



The Opportunity Agenda

Building the National Will to Expand Opportunity in America

December 10, 2013 | Human Rights Day 2013

Dear friends,

On [International Human Rights Day 2013](#), let's remember that our nation was founded on the ideal of basic human rights. Our nation's leadership in drafting the pivotal [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), the document we celebrate today is a reminder of how central this notion of rights is to our national values.

But it also reminds us that we have a long way to go. The Universal Declaration, drafted and agreed upon by countries with diverse cultures and priorities, incorporates health care, housing, and freedom from torture, among other things. Many of these basic rights are increasingly in jeopardy here at home. Wall Street's mismanagement and greed has forced millions out of their homes. Even post-health care reform, millions of Americans will lack access to quality health care. And we still have policies that condone torture.

Let's continue to aspire to be a nation that respects and protects the rights of all. We must press for policies that protect our life, liberty, and chance at fulfilling the American Dream. In turning the tide, let's return to documents like the Universal Declaration that remind us of the kind of country we want to be, based on the ideals of human rights, dignity, and equality.

[Click here](#) to access The Opportunity Agenda's tools and to learn more about our work promoting human rights at home. In addition, we invite you to read our documents on Human Rights.

Talking About Human Rights in the United States



To address the question of how Americans view human rights domestically, The Opportunity Agenda undertook a [three-year public opinion research](#) project comprised of both quantitative and qualitative methods. In it we examined how several key audiences viewed human rights in the United States as applied to social justice issues. Audiences included social justice advocates not currently using the human rights approach, state-level policymakers, persuadable segments of the public, and the general population. Their opinions were examined through a range of research strategies.

From this research, we developed a [communications toolkit](#) that includes research summaries, communications advice, talking points, and sample media materials.



Legal and Policy Analysis: Human Rights in State Courts

Since the last version of this report was released, state court litigants in the United States have continued using international human rights law in their arguments. Many of these cases have been met with cursory dismissals from the court, especially in death penalty cases. At the same time, courts have

seriously considered some arguments, and occasionally use international law affirmatively as persuasive authority for the interpretation of state constitutions, statutes, and common law. To read more about this report, [click here](#).

Human Rights Indicators



This policy brief provides an overview of how existing human rights indicators are currently used, including their formation, predominant frameworks, and applicability to the United States. We also propose a set of indicators that may be used in evaluating the status of human rights in America, by drawing both upon our review of existing international frameworks and upon core American values. [Click here](#) to read more.