner which ensures universality of coverage and equal treatment with respect to all States.”

Among the Universal Periodic Review’s leading objectives are the “improvement of the human rights situation on the ground” and the “fulfilment of a State’s human rights obligations and commitments and an assessment of positive developments and challenges faced by the State.” To further these objectives, the Human Rights

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2Id. ¶ 5(e).
3See Human Rights Council, Res. 5/1 (June 18, 2007), Annex I.B.2.4 (a)-(b).
Council’s core principles urge that the Universal Periodic Review (1) promote the “universality, indivisibility, and interrelatedness of all human rights”; (2) be an interactive dialogue and cooperative based on objective and reliable information; (3) ensure universal coverage and equal treatment among all states in an intergovernmental and full involvement of the country under review; and (4) “[f]ully integrate a gender perspective.” The council explicitly urges the “participation of all relevant stakeholders” in the Universal Periodic Review in recognition of civil society’s pivotal role in ensuring accountability and advancing human rights for all.

In seeking to ensure a universal set of standards against which all countries are reviewed, the Universal Periodic Review assesses a country’s compliance with not only the human rights treaties it has ratified but also the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration enumerates an inclusive set of rights built on the premise that “[a]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” The declaration expands significantly beyond the U.S. Constitutional framework of civil and political rights and incorporates the full range of economic, social, and cultural rights central to the realization of the fundamental right to human dignity.

The Universal Periodic Review’s inclusion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as a body of international human rights principles against which countries are reviewed, is of particular importance to U.S. advocates because the United States has failed to ratify many core international human rights treaties under both the United Nations system and the Inter-American system. As for those treaties the United States has ratified, the United States has done so with a series of reservations, understandings, and declarations that seek to limit the scope of those treaty obligations to the domestic legal framework. The Universal Periodic Review is a unique opportunity for advocates in the United States to push for the full panoply of rights where domestic law and litigation strategies have proven insufficient.

Three primary documents assembled and distributed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights inform the Universal Periodic Review: a ten-page summary of civil society and other stakeholder submissions; a summary of reports from the United Nations Charter–Based and Treaty Monitoring Bodies; and the report submitted by the country under review. The peer review lets states have two minutes each to comment, ask questions of, and issue recommendations to the country being reviewed during a three-hour session in Geneva. In the days immediately following, the Universal Periodic Review Working Group issues a draft report and the government reviewed is given an opportunity for a brief preliminary response. The report essentially transcribes the review and sets forth the recommendations made.

While civil society has no opportunity to participate directly in the review itself and is allowed only twenty minutes during the formal adoption session, civil society can still ensure that its priorities are incorporated into the report. Through its written submissions, communications with its own government, and advocating with countries to ask targeted questions and make key recommendations, civil society can and does inform and influence the review and the final report.

II. Toward a “More Perfect Union”

In its written submission to the Human Rights Council and throughout the Universal Periodic Review, the United States referenced the Founders’ proclaimed ambition “to create a more perfect Union,” and the United States framed its participation in the review as part of its

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4Id. Annex I.B.1.3.
5Id. Annex I.B.1.3.(m).
ongoing effort toward a “more perfect union, a more perfect world.” The first U.S. review demonstrated the inherent promises and challenges associated with using international human rights mechanisms to effectuate meaningful changes in domestic laws and policies in order to advance a human rights agenda domestically. The challenges are particularly hard in the United States because there is no formal mechanism to promote and enforce international human rights obligations at home and there remains a limited consciousness among all branches of government. There persists a disconnect between national policies and local realities on human rights. But civil society can ensure that the Universal Periodic Review advances human rights.

