



**Human Rights Council  
Universal Periodic Review (UPR)  
of the United States of America 50<sup>th</sup> Session  
(2025)**

**Joint Stakeholders' Submission on:**

**Human Rights in the United States of America**

**Submitted by:**

**Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)**  
*(NGO in Consultative Status with ECOSOC)*

and

**Marist Brothers Province of the United States of America**

Geneva, April 2025

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. This stakeholders' report is a joint submission of the above-mentioned organizations. The report highlights key concerns related to **children's rights** in the USA, particularly **Discrimination and Migration; Violence and Social Media; Mental Health; Drugs; Children with Disabilities, Environmental Issues**. Each theme focuses specifically on the sector of the population comprising children and adolescents, although not exclusively. Each section conveys recommendations to the Government.

2. The data and information obtained for this submission came from various sources and includes information from youth, teachers, educators, and other civil society actors living and working in the United States of America, specially three groups within our Marist presences to hold listening sessions to raise concerns and challenges within our country in relation to issues of human rights with a particular emphasis on the rights of children and young people in the most vulnerable conditions. All information concerned the period from November 2020 to March 2025.

3. Our Province invited three district Marist. Groups within the Province to participate, namely students in our schools, folks connected to our summer camp for disabled children as well as folks working on the USA Border with Migrants and Refugees.

4. **Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)** is an international organization promoted by the Marist Brothers, present in eighty countries. FMSI has more than 15 years of experience working in the field of international solidarity, advocating for children's rights especially in the field of education. It works at the international level, participating in the UN human rights mechanisms in collaboration with other organizations with similar interests. It has been accredited by ECOSOC since 2011.

5. **The Marist Brothers Province of the United States of America** was founded in 1886. Today there are approximately one hundred Marist Brothers living in twenty-two communities across eight states in the United States as well as approximately 50 Marist Brothers living in Quebec, Canada. The Province strives to make a difference in the world by showing young people that they are loved, safe and cared for. They minister in school settings, parishes, retreats, spiritual accompaniments, at-risk youth settings, and young adult ministries. The Marist Brothers and their lay colleagues serve as educators, counselors, spiritual directors, social workers, youth leaders and in programs for many marginalized populations. They strive to influence and transform the lives and situations of thousands of young people through education and spirituality, challenging young people to live their fullest potential as faith-filled servant leaders.

## II. GENERAL REMARKS AND COOPERATION WITH THE UPR MECHANISM

6. The USA was reviewed on 9 November 2020 at the 36th Session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. This coalition welcomes the constructive participation of the USA in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). On this occasion, the USA received 347 recommendations and supported 263 recommendations while noting eighty-four

recommendations. The present joint submission represents the follow-up to the UPR recommendations accepted by the State in 2020.

7. The implementation of recommendations is critical in order to ensure a true advancement of human rights in the State under review. Therefore, the USA must pay particular attention to effectively follow-up those recommendations in consultation with Civil Society.

8. We thank the government of the USA for the opportunity to submit this report, as well as for its adherence to the measures proposed by the United Nations for the participation of civil society. We welcome the recommendations adopted after the last UPR, as well as the country's efforts to implement these measures. At the same time, we are also aware of the need to further elaborate on the previous recommendations, as well as to address new ones that may arise at the next session.

### **III. METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COLLECTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC**

#### **Methodology:**

9. An important part has been carried out by listening to the direct voices of children, adolescents and young people, as well as adults directly involved in the lives of children and young people involving students from 4 schools aged 15 - 18 and the communities listening those who cross the USA/Mexican Border in El Paso. Around three hundred people have participated in these consultation processes, including around 250 students.

10. In many of the themes, we highlight the coincidence in the opinions expressed by the children and the adults who accompanied them in the consultation and listening process. The main issues highlighted in this fieldwork are reflected in this report, although there were other concerns beyond those mentioned here.

#### **Overview:**

11. **Discrimination and Migration:** Children from migrant backgrounds face several forms of discrimination. Many children shared that they experienced exclusion in educational settings due to language barriers, particularly in the lack of sufficient support for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

12. Migrant families and asylum seekers brought additional focus to the challenges faced by young people who have experienced trauma as part of their journey to the United States. Many children spoke about the violence and exploitation they witnessed or endured while crossing borders. The separation from their families, which often occurs during the detention process, has a severe emotional impact on children and youth, further exacerbating the trauma they have already experienced.

13. Participants also emphasized the lack of basic services available to migrant children in detention centers, including access to education, healthcare, and safe living conditions. They reported that their rights were not adequately protected during the asylum process, and that the lack of legal support or resources left them vulnerable.

