**USHRN Partners Summary Submission to: Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Questionnaire for Civil Society Consultation on Civil Society Engagement with CERD**

***Questions:***

1. **What are the key challenges and issues of racial discrimination in your country/region today and how do you work to address them?**

**From Lori Johnson, Water Southeast:**

US equates money with constituency, which leaves non-monetized Peoples voiceless. European colonization created the economic class of ‘white’ to displace, dispossess, dislocate, traffick, enslave, and kill colonized Peoples. US ‘nation of immigrants’ apartheid legal structure excludes many colonized Peoples from de facto citizenship. These violent economic structures require more attention than CERD currently affords.

**From Natasha Bannan, National Lawyers Guild, President:** Anti-immigrant sentiments being expressed and legitimized by elected officials, political campaigns, militia groups and others that is being translated into racialized policies that target people of color immigrants for racial profiling, surveillance and monitoring, spying, immigration raids, deportation and detention. Policies dealing with immigration or immigrants has become code for “Latinos,” as has detention and deportation.

**Rhonda Cowden:**: Living in the deep south racial discrimination has always been an issue due to lack of integration of races, ignorance of cultures, deep rooted fear, geography and ethical teachings. It is difficult to combat and encourage change in this environment with the old ethical teaching and younger generation that does not understand the hatred. What I do is observe my surroundings, economical, political, educational, social and criminal through all outlets (news, neighbors or people on the street). Next, I reflect the attitudes and information with current policy makers whether it is local, state or federal government officials and engage them with whatever information I have, make suggestions or plain comments. I sign petitions, donate, tweet, post, protest and educate myself on may issues. These policy makers do respond.

**From Melanie Goerke, United Nations Association of Michigan State University; Director of Finance and GenUN Midwest Regional Fellow:**

As a current college student, I see some of the worst forms of racial discrimination among young millennials. Even in my home state of Michigan, we see a large population of minority citizens in certain areas, in areas that do not have a large minority population, or any at all, coming to a large university such as my own can be an incredible culture shock, and some do not know how to handle their newfound surroundings. There is deep divide between my

generation and the generations after mine, with the older crowd. Neither of us will admit that the other generation has quality characteristics among the inevitable faults. We are a society now that ostracizes people who are different from us. Growing up people learn of this figurative “box” of normalcy, and if individuals cannot fit others who are different from themselves, such as in terms of racial discrimination into their box, then comes the discrepancy among the two parties. I’m privileged to attend such a large university where the culture is vastly different than the small hometown where I grew up, and we here in my town are generally welcoming of those who are different from us. Could we work on our patience? Sure. But the process begins at home. It begins with the people who criticize my generation for being so privileged, or lazy, or uncommunicative, what have you. As the generations before me went through segregation and the insane racial tension from decades before, it begins with them and ends with us.

**From George Garland, President, United Nations Association of the USA Southern New York State Division:** Criminal Justice issues such as 1) profiling and excessive force in routine enforcement actions directed at racial minorities; 2) school to prison pipeline beginning with low expectations and cultural insensitivity which hinders successful participation in classrooms by minorities; 3) abrupt transition from foster care which leads to bad choices by minorities; 4) harsher sentencing for minorities for same crimes. Work with community activists and State legislators to educate stakeholders about above and pass legislation as appropriate.

**Jeanne Betsock Stillman, Past-President, United Nations Association of the USA Southern New York State Division:** The UNA-USA Southern New York State Division held its third consultation on Race, Criminal Justice and Human Rights on August 17, 2016. The event was held in the office of the UN Foundation in New York City. The 38 participants included clergy members, police officers and consultants, legislative staff, university faculty members and other educators, attorneys, staff of agencies assisting prisoners or those released from prison, experts in human trafficking and violence against women, public health specialists, Human Rights specialists, NGO representatives, UNA-USA chapter and Division leaders and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority members, and included several people who were formerly incarcerated. I am sending the resulting report to the CERD and to USHRN.