### A. Civil Society Coordination and Collaboration

The U.S. review took place in a three-hour session before the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva on November 5, 2010, but the review began well before and continues well past that date. Almost one year earlier, advocates from across the country came together to identify substantive areas about which to prepare and submit stakeholder reports. In late January 2010, the State Department initiated consultations with civil society. Advocates recognized the unique opportunity to raise rights issues for which they lacked any other formal mechanism, especially in light of the United States’ poor record of treaty ratification and the lack of any formal mechanism for implementing human rights obligations. We also saw the Universal Periodic Review as an opportunity to build human rights consciousness in the United States and to bridge substantive and identity-group divisions to transcend the more episodic, Geneva-centric approach to which human rights advocacy is susceptible. Advocacy communities came together to elevate economic, social, and cultural rights alongside other human rights challenges to the United States—freedom of association, criminal justice, racial profiling, and all forms of discrimination. In anticipation of the Universal Periodic Review, 103 stakeholder submissions were presented to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; among the submissions were twenty-four coalition stakeholder reports and an overarching summary report, representing hundreds of organizations and advocates that the United States Human Rights Network coordinated. The reports highlighted significant gaps between rights and reality in the United States and set forth concrete recommendations to close those gaps.

### B. U.S. Government Participation

The Obama administration approached the Universal Periodic Review as an opportunity to establish its role before the international community, to lend support and legitimacy to the Human Rights Council, and to model for the rest of the world the values associated with a free and open society where residents may engage in dialogue and critique. Unprecedentedly, the administration engaged civil society in on-site consultations in New Orleans, New York City, Albuquerque, El Paso, San Francisco and Berkeley, Detroit, Chicago, Birmingham, and three targeted consultations in Washington, D.C. These consultations marked the first time the government had gone on the road to hear individuals’ concerns about U.S. human rights obligations and the first time federal agency representatives from both Washington, D.C., and local or regional offices directly participated in discussions on U.S. human rights obligations. The participation of representatives from the U.S. Departments of Defense, Education, Health and

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Using the Universal Periodic Review to Advance Human Rights

Human Services, Interior, and Labor, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties within the Department of Justice allowed individuals and community representatives to express their human rights concerns to the agencies with direct oversight over human rights issues, rather than just the Department of State, which is oriented toward engaging the world beyond the United States.10

During the Universal Periodic Review consultations, community representatives typically excluded from the legal and power structures in the United States—formerly incarcerated persons, indigenous peoples, sex workers, high school students, single parents, the homeless, those without health insurance—participated directly in conversations about their human rights. Those who engaged did so expecting that their participation and commitment of time and resources would bring results that extended into the daily lives of the people in their communities.

The consultations highlighted the promise and challenge associated with “civil society” engagement and “stakeholder” participation, terms nowhere defined in the resolutions implementing the Universal Periodic Review. Historically “civil society” access to government and United Nations human rights mechanisms was limited to professional advocates who represented leading national and international human and civil rights organizations, often behind closed doors within the Beltway or in the distant halls and hearing rooms of the United Nations’ prohibitively expensive city of Geneva.

Similar to the consultations that preceded its preparation, the national report submitted to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights demonstrated a level of commitment not seen in prior United Nations human rights reviews. But, as the government conceded, the report “gives a partial snapshot of the current human rights situation in the United States” and unfortunately fell short of its stated promise of serving as a “road-map for … ongoing work within our democratic system to achieve lasting change.”11

The report assesses the United States’ compliance with its human rights obligations along the following categories of rights: freedom of expression, religion, association, and political participation; fairness and equality; dignity; education; health; housing; national security; immigration; and human trafficking. Rather than taking ownership over areas where the United States falls short of its obligations to achieve human rights for all, the administration framed the report and subsequent presentations within the more narrow constitutional rights framework and asserted pride in its improvements in the area of civil rights.12

For the limited areas where it noted need for improvement or reiterated concerns raised by civil society, the administration failed to set forth a plan of action or the promised road map for lasting change.

The consultations, the report filed, and the administration’s presentation during the review marked a positive shift by the United States in its approach to international human rights reviews, but the review also brought into focus the disconnect between the rhetoric from Washington, D.C., and the realities in local communities. Throughout the review, the administration cited the U.S. Constitution, federal statutes, and federal policies aimed at combating discrimination in all its forms and at protecting freedom of association, freedom of religion, criminal due process, and other fundamental rights central to the notion of human rights and dignity for all. But the government did not fully acknowledge

10For more information on the on-site consultations and the activities and reports of the U.S. government throughout the Universal Periodic Review, see U.S. Department of State, Universal Periodic Review (n.d.), http://1.usa.gov/bbS5fG.