14. **Violence and Social Media:** Students expressed concerns about their safety, particularly with the increasing frequency of school shootings and incidents of sexual assault. The fear of violence near school campuses and on public transportation was also noted as a growing concern, affecting students' ability to focus on their education.

15. **Mental Health:** The influence of social media emerged as a particularly alarming issue. Students revealed that social media platforms have become a source of cyberbullying, leading to a range of mental health problems, including anxiety and depression. Many young people also reported feeling isolated due to the pressures of social media and its role in exacerbating the feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem.

16. **Drugs:** The young people involved in the sessions expressed concern about the ease with which their peers could access these substances, and many of them voiced the urgent need for better support in tackling substance abuse and addiction within their communities.

17. **Children with Disabilities:** children with disabilities face specific challenges in accessing education and healthcare services. Many of these children do not receive the necessary accommodation in their schools, preventing them from reaching their full potential.

18. **Environmental issues:** The USA protects human rights with laws and public policies. Our collation is aware that some of the challenges facing the government are not easy to work on, so we appreciate the efforts to improve them, now and in the future. We are also aware that some of the challenges presented to the government are not easy to work on, and we appreciate efforts to improve them, now and in the future.

#### IV. DISCRIMINATION AND MIGRATION

19. This coalition welcomes USA's actions to combat discrimination against migrants, especially children, as well as its acceptance of recommendations 26.119<sup>1</sup>, 26.127<sup>2</sup> 26.130<sup>3</sup>. We are aware that this path is neither easy nor quick, but we also know that it is possible to take steps in favour of those who are discriminated against in society.

20. The U.S. immigration system continues to pose significant challenges for migrant children and families. Discriminatory practices, including racial profiling and family separations, remain a critical issue. Many children, particularly those from minority and immigrant backgrounds, face discrimination in education, healthcare, and employment.

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<sup>1</sup> Continue to put in place measures to eradicate racism, xenophobia and all forms of related intolerance across the country (Lesotho).

<sup>2</sup> Adopt effective measures to enhance equality and eliminate racial discrimination and xenophobia against migrants and refugees, as well as racial, ethnic and religious minorities (Qatar).

<sup>3</sup> Combat racism and hate speech, especially against immigrants and asylum seekers, and reinforce their protection (Iraq).

21. Among the group of people who may be particularly discriminated against are the most vulnerable groups, including migrants. It is therefore essential that more anti-discrimination measures are put in place. In this sense, the acceptance of multiple recommendations in the previous cycle is a positive starting point, which must continue to be complemented by concrete measures that affect the population on a day-to-day basis. The repeated repetition of the recommendation concerning the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women is striking<sup>4</sup>.

22. This coalition and the people consulted are concerned about the situation in which many of the migrants and asylum seekers arriving in the country find themselves, especially through the Mexican border. Several situations arise (deception, human trafficking, sexual abuse and rape, false expectations, difficulty in obtaining documentation, extortion, kidnapping and murder, police violence, LGTBQ community...).

23. Special mention should be made of the situation of children and adolescents, who must face the lack of educational opportunities, separation from their families, organised gangs and drug traffickers. This situation is often aggravated in the case of girls, who, in addition to the above, must face rape and early pregnancies.

24. The status of "illegal immigrant" makes access to education, health care and decent employment difficult upon arrival in the country.

25. This coalition welcomes USA's actions to fight against exploitation of children and to improve the living conditions of migrants and asylum seekers, particularly in the detention center, as well as its acceptance of recommendations 26.333<sup>5</sup>, 26.334<sup>6</sup>, 26.335<sup>7</sup> 26.337<sup>8</sup> 26.338<sup>9</sup> 26.339<sup>10</sup> 26.340<sup>11</sup> 26.342<sup>12</sup> 26.344<sup>13</sup>.

26. Our coalition appreciates the presence of this issue in multiple recommendations, as well as the government's efforts in recent years to further improve human conditions, particularly for children and youth. We are also aware that there is still work to be done to improve the lives of these people.

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<sup>4</sup> Here are just few: 26.40, 26.43, 26.44,

<sup>5</sup> Ensure that detention conditions for immigrants, particularly for minors, comply with international human rights law (Norway).

<sup>6</sup> Ensure that the detention and separation of migrant families and asylum seekers are not used as punitive measures to deter irregular entry into the country (Peru).

<sup>7</sup> Increase its efforts to protect migrants, especially those in vulnerable groups, including by seeking alternatives to detention for migrant children and ensuring access to basic services (Thailand).

<sup>8</sup> Seek alternatives to the present immigration detention system and improve conditions of confinement to meet basic human rights standards (Zambia).

