

Human Rights: According to Human Rights Watch, human rights are "the basic rights and freedoms to which everyone is entitled on the basis of their common humanity. They include civil and political rights, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights." There are several treaties, declarations and organizations aimed at protecting human rights across the world. Governments, courts and international bodies can help define and promote human rights. They also help monitor situations in which human rights may be at risk, and enforce laws that protect human rights. However, it takes constant vigilance to ensure that human rights are being respected, so a great place to start is by getting involved with your communities to spread the message: "Human Rights for All."

www.amnesty.org/en/ | www.hrw.org | bit.ly/UN-Human-Rights

Climate Change: This year's Synthesis Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change categorically confirmed "that human activity is the overwhelming cause of climate change."

This results in longer, more severe and more deadly heat waves, wildfire seasons, crop losses, and even reduced access to clean water. Such impacts will cause regional conflicts as impoverished populations are forced to migrate. Studies show climate change has increased the risk of armed conflict by anywhere from 3 percent to 20 percent over the previous century. Experts agree this risk will rise as climate change advances. With swift and decisive action, we can reduce and reverse human-caused climate change and prevent its worst effects.

bit.ly/UN-climate-myths | bit.ly/ICRC-Climate-Conflict | bit.ly/ICRC-Climate-Conflict | bit.ly/Climate-Violence

Torture: Torture permanently injures its victims, and it warps and haunts the torturer. Torture is opposed in the teachings of every spiritual tradition. Information given under torture is wholly unreliable, since victims will say anything to end the ordeal. The 1984 UN Convention Against Torture states, "No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture." Torture invites retribution via torture, and puts our own military at risk.

ncstn.org | bit.ly/UN-CAT-84

Gun Violence: More than half of suicides in the United States occur with firearms. In their report on gun violence, "A Year in Review: 2020 Gun Deaths in the U.S.," researchers at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions analyzed Center for Disease Control data and found that gun violence was the leading cause of death among children, teens and young adults under age 25, surpassing automobile accidents. There have been 386 school shootings since Columbine. Do we have to live like this? everytown.org | momsdemandaction.org | bradyunited.org

Non-Violence for Social Change: Nonviolence is defined as a social philosophy based on the rejection of violent means to gain objectives. It's more than an action; it's a way of life that may be based on moral, religious or spiritual principles. We think of nonviolent actions as a way to bring about social change or to gain political objectives. Historical examples include: The Women's Suffrage Parade of 1913 in Washington, DC; Mahatma Gandhi's Salt March Campaign against British rule in India, 1930; Student Lunch Counter Sit-Ins, 1960, Greensboro NC; Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington, 1963, and his march from Selma to Montgomery AL, 1965. While the U.S. has invested trillions of dollars on war and preparations for war, little of our national resources have been invested in supporting the work for Peace and Nonviolent Social Change. thekingcenter.org | nonviolence.com | wagingnonviolence.org

Voting Rights: Voting rights are at the heart of a healthy democracy. Due to disenfranchisement through felony convictions, gerrymandering and a lack of engagement by a populace that is increasingly apathetic, our democracy is in real danger. Can we imagine a shift toward grassroots democracy and community organizing that engages and empowers citizens across the board to get involved in their government? Increasing public participation to hold elected officials accountable to the people and fighting for legislation that stops corporations from funding campaigns are essential in the fight for voting rights. Educating ourselves and our neighbors about campaign finance reform, ranked choice voting, reinstating voting rights to all, corporate money in politics and other issues that stand in the way of helping the most vulnerable in our community is essential.

www.commoncause.org/north-carolina | www.betterballotnc.org | www.splcenter.org/our-issues/voting-rights

Death Penalty: Since Black enslaved people were considered property, through lynchings and Jim Crow laws, capital punishment has always been influenced by race. While 76 percent of the U.S. population is white and 12 percent is Black, 34 percent of the executed have been Black. In NC, 74 percent of those executed have been Black men. The death penalty is racially biased. Of the chief District Attorneys in counties using the death penalty in the U.S., nearly 98 percent are white and only 1 percent are African-American. Since 1973 at least 194 people on death row (including 12 in NC) have been proven innocent and exonerated. We cannot know how many innocent people have been executed or still await execution in the U.S. The death penalty is strongly opposed by leaders and organizations representing a variety of faiths in the U.S. deathpenaltyinfo.org | innocenceproject.org | worldcoalition.org

Nuclear Disarmament: Since the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Japan in 1945, eight more nations have acquired nuclear weapons. The Pentagon has cited deterrence as its justification for our country's possession of nuclear weapons, but for deterrence to work it can never be tested: nuclear weapons must never be used. One flaw in this strategy is the chance a nuclear weapon could be deployed by accident due to a computer failure or used by terrorists. Nuclear Abolition is our only hope. The United States should work to fully ratify *The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, an international effort calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction is our best hope for Peace. bit.ly/no-nuclear-weapons-treaty | www.icanw.org | nuclearban.us

Immigration: As the Statue of Liberty welcomes the tired, the poor and the huddled masses yearning to be free, the U.S. immigration system has broken. Our country was built with the help of immigrants. Global poverty and violence cause migration, often by human smuggling and brutal risk-taking for the migrants. Many are held in detention centers where they experience subhuman conditions, mistreatment and family separation. Fleeing migrants need to find a path to U.S. citizenship. Guest worker laws should be expanded, and reasonable and appropriate fixes be made to our immigration system to make it humane and cohesive. acluimmigrationdetention.gov | immigrationvisa247.com | latinausa.com

Police Use of Force: Police violence is prominently displayed by news media coverage of incidents where police have acted with impunity. It is a serious problem for all members of society but we tend to see police violence used disproportionately on people of color and the poor. However, it is not an insurmountable problem – there are methods to reduce police brutality. Psychologists are testing and instituting ways to reduce acts of police violence: Having alternatives to sending in the police in non-criminal interventions, such as when someone is experiencing mental illness; Training officers to first use nonviolent solutions whenever possible. There is growing support for so-called "just policing" with the cooperation of citizens and instituting peer intervention to reduce police violence, reducing officer discretion and racial bias in stops and searches, and improved screening of officer candidates.

What works to reduce police brutality, Zara Abrams, Monitor on Psychology, American Psychological Association, vol 51, no.7, 01 October 2020.

Military Industrial Complex: During his Farewell Address in 1961, President Dwight Eisenhower warned Americans of the dangers of the "military industrial complex," a reference to the close ties shared between the Pentagon and its corporate contractors. Eisenhower warned that the growing power and influence of the Pentagon and the arms industry represented a threat to American democracy and peace. He predicted the military industrial complex would exert undue influence on government policy, causing an over-reliance on military solutions to political and economic problems, making the world less safe. Appropriations for the Pentagon comes from taxpayers, and the arms industry claims a big piece of the fiscal pie, leaving less funds to care for human needs.

Racism: Racism's history in the U.S. dates back 400 years to the onset of slavery. Since slavery in the U.S. was abolished, racism persists in the form of active violence and the killings of African Americans, indentured servitude, and an ongoing effort to repress Black Liberation.

Segregation and the oppression of Black people still exists today by white supremacist-enacted policies, such as educational censorship of Black History, and by state laws enacted that keep Black Americans from voting and on the margins economically.

With the proliferation of cell phone video, acts of racism and the maltreatment of Black people are well documented. The suffocation death of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police helped launch The Black Lives Matter Movement that has led to many public protests against racism. This fight against racism goes on.