1. **What has been your experience, as civil society, of engaging with CERD to date?**

**From Lori Johnson, Water Southeast:**

The US has created conflict among colonized Peoples, limiting communication space so that we have to negotiate with other colonized Peoples for a few seconds of space. We recommend procedures to empower colonized Peoples to negotiate with the colonizers from the position of power as conveners controlling the meeting space to which we can invite US immigrant government. Decentralized local militia structures also attempt to enforce immigrant government

legal system, disregarding original nation laws and international human rights standards. These immigrant government militia identify with european laws and disregard legal standards of the Americas where these militia now are armed and operating. These European immigrant militia historically and presently cross-train with US immigrant government sanctioned ’law enforcement.’

This militia-law enforcement nexus is difficult and expensive to document and then communicate clearly and succinctly for CERD. This extrajudicial law enforcement phenomenon warrants an OHCHR report of its own as the Peoples victimized have limited resources to show state actor involvement in militia actions.

**Rhonda Cowden:** I have discussed CERD with my Governor, state officials, and Federal Government. I believe I was told that we need to get organized to do something other than a website. Some have never heard of it, some were looking into the US Human Rights Network. I have attended public functions and sent letters to the editor of the paper.

**From Natasha Bannan, National Lawyers Guild, President:** Very limited, although there is great interest to engage more with the Committee and the mechanism to bring attention to deep-seated racism in the U.S. and how that translates to law enforcement and policing models and immigration policies.

**From Melanie Goerke, United Nations Association of Michigan State University; Director of Finance and GenUN Midwest Regional Fellow:** I am fortunate enough to be aware of CERD and it’s mission. Others in my generation or here on campus, if not involved in some capacity with the structure of the United Nations or student organizations that are tied to humanitarianism would have no idea about CERD or be exposed to any other related organizations or committees. I find a large void in college aged students, even among acquaintances of mine that are in student organizations with a humanitarianism profile.

**From George Garland, President, United Nations Association Southern New York State Division:** Community and political leaders willing to participate in

discussions to elucidate, analyze, and recommend actions for racial justice in context of CERD.

**Jeanne Betsock Stillman, Past-President, United Nations Association of the USA Southern New York State Division:**

Our Division organized three events relevant to the CERD, which resulted in reporting to the CERD. These include: [www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/una-sny\_shadow\_report\_november\_2015.pdf](http://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/una-sny_shadow_report_november_2015.pdf); [www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/una\_southern\_nys\_division\_icerd\_shadow\_report.pdf](http://www.unasny.org/uploads/1/1/6/5/11653096/una_southern_nys_division_icerd_shadow_report.pdf). The third report has not yet been posted online but is being sent separately to the CERD.

1. **How can the CERD improve and enhance its engagement with civil society, and its work on racial discrimination for greater impact on the ground?**

**From Lori Johnson, Water Southeas: :**Promote focused attention on intersecting racial issues, including gender-related violence and development-related violence. Include Indigenous Peoples’ issues in CERD consideration and recommendations, especially regarding hate speech, education, jurisdictional issues, state actor violence including trafficking, police brutality, and incarceration. Coordinate with regional human rights mechanisms that will educate the US immigrant government about how to work with original nations and later waves of immigrant communities to establish National Human Rights Institutions responsive to all Peoples globally living where the US immigrant government claims to occupy.

**From Natasha Bannan, National Lawyers Guild, Presiden: :**Have more unofficial or official country visits in various parts of the country and meet with different constituencies. Make information available bilingually (Spanish).

**Rhonda Cowden:** You need media coverage in every local community. A representative to discuss CERD. Someone to open a dialog. We have the communities that are trying to work on community relations such as Knoxville but we have no one to “officially” guide us in the CERD process. We need someone in the court rooms as monitors such as MADD (mothers against drunk driving) promotes. These cities are asking for help. We need to help them. CERD needs to be discussed at a level that any individual can understand and engage. Make it simple, not scary.

**From Melanie Goerke, United Nations Association of Michigan State University; Director of Finance and GenUN Midwest Regional Fellow: :**Again, speaking from the young college aged student perspective, I find it imperative that CERD and its abilities be spread throughout young professionals. My peers are incredibly passionate. We’ve jumped behind multiple grassroots initiatives, protests, programs, organizations, movements, anything that we can identify with to have our voices heard. It’s so important to get people like myself involved and aware of the message so we can spread it to others around us.

**From George Garland, President, United Nations Association Southern New York State Division:** Provide funding for case studies which document CERD issues, follow implementation of remedies, and assess barriers not yet removed.