<sup>9</sup> Stop incarcerating migrants, including migrant children, and guarantee the rights of migrants (China).

<sup>10</sup> Stop the cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of migrants and asylum seekers and the separation of hundreds of minors from their families (Cuba).

<sup>11</sup> Protect the rights of children who arrive in the United States and seek alternatives to the current detention system for migrant children, both unaccompanied and part of family groups, and allow them to remain under the protection of their parents (Ecuador).

<sup>12</sup> Ensure that detention centres for migrants and refugees and the treatment they receive meet the basic conditions called for under international human rights law and standards (Fiji).

<sup>13</sup> Stop separating young children from their migrant parents and putting them in cages (Islamic Republic of Iran).

**27. For these reasons, the following are some recommendations for the US government, in order to improve these situations:**

- a. Establish policies and programmes to raise awareness of different forms of discrimination and of the main groups that suffer from it.**
- b. Strengthen judicial systems to respond promptly and effectively to cases of discrimination.**
- c. Offer specific opportunities for adolescents and young people from the country's most vulnerable groups to facilitate their full integration into society.**

## **V. VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

28. The rise in school shootings and the increasing prevalence of bullying, both physical and online, have created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity in schools. Children express growing concerns about their safety and well-being in educational settings. Cyberbullying, in particular, is a major problem, and many children are vulnerable to online harassment.

29. The need for greater reflection and systematisation in confronting these problems during the school stages is called for by children and young people. Alongside this, there is a need for greater training and awareness-raising for all those involved in school life (both adults and minors).

30. In the dynamics of violence, social media and its influence often play an essential role, especially in the early stages of life. In this way, the media can sometimes become an enabler of various forms of violence. However, the media itself can become a positive "weapon" in the fight against this type of violence<sup>14</sup>.

31. Social media, due to their scarce regulation and the difficulty of parental control, presents a concern for the possibilities of "cyber bullying", "misinformation, privacy, explicit violent contents, "access to pornography"...

32. We would like to highlight the growing awareness among adolescents of the possible problems that can arise from inappropriate and/or excessive use of social media, as well as their lack of training in these issues. Fake news, addictions, lack of parental control, use of Artificial Intelligence, excessive use of social media... appear repeatedly in their contributions and opinions.

**33. For all these reasons, having listened to children and young people, our coalition would like to make the following recommendations, with the intention of helping the government to improve existing problems:**

- a. Curb access to and use firearms, especially in environments frequented by children and young people.**
- b. Establish clear policies and specific regulations on the use of social media and negative content.**

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<sup>14</sup> There are several recommendations, in the previous cycle, which were supported and which speak of different types of violence. Against women (26.240); Racially motivated (26.257); Gay-Lesbian (26.148); Afro-descendants (26.132).

- c. **Implement educational programmes, at all levels, on the use and dangers of the media.**
- d. **Bring the use of new technologies closer to children and adolescents, as well as their parents, and spaces to turn to in case of need for help (addictions, misuse, "virtual" aggressions...).**

## **VI. MENTAL HEALTH**

34. This coalition welcomes USA's actions to properly address issues related to mental health and bullying, as well as its acceptance of recommendation 26.145<sup>15</sup>.

35. Mental health issues are among the most pressing concerns for U.S. children, with increasing rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. The impact of social media on mental health, as well as limited access to psychological services, is a significant barrier to addressing these issues. Children from migrant backgrounds are especially vulnerable to trauma but often lack adequate mental health support.

36. Young people have expressed concerns about the negative effects of social media on their self-esteem and mental well-being. The pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards and the prevalence of cyberbullying are among the main challenges. There is also growing concern about the desensitization of violence and exposure to harmful content online.

37. There are many issues that can contribute to the emergence or increase of mental health problems among the population, especially in vulnerable environments, as well as among the youngest members of the population. This topic is reflected in the contributions of the young people consulted for the report.

38. The situation of increasing suicides is a clear indicator of the mental health problems facing society. Moreover, the children and young people consulted show their concern about this aspect. Therefore, our coalition also wants to focus on the problems that lead to this situation, as well as those caused afterwards.

**39. In the light of the above, our coalition recommends to the US government:**

- a. **Establish easily accessible psychological support centres for adolescents and young people.**
- b. **Implement school programmes to raise awareness of the problem and of the resources available to society.**
- c. **Establish a national suicide prevention plan.**

## **VII. DRUGS**

40. From the coalition, after actively listening to the voices of children and young people, we would like to highlight a very significant point in their contributions, due to its impact on the country's society, from different perspectives.

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<sup>15</sup> Address issues of racism, xenophobia and bullying among children at schools (Myanmar).

