

## Human Rights in the United States: Challenges and Lessons from the Period 1948-2018

**Authors :** Mary Carmen Peloché Barrera

**Abstract :** Since its early years as an independent nation, the United States has been one of the main promoters regarding the recognition, legislation, and protection of human rights. In the matter of freedom, the founding father Thomas Jefferson envisioned the role of the U.S. as a defender of freedom and equality throughout the world. This founding ideal shaped America's domestic and foreign policy in the 19th and the 20th century and became an aspiration of the ideals of the country to expand its values and institutions. The history of the emergence of human rights cannot be studied without making reference to leaders such as Woodrow Wilson, Franklin, and Eleanor Roosevelt, as well as Martin Luther King. Throughout its history, this country has proclaimed that the protection of the freedoms of men, both inside and outside its borders, is practically the reason for its existence. Although the United States was one of the first countries to recognize the existence of inalienable rights for individuals, as well as the main promoter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the country has gone through critical moments that had led to questioning its commitment to the issue. Racial segregation, international military interventions, national security strategy, as well as national legislation on immigration, are some of the most controversial issues related to decisions and actions driven by the United States, which at the same time mismatched with its role as an advocate of human rights, both in the Americas and in the rest of the world. The aim of this paper is to study the swinging of the efforts and commitments of the United States towards human rights. The paper will analyze the history and evolution of human rights in the United States, to study the greatest challenges for the country in this matter. The paper will focus on both the domestic policy (related to demographic issues) and foreign policy (about its role in a post-war world). Currently, more countries are joining the multilateral efforts for the promotion and protection of human rights. At the same time, the United States is one of the least committed countries in this respect, having ratified only 5 of the 18 treaties emanating from the United Nations. The last ratification was carried out in 2002 and, since then, the country has been losing ground, in an increasingly vertiginous way, in its credibility and, even worse, in its role as leader of 'the free world'. With or without the United States, the protection of human rights should remain the main goal of the international community.

**Keywords :** United States, human rights, foreign policy, domestic policy

**Conference Title :** ICHRHS 2019 : International Conference on Human Rights and Human Security

**Conference Location :** Paris, France

**Conference Dates :** June 25-26, 2019