12Id. ¶ 10 (“Since our founding, we have made tremendous progress in strengthening the protection of rights and in enhancing and expanding equal opportunities for their enjoyment…. The Constitution provided the means for its own amelioration and revision: its glaring original flaw of tolerating slavery, as well as denying the vote to women, have both been corrected through constitutional reform, judicial review and our democratic processes.”).
that those legal provisions fall short in substance and implementation.

The administration sought to absolve itself of responsibilities and deferred to U.S. political and constitutional structures—Congress, the judiciary, or the states. Furthermore, with regard to implementation, nowhere did the United States acknowledge how lack of access to competent counsel and other barriers to the judicial system result in lack of access to justice and in impeding the realization of the rights being touted.

C. Draft Report and Follow-Up

Through its participation in a variety of formats, advocates informed one another, the government, and the international community on the human rights realities and set forth concrete strategies for advancement. The result was 228 recommendations reflecting the concerns and priorities of a diverse civil society, even those made by countries with their own political agendas.

Harold Hongju Koh, a State Department legal advisor, sought to categorize the 228 recommendations into ten loosely constructed baskets:

(i) Political in nature (e.g., challenging the U.S. embargo of Cuba), or based on pending or resolved court proceedings; the Obama administration viewed this as beyond the scope of the Universal Periodic Review;

(ii) Calling for treaty ratification and for removal of reservations and understandings that limit the scope and application of treaties already ratified;

(iii) Criminal justice, specifically discrimination within the criminal justice system, violence against women, the sentencing of juveniles to life without parole, the school-to-prison pipeline, and the death penalty;

(iv) Discrimination in housing, credit, employment, education, and environmental justice;

(v) Immigration, particularly racial and ethnic profiling, detention, and discrimination;

(vi) National security enforcement, including torture and accountability, the closing of Guantanamo, the use of military commissions, and infringements on privacy and due process;

(vii) Rights of indigenous peoples;

(viii) Freedom of expression and religion, and specifically discrimination against the Muslim and Arab communities;

(ix) Economic, social, and cultural rights, specifically regarding access to housing, health care, education, and decent work; and

(x) Need for a national institution or other mechanism for domestic implementation of international human rights obligations.

The largest number of recommendations related to establishing a national independent human rights institution charged with domestic implementation of human rights norms; ratifying core human rights treaties; the abolition of the death penalty; ensuring the rights of all people to be free from racial profiling and violations that persist in immigrant detention policies; and the need to combat discrimination in the enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights.

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14Civil society participated through drafting summary documents concisely setting forth the issues, questions to be raised, and recommendations for actions; individual and group meetings in Washington, D.C. and at the United Nations; and oral and video testimony shared during public side-events in Geneva.


16Core human rights treaties that the United States has yet to ratify are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Dec. 18, 1979, 1249 U.N.T.S. 13 (the United States is one of just seven countries that have failed to ratify this treaty, the other countries being Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Nauru, Palau, and Tonga); and the Convention on the Rights of the Child art. 2, Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3 (the United States and Somalia are the only two countries not to have ratified this treaty).
Immediately following the review, the United States hosted a town hall meeting for civil society at the United Nations, with a live videofeed to Washington, D.C., and webcast to all participants. The full federal interagency governmental delegation was represented, and civil society had a platform to engage in the review itself. The town hall was the first of its kind to be held during a Universal Periodic Review and set a precedent. The town hall allowed civil society to cite instances of realities not matching the rights or the rhetoric, to question the Obama administration on its specific plans to implement the recommendations, and to reclaim the Universal Periodic Review from the politics of the process, furthering the goal of connecting Geneva to the realities at home.