41. Children and young people show their concern and consider that this issue should be tackled by the government, proposing measures to improve the situations that drugs produce in various areas of life.

42. As a coalition, we highlight the low presence of this problem in the previous cycle, so we consider it important to put this issue in the focus, as well as to establish some concrete measures that help to reduce or eliminate the problems derived from the use and abuse of drugs and/or addictive elements.

43. It is essential to be aware that substance use is sometimes normalised in some circles of society (certain social groups and the media). There is a social discussion about the use of certain substances (e.g. marijuana) and their legalisation, where sometimes not all the elements that should be considered in the discussion are presented.

**44. As a coalition we would like to present recommendations to the US government, which we believe would help to improve:**

- a. Establish policies and programmes to raise awareness of the negative consequences of drug use (alcohol, tobacco, and other substances).**
- b. Controlling the use and abuse of addictive substances.**
- c. Tighten measures to ensure that children and young people cannot access addictive substances.**
- d. Implement educational programmes, at all school ages, on the problems of addictions.**

## **VIII. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

45. Our coalition is particularly interested in improving the living conditions of people with disabilities and is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities can live a life of dignity and where their rights are respected in all situations. Our coalition works on behalf of people with disabilities on the ground and therefore addresses the government of the United States of America to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

46. We thank the government for the recommendations that were accepted during the last cycle of UPR reports, as well as for the efforts to implement them. Nevertheless, we believe that there are still elements that can be improved for the benefit of people with disabilities to make their lives better and better since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>16</sup>.

47. A point that we would also like to point out in this section, although it could be placed in another topic, is that of children who suffer from a major illness, such as cancer, which deprives them of being able to lead a normalised life, due to the length of hospitalisation and absences

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<sup>16</sup> In the last UPR cycle, the call for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was repeated on many occasions (26.18; 26.20; 26.22-23...).



from educational centres and other daily activities, causing social isolation and social-emotional problems<sup>17</sup>.

**48. In order to improve the living conditions of people with disabilities, our coalition would like to recommend that USA:**

- a. Increase support and assistance for people with disabilities, particularly in school settings.**
- b. Facilitate access to specialised and individualised health care.**
- c. Establish training and awareness-raising processes among the population to facilitate integration into society.**
- d. Create mental health care programmes to address problems such as depression and anxiety.**

## **IX. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:**

49. The coalition welcomes USA's actions to address climate change, as well as its acceptance of recommendations 26.151<sup>18</sup>, 26.152<sup>19</sup>. We also welcome the adoption of recommendation 26.64 and 26.65 as an effective means of combating climate change<sup>20</sup>.

50. Youth in the U.S. are increasingly concerned about climate change and environmental degradation. Many are calling for stronger policies to address global warming and environmental pollution, emphasizing the need for action to protect the planet for future generations.

51. In our coalition we recognise the importance and leadership of the U.S. in international processes and therefore believe that the country can continue to improve in its domestic actions, as well as in its support and decisions at the international level.

**52. To improve environmental conditions in the country, our coalition would like to make the following recommendations.**

- a. Take concrete and effective measures in favour of the preservation of the environment.**
- b. Reduce CO2 emissions, through a sustained and progressive plan.**
- c. Introduce awareness programmes on social media and in schools.**

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<sup>17</sup> This idea could be in line with the recommendation 26.241 Ensure that appropriate measures are taken by the police to identify and protect persons suffering from mental illness during their operations (Uganda).

<sup>18</sup> Intensify efforts to develop and strengthen the necessary legislative frameworks that address cross-sectoral environmental challenges, including climate change adaptation and mitigation frameworks (Fiji).

<sup>19</sup> Pursue the fight against the global problem of climate change and its negative impacts, in particular by strengthening cooperation with the international community in this area (Haiti).

<sup>20</sup> 26.64 Reconsider the 2017 decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate change (Slovenia); 26.65 Take immediate steps to overturn the executive branch decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement (Fiji).

## **X. DIRECT VOICES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

53. This report would like to bring, albeit briefly, some direct voices of children and young people when talking about the situation of rights in the USA. These voices reaffirm the theoretical work that has been carried out by the organizations presenting the report, the result of interaction and listening to children, adolescents and young people, as well as groups of adults directly related to the lives of minors.

54. Some of the contributions have already appeared during the report, but it is interesting to specify the richness of the direct voices of the next generations of the USA. They are the future of the country, and they will be responsible for their own future. For this reason, with the consultation work, this coalition would like to work on the participation and protagonism of children and young people, giving them a direct voice in the drafting of the report. From this desire, the "between quotes" of the report, and the contributions explained below, arise.

