

Undergraduate Programs

February 08, 2019

BA, Sociology

BA, Social Science,
Preparation for Teaching
• Single Subject
• Multiple Subject

Minor Programs:
• Asian American Studies
• Sociology of Education
• Women, Gender, &
Sexuality Studies

Credential and Graduate Programs

MA, Sociology

Teacher Credential Program

TO: UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

RE: HRC resolution 39/7 on Local Government and Human Rights

Attachments: Shadow Report, US CAT Review (2016), Jail Conditions in the U.S.

To Whom it May Concern:

This letter is in response to your call (in a memo dated Dec. 13, 2018) for civil society organizations to report on domestic efforts to “foster cooperation between local government and local stakeholders for the effective promotion and protection of human rights at their level.”

We would like to respond in partnership with our area partners by focusing briefly on our work as an emergent research institute to (1) establish our role to inform local policy through county human rights commissions, and (2) take advantage of that role to provide local human rights reporting and contributions to the international UPR process.

- 1) Beginning in 2010 we worked with our county human rights commission and other HRCs throughout the state (including the statewide association of HRCs—CAHRO) to train all commissioners in the basics of human rights and international law. Indeed, one of our first observations about these commissions was that they were largely seen as political stepping stones or positions for well meaning (but insufficiently trained) community members. Membership did not have the necessary education to leverage international law or discourse at the local level in an effective way—instead only speaking broadly to social issues as they were introduced. After making some headway in training commissioners, we worked with various HRCs (Santa Clara County, San Francisco County, etc.) to establish a consistent policy role for them that would be informed and supported by international human rights law. Specifically, we were able to carve out a process through which the HRCs could work with our faculty and students to submit reports to the Board of Supervisors on the Constitutional and Human Rights implications of any particular policy or practice under examination. This process and partnership proved to be effective to (for example) stop the use of pepper spray on juveniles in detention, establish the most aggressive living wage policy at the time, or more recently establish SCC as a human rights county.
- 2) One of our most successful reporting projects in conjunction with the SCC HRC was on county jail conditions following the disturbing murder and death of various inmates at the Main Jail and Elmwood Jail facilities in San José and Milpitas, CA respectively. Our report was one of two that continues to guide county jail reform

according to Constitutional and international standards. Further, we submitted the summary findings of our report as part of civil society reporting for the review of the U.S. under the Convention Against Torture in partnership with the U.S. Human Rights Network (please see this summary report attached).

We look forward to reinvesting in this policy reporting relationship with local Human Rights Commissions to inform/shape these policies and to provide valuable contributions to the UPR process.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to discuss our work and the work of our many area partners that accompany this letter/submission. Please do not hesitate to contact me via email for any questions or feedback about our activities or about the emergent SJSU Human Rights Institute set to launch in summer/fall of 2019.

Sincerely,

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