D. Pushing the United States to Adopt and Implement All Recommendations

Among the unique characteristics of the Universal Periodic Review is the requirement that the country being reviewed return to the United Nations Human Rights Council a few months later to state its position on the recommendations made and to identify those it will accept, take under consideration, or reject. Only after this is done is the draft Universal Periodic Review report deemed adopted. Because of the United States’ historical position that it accepts only recommendations or international standards it views as consistent with domestic legal structures, advocates pushed for adoption of all the recommendations and presented specific actions the administration could take to further the recommendations in both the short and long term.

The White House convened three interagency consultations in February 2010 with representatives from civil society. The first consultation focused on those recommendations unique to the Universal Periodic Review. The second focused on the recommendations that implicated rights under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The third focused on recommendations that implicated rights under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. All three consultations, like the town hall in Geneva, were additional entry points for advocates to voice their critical and persistent human rights concerns to federal agencies such as the State Department and the Justice Department.

On March 18, 2011, a delegation led by Koh, the State Department legal advisor, returned to Geneva for adoption of the Universal Periodic Review report. The United States accepted a significant number of recommendations but circumscribed its level of commitment, reiterating its commitment to a “more perfect union” along with its pride in its human rights record, with the following explanation:

Some recommendations ask us to achieve an ideal, e.g., end discrimination or police brutality, and others request action not entirely under the control of our Federal Executive Branch, e.g., adopt legislation, ratify particular treaties, or take action at the state level. Such recommendations enjoy our support, or enjoy our support in part, when we share the ideal that the recommendations express, are making serious efforts toward achieving their goals, and intend to continue to do so. Nonetheless, we recognize, realistically, that the United States may never completely accomplish what is described in the literal terms of the recommendation. We are also comfortable supporting a recommendation to do something that we already

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2Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Dec. 10, 1984, 1465 U.N.T.S. 85.

do, and intend to continue doing, without in any way implying that we agree with a recommendation that understates the success of our ongoing efforts.20

Legal services attorneys and community-based advocates can translate clients’ needs and experiences into concrete policy recommendations as advocates work toward implementing the Universal Periodic Review recommendations and to push the United States to be accountable domestically and internationally. Advocates daily confront the limitations of laws, policies, and practices in protecting the rights of their clients and in gaining redress when those rights are violated. In the case study below, I describe how advocates used the Universal Periodic Review to advance the right to decent work and the rights of low-wage immigrant workers. I highlight what the legal services community can do.

III. The Right to Dignity Through Work

The ranks of the working poor and the unemployed are increasing as legal rights and remedies available under U.S. labor and employment laws become more limited. Domestic and agricultural workers are explicitly excluded from certain protections set out in the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (guaranteeing a minimum wage and overtime pay) and the National Labor Relations Act (guaranteeing freedom of association).21 The federal Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, covering terms and conditions of employment for agricultural workers, excludes seasonal migrants admitted under the H–2A visa program from coverage, an exclusion that applies to more than 40,000 workers yearly.22 Other procedural, administrative, and logistical barriers exclude even more workers from rights, protections, and remedies.23 Accessing a new rights regime has become all the more critical in an era of economic crisis when more people are forced into informal labor sectors as temporary workers, often outside the legal protections afforded in the formal workplace economy, and when many are simply unable to find employment. In response, advocates increasingly are looking to international human rights mechanisms to secure employment-related rights. With each human rights review that the United States undergoes, advocates gain ground in getting recognition of the right to dignity through work.

During the most recent review before the United Nations Human Rights Committee regarding U.S. compliance with the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, advocates sought recognition of how laws related to the freedom of association discriminate against categories of workers, in terms of both statutory exclusions based on industry and judicial restrictions on remedies based on immigration or other status. The Human Rights Committee responded by asking the United States to account for “any restriction imposed on the right to form and join trade unions of, inter alia, agricultural workers, domestic workers, federal, state and local government employees, and immigrant workers, including undocumented workers”; the committee cited specific instances where the legal system failed to recognize