### **55. Discrimination and Migration:**

- Children of migrants should NOT be “discriminated against” due to their parents citizenship status, especially when many of them have been legally born in the United States.
- Lack of support or resources for young people of migrant backgrounds... “they prepare us for assimilating behaviors and how to be and exist in a classroom, but not necessarily how to assimilate to learning differently.”
- Some of these young people in turn are enticed to “find” communities where they “do belong” - which often leads them into street gangs, fueled by their ability to make “quick money” to support their families.
- Racial Profiling leads to migrant and immigrant families systematically being exposed to low-income neighborhoods, lack of education, lack of good job opportunities and no way to “break the cycle.”
- Racial profiling is rampant, particularly when requesting immigration documentation by law enforcements agents.
- The deportation of innocent individuals who contribute positively to society

### **56. Violence and Social Media**

- “Violence, particularly gun violence and school shootings.”
- “Gun violence and road rage incidents.”
- “False allegations of sexual assault.”
- “Need for more frequent and consistent review of school safety plans with students.”
- Cyber bullying is more prevalent than physical bullying. It has also become somewhat normalized.
- The students felt strongly that if students who are being bullied tell adults about it, the bullying only gets worse and increases.
- Students (children) need to be educated about what exactly bullying is and the effect(s) it has or can have on their peers. This might encourage students to stop bullying.
- Prevalence of teen suicide and its connection to social media pressure.
- Desensitization of youth to violence and explicit content.
- Easy access to pornography and its link to human trafficking.
- AI editing and fake images being used to manipulate or harm individuals.
- Phone addiction and its role in distracting from real-life interactions.

- In poorer sections-lack of adult or parental control or guidance played a larger role in advancing help or lacking guidance.
- It was surprising how much the youth realized the hazardous effects of too much social media, cell usage, AI, and cyber bullying had on their normal lives.

#### **57. Mental health**

- The topic of substance abuse led to a conversation of mental health, and potential suicides, and the rise of mental health issues in young people today.
- The students agreed that by and large, young people do not have access to good support systems for emotional/mental support, nor are they taught good coping mechanisms
- Topics of “men’s mental health” was raised. Men are taught not to be open about their emotions. Societal stigmas around men who are “open about their emotions” or who are in touch with them.
- LGBTQ+ rights and concerns regarding discrimination in educational environments.

#### **58. Drug use**

- “The ease of obtaining alcohol and other addictive substances and that Alcohol and drug use is often normalized.”
- Steroids can be a big problem for athletes.
- “The presence of laced or harmful substances in illegal drugs such as fentanyl.”
- “The accessibility of alcohol to underage students and related risks.”
- ...the legalization of marijuana, drugs are being marketed to young people today - with dispensaries popping up in suburban areas with lights, and attractive things to lure young people into the store.
- Social Media also plays a use role in substance abuse and exposure by normalizing the “marijuana” or “pill-popping” culture (Ex. A student spoke about a TikTok trend recently where people mimicked side-effects of fentanyl use, the way they would a dance trend, and it caught on, becoming a trend; Ex. Another student spoke about “galaxy gas” which was a huffing trend that recently aired on social media - a revival of what was called “whip-its” in the late 90s/early 2000s).
- The use of opioids for pain management often leads to addiction because doctors overprescribe these.

#### **59. Environment**

- “We need to preserve the environment so that future generations can live safely on earth.
- “We need to reduce CO2 emissions.”
- “The recycling industry needs to be reformed.”
- “People are still questioning whether global warming is real... it’s real and we should be more focused on solving it.”
- “Air pollution and the quality of the air is affecting the health of young people.”

60. We would like to highlight the high level of participation, as well as the coincidence in many of the issues raised in the report. We also note that depending on the socio-economic or cultural-racial composition of the participating schools and groups, the responses varied based on these attributes and qualities.

## **XI. CONCLUSION**

61. As members of the Civil Society this coalition would like to thank the Government of the USA for accepting recommendations from the previous cycle and looking for ways to implement them.

62. As a coalition we join many civil society actors, and also the recommendations of the previous cycle, where the country is invited to ratify the signing of international conventions on human rights, at a general level as well as to implement concrete measures for each of these conventions.

63. This coalition thank the government of United States of America for its efforts to continue to listen to the voices of civil society, especially children and young people, and encourage it to continue to make its best efforts to improve the situation of rights in the country in all areas.

64. This coalition is also grateful for the opportunity offered by the United Nations to participate through the UPR mechanism. Special thanks for allowing us to raise the direct voices of the children and young people with whom we have worked, reflected, and drafted the report we conclude here.