

ACLU Conducts Advocacy Before UN to Hold U.S. Accountable for Race Discrimination



Steven Elloie was severely beaten and tasered by police officers searching his business without a warrant. The unprovoked attack by officers left Elloie severely injured.



Susana Rodriguez Blanco sought asylum in the U.S. after her father was assassinated in Venezuela. She and her mother were locked up in the Hutto detention center for several months.



Siti Rina Aisah was a paid less than 33 cents an hour as a domestic worker for the Ambassador to the Qatar Mission of the United Nations.



Taylor White Buffalo, a Native American student in South Dakota, was arrested and prosecuted for criminal misconduct defending himself in a fight against a Caucasian classmate.

This past winter, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) helped lead a successful advocacy effort to shine a world-wide spotlight on the dismal U.S. record on race discrimination.

In December 2007, the ACLU released a 212-page “shadow report” to the United Nations’ Committee to Eliminate Racial Discrimination (CERD), *Race and Ethnicity in America: Turning a Blind Eye on Injustice* (www.aclu.org/intlhumanrights/racialjustice/33061pub20071210.html). Using details drawn from ACLU cases and advocacy and extensive documentation from ACLU affiliates, this “shadow report” offered a devastating critique of the official U.S. government report to CERD, which severely underreported racial discrimination around the country and failed even to acknowledge the race issues following Hurricane Katrina. The ACLU report details the setbacks in the promotion of racial and ethnic equality, including the government’s attack on affirmative action and the courts’ curtailment of civil rights. It finds that race discrimination in America permeates education, employment, the treatment of migrants and immigrants, law enforcement, access to justice for youth and adults, detention and incarceration, the death penalty and the many collateral consequences of incarceration including the loss of voting rights.

This message reached a global audience in February, at the Geneva meeting of CERD. The ACLU helped organize a delegation of 123 U.S. non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – the biggest delegation to attend an international UN meeting on race discrimination since the Durban conference on racism in 2001.

The ACLU’s advocacy directly informed CERD’s questions to the U.S. government delegation – not only did the Committee cite the shadow report but it added new lines of inquiry (such as immigration detention and voting rights) in response to the ACLU’s formal and informal briefings with CERD members.

Ultimately, the ACLU’s shadow report and on-site advocacy culminated in CERD recommendations that substantially reflected the ACLU agenda. Among other recommendations, CERD called on the U.S. to:

- Pass the federal End Racial Profiling Act or similar legislation and combat widespread ethnic and racial profiling practices by law enforcement, especially against Arabs, Muslims

- and South Asians in the wake of the 9/11 attacks;
- Adopt and strengthen the use of affirmative action programs to eliminate discrimination, and allow school districts to voluntarily promote school integration;
 - Eliminate systemic inadequacies in criminal defense programs that have a disproportionate effect on indigent minorities and ensure competent counsel in all cases;
 - Address the problem of the school-to-prison pipeline – the trend of funneling minority children into prison; and
 - Restrict felony disenfranchisement policies and eliminate barriers to post-sentence voting rights restoration.

Please visit www.aclu.org/cerd for more information, including a state-by-state map of racial problems, podcasts with ACLU staff in Geneva, and profiles of race discrimination victims featured in the ACLU's shadow report.