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21See Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended, 29 U.S.C. § 213(b)(12)–(13) (excluding agricultural workers from maximum-hour requirements), § 213(b)(21) (excluding domestic workers who reside in household in which they are employed from maximum-hour requirements); National Labor Relations Act of 1935, as amended, 29 U.S.C. § 152(3) (excluding from definition of covered “employee” “any individual employed as an agricultural laborer, or in the domestic service of any family or person at his home”).


those rights fully.24

Less than two years later, advocates again raised these issues as part of the U.S. review under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination asked the United States questions similar to those raised by the Human Rights Committee.25 The government responded that undocumented workers were not discriminated against in that they remained statutorily covered “employees,” but it did not take up the internationally recognized principle that the failure to provide a remedy is tantamount to failing to provide a right.26 The committee regretted that, “despite the various measures adopted by the State party to enhance its legal and institutional mechanisms aimed at combating discrimination, workers belonging to racial, ethnic, and national minorities, in particular women and undocumented migrant workers, continue to face discriminatory treatment and abuse in the workplace and to be disproportionately represented in occupations characterized by long working hours, low wages, and unsafe or dangerous conditions of work.”27 The committee cited specific U.S. Supreme Court decisions that “have further eroded the ability of workers belonging to racial, ethnic and national minorities to obtain legal protection and redress in cases of discriminatory treatment at the workplace, unpaid or withheld wages, or work-related injury or illnesses.”28

The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination urged the United States to “take all appropriate measures, including increasing the use of ‘pattern and practice’ investigations, to combat de facto discrimination in the workplace and ensure the equal and effective enjoyment by persons belonging to racial, ethnic and national minorities in their rights under … the Convention,” and highlighted the need for effective measures to ensure that all workers, including undocumented workers, can “obtain effective protection and remedies in case of violation of their human right by their employer.”29

The Universal Periodic Review was an opportunity to build on the advocacy during the review, while allowing advocates to pursue more directly the right to decent work under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to deal more comprehensively with the persistent problem of unemployment and underemployment. Advocates came together around three coalition stakeholder reports on different aspects of workplace rights: the right to decent work, which outlined steps for the United States to take to ensure such a right, specifically accounting for the needs of women and racial and ethnic minorities in securing decent work; labor rights, which called for the recognition of workplace rights through the protection and promotion of the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining for all workers; and migrant labor rights, which stressed U.S. obligations to ensure that all workers, regardless of the industry in which they work and their migration status, are granted the full set of workplace rights and other fundamental rights connected to their status as migrant workers, without...
All three reports called on the United States to take affirmative measures to combat workplace discrimination and to protect the fundamental rights of all workers and job seekers.

The United States touched on workplace rights in just two places within its Universal Periodic Review national report. Regarding its legal system’s failures to protect and promote workplace rights fully, the United States—in recalling the role of the U.S. labor movement in protecting workplace rights—conceded:

Our [Universal Periodic Review] consultations included workers from a variety of sectors, including domestic workers who spoke about the challenges they face in organizing effectively. Currently there are several bills in our Congress that seek to strengthen workers’ rights—ensuring that workers can continue to associate freely, organize, and practice collective bargaining as the U.S. economy continues to change.

But the national report failed to acknowledge that the legal system explicitly excludes categories of workers from protection, whether because of the industry in which they work, their immigration status, or the lack of a formally recognized employer-employee relationship. It also failed to acknowledge how the noted challenges result in persistent workplace abuses and the challenges’ impact on worker health and safety, discrimination, wage and hour violations, and a host of other workplace rights.

On the disparities in employment, the report noted:

We are not satisfied with a situation where the unemployment rate for African Americans is 15.8%, for Hispanics 12.4%, and for whites 8.8%, as it was in February 2010. We are not satisfied that a person with disabilities is only one-fourth as likely to be employed as a person without disabilities.

While advocates were disappointed by the United States’ failure to set forth a plan of action to reduce these disparities in the nation’s unemployment rates, they seized on the acknowledgment of unemployment—a socioeconomic right—within the context of its human rights obligations as an opening for engaging with the government on developing plans to remedy this situation. And the Universal Periodic Review report contains a series of recommendations on which advocates can rely in their work to advance the rights of all workers and the unemployed.

