

PROMOTING ECONOMIC SECURITY & THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WORK FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

The Human Rights Project at the Urban Justice Center (HRP) is coordinating an effort calling on all levels of government to ensure the right to work and economic security for groups that are overrepresented in unemployment and/or underemployment and poverty – particularly communities of color and women. The economic crisis presents an opportunity to reorient our economic policies to, first and foremost, secure social and economic rights. Towards that end, we call on the Obama Administration, Congress, State and city governments to develop policies that provide living wage employment opportunities with labor protections for everyone who depends on wage labor for their livelihood by adopting immediate measures that provide good jobs for workers who cannot find private employment with an emphasis on communities of color and women.

As a first step, *HRP is coordinating the submission of a national 10-page report on the right to work to the United Nations through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)—see next page for more information,—which will review the US government's compliance with its human rights obligations. The 10-page report on the right to work, which is due on April 19, 2010, will outline concrete recommendations for all levels of government to address the problems of unemployment and underemployment in communities of color and for women.* The report and subsequent advocacy efforts will include contributions from organizations in cities with some of the highest income disparities such as New York City, Chicago, Atlanta, San Francisco and other urban areas.

GOALS OF THE UPR RIGHT TO WORK REPORT AND ADVOCACY EFFORT

- Maintain sustained attention to the lack of good jobs for vulnerable populations
- Reframe the right to work as a human rights issue
- Outline specific recommendations for ensuring work for communities most impacted including strategies for job creation, job training, labor protection, removal of barriers to work for the formerly incarcerated and migrant workers, and reinvestment in private sector opportunities for living wage employment
- Create a platform in partnership with national and local groups already engaged in job creation work to prompt government implementation of recommendations

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE

- **Contribute to the report** by suggesting recommendations and sharing stories
- **Help develop advocacy plan** to ensure the implementation of recommendations at the national and local levels
- **Lobby countries and US government officials** to educate and obtain support for recommendations made to the US government during the UPR review
- **Engage your community** in supporting this effort
- **Endorse the final report** submitted for the UPR review

If you are interested in participating in the Right to Work report, please contact: tbejar@urbanjustice.org or visit www.hrpujc.org. If you would like to participate in the UPR process by submitting or contributing to a report on a different topic, please contact lbaum@ushrnetwork.org or visit www.ushrnetwork.org.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a new human rights mechanism of the United Nations that will help groups advance a domestic human rights agenda. The UPR allows the United Nations Human Rights Council to review all the members of the United Nations on their fulfillment of human rights obligations and commitments based on the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and all treaties and humanitarian law that the countries have formally accepted. **The actual review is based on three documents, one of which is a summary of reports like the 10-page report that we are coordinating on the right to work.** This is an important platform for social justice groups to petition the US government to implement policies that protect the rights of working people and the poor. The report for the UPR is due on April 19, 2010.

Upcoming National Human Rights Institute on the UPR

Apply now for the 2010 Human Rights Institute in New York City on February 3 -5, 2010 sponsored by the Human Rights Project (HRP) and the US Human Rights Network (USHRN). The Institute will offer advanced information on the Universal Periodic Review with a focus on human rights and employment. If you are interested, please email tbejar@urbanjustice.org. **Applications deadline: December 8, 2009**

The **right to work is a universal human right** recognizing that every human being is entitled to the opportunity to work that provides a wage sufficient to live in dignity, and supplemented when necessary by other means of social protection to maintain an adequate standard of living. The right to work places a duty on the government to take concrete measures aimed at achieving full employment, and to protect the rights of workers to be free from discrimination in the workplace, to just and favorable conditions of work, and to form and join trade union for the protection of his or her interests.

Unemployment is caused by a lack of jobs yet there is currently no government plan to create direct employment where the private sector has failed or to provide pathways to move out of poverty through the creation of good jobs for the people most affected by the crisis including people of color, women, immigrants, and persons with disabilities. The US government has an obligation to secure the right to work as specified by its formal acceptance of the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This obligation requires the US government to develop economic policies designed to secure the economic and social rights of all members of society. This concept is firmly rooted in American principles as exemplified by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies, which offer a clear example of how the government can successfully create good job opportunities in times of need. As President Roosevelt's aptly noted, "individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence." Our government can revive these ideals by committing to secure economic security and the right to work for all.

We thank Philip Harvey, Professor of Law and Economics at Rutgers School of Law for sharing his paper – Learning for the New Deal – which informed the content of this factsheet.

Unemployment Data - Oct 2009

Total: 10.2%
African American: 15.7%
Asian: 7.5% (not seasonally adjusted)
Latino: 13.1%
White: 9.5%

Another 6% of workers are working part time because they cannot find a fulltime job

While the overall unemployment rate for women is lower than for men, the rate for African American and Latino women is higher than it is for White men and women

People of color are the first to be fired in recessions and the last to be hired during recoveries

[Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Center for American Progress](#)