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Chronicling the high cost of our legal system

My new Cato podcast: human rights redefined

by [Walter Olson](#) on September 7, 2010

The other day the Obama administration came out with the first official U.S. response to the United Nations' "periodic review" critique of human rights practices within the United States. To the surprise of many — though not of those who've been following this area carefully — it presented as human rights imperatives worthy of international attention a wide range of initiatives that would earlier have been seen as domestic policy matters, from ObamaCare (whose passage — including a penalty on individuals for failing to buy health insurance — it depicted as a human rights advance) to labor law (where it suggested that Congress might be putting the U.S. human rights record at risk if it declines to expand the organizing rights of labor unions).

One of the major themes of my forthcoming book *Schools for Misrule* is the role of thinkers in the law schools in preparing the way for new and transformed (and gravely mistaken) conceptions of international human rights. Today on the Cato Institute's daily podcast series, Caleb Brown interviews me about the ongoing redefinition of international human rights and how we got to this point. The interview audio is available [here](#).

My Cato Institute colleague Roger Pilon, who directs the Institute's Center for Constitutional Studies and served under Reagan as policy director for the State Department's office on human rights, has been active in recent days in advancing a critique of the Obama administration's approach in a [Philadelphia Inquirer op-ed](#) as well as at [Cato at Liberty](#).

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