Throughout the Universal Periodic Review, advocates identified actions that the government could take immediately, without waiting for legislative action, contravening judicial decisions, or confronting issues of federalism. Advocates also reminded the government of its obligation to lead on issues that will require legislative action and other longer-term policy changes. On the rights of migrant workers, advocates have long called for equal protection under our labor and employment laws for all workers, regardless of migration status. That advocacy was reflected in the Universal Periodic Review report, in which several recommendations were made on this point. In the

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32Id.

33See, e.g., Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: United States of America, Human Rights Council ¶ 92.113, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/16/11 (Jan. 4, 2011), (“That further measures be taken in the areas of economic and social rights for women and minorities, including providing equal access to decent work.”). ¶ 92.99 (“Eliminate discrimination against migrants … and ensure equal opportunity for enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights.”); ¶ 92.210 (“Protect the human rights of migrants, regardless of their migratory status.”); ¶ 92.192 (“Recognize the right to association as established by ILO, for migrant, agricultural workers and domestic workers.”). ¶ 92.81 (“Take the necessary measures in favor of the right to work and fair conditions of work so that workers belonging to minorities, in particular women and undocumented migrant workers, do not become victims of discriminatory treatment and abuse in the work place and enjoy the full protection of the labour legislation, regardless of their migratory status.”).

34Id. ¶¶ 92.64, 92.81, 92.192, 92.210.
long term, legislation will be necessary to overturn the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Hoffman Plastic Compounds Incorporated v. National Labor Relations Board.*\(^{35}\)

In the short term, however, advocates pushed the Labor Department and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to issue a memorandum of understanding, similar to an earlier memorandum between the Labor Department and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, clearly establishing a firewall between labor and immigration law enforcement.\(^ {36}\)

The Labor Department and Homeland Security released on March 31, 2011, a revised memorandum of understanding concerning enforcement activities at worksites, showing how collaborative advocacy at the domestic and international levels can advance specific human rights initiatives by translating international human rights obligations into practical, domestic policy recommendations.\(^ {37}\) While the revised memorandum was undoubtedly the result of persistent advocacy at the domestic level, such advocacy was supported by reiterating the policy recommendations throughout the Universal Periodic Review at the international level and in interagency consultations with the federal government that included representatives from both the Labor Department and Immigration and Customs Enforcement within Homeland Security. Through such complementary advocacy efforts, concrete changes in policy and practice that advance human rights can be effectuated.

### IV. Only a Beginning

The Universal Periodic Review presented opportunities not available through other mechanisms to handle the full range of human rights issues that communities across the country confront daily, but it is not the panacea for all human rights ills. It is one additional mechanism for a discourse on human rights focused on positive change. Legal services attorneys, community lawyers, and other advocates can contribute to this growing social justice movement by assessing their clients’ experiences within the human rights framework and then joining in the collective identification of the barriers to the realization of the rights spelled out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and developing proposed solutions.

While many within the United States deem its historic first Universal Periodic Review a success, advocates note that declaration is premature. As we look ahead to upcoming treaty reviews, those of us who invested time, energy, and resources into the Universal Periodic Review are mindful of the work that remains to ensure that the review does not end with the report and that its recommendations are not lost; rather, the Universal Periodic Review report should serve as a blueprint for positive change. Ongoing advocacy is needed to ensure that the rhetoric heard in Geneva in November 2010, and again in March 2011, translates into meaningful change here at home. In four years the United States will return for its second Universal Periodic Review and will have to account for positive steps it will have taken to implement the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review report. In the intervening years the legal services community is an indispensable ally in the struggle to ensure that those advances are realized.

The Universal Periodic Review held up a looking glass through which government and civil society viewed the situation of human rights in at home. We must continue to hold up the looking glass and collaborate among and across our respective constituencies as we work to advance not just the image but the reality of “a more perfect union.”

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