

## **Human Rights in Pittsburgh and the World: Dialogue Series Honoring the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

Series Organizers: Jackie Smith, Michael Goodhart, & the [Pitt Human Rights Working Group](#)

2018 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). To mark this important milestone, we propose a dialogue series that addresses how human rights are being used and contested globally, with a special emphasis on the experience in Pittsburgh. The series will promote public dialogue and reflection on the unexpected ways that human rights have come to be used in the world, drawing on the expertise and experience of faculty, staff, students, and community leaders who have been working together as the [Pitt Human Rights Working Group](#).

The UDHR was negotiated and promulgated in a very different world – one in which empires still spanned the globe, women’s humanity was not fully recognized, communist countries were a powerful economic and political block, institutional racism was legal and open, and environmental consciousness was minimal. The international legal mechanisms for human rights enforcement established through the UN reflect all of this legacy, and more. Today, despite the ongoing evolution of that system and the discourse in which it is enveloped, there are important questions about whether and how human rights remain relevant in addressing the pressing injustices in our world.

To address these questions, we are organizing a series of dialogues around new and emergent areas of global human rights activism with a specific focus on Pittsburgh. Contrary to the expectations of the human rights regime’s creators, extensive research and experience shows that *local human rights activism that draws on, criticizes, repurposes, and often innovates from global rights discourses in mobilizing local resistance and activism has proven to be the most robust and effective mechanism for advancing human rights.*

This series will not only advance new thinking and dialogue, but will also help develop and solidify networks linking scholar-activists with local and global human rights practitioners and support reflective engagement in work to promote intersectional organizing and transformative social change in Pittsburgh and the larger world.

### **Schedule of Topics/ Events and Co-Sponsor List**

(Preliminary/ November 2018)

Each event will feature a variety of viewpoints and include local practitioners and scholars from Pittsburgh and beyond. Formats will vary (lectures, panels, moderate discussions or roundtables) but always with an emphasis on connecting local to global and on opportunities for substantive discussion.

***Human Rights in Pittsburgh and the World: Assessing Human Rights Impacts, Limitations, and Prospects at the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Wednesday September 19, 2018 4:30PM Alcoa Room, Barco Law Building***

As the Trump administration flaunts international human rights standards in its treatment of immigrant families and in its recent withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council, cities around the country—including Pittsburgh—have been stepping up to declare their commitments to global human rights by signing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and by joining a growing global “Human Rights Cities” movement. As we recognize the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this panel reflects on shifts in global human rights strategies that have been working to “bring human rights home” in cities around the world and to advance thinking about global human rights principles. Panelists will provide insights into global and local work for human rights and explore how community-based human rights initiatives might support work in our city and elsewhere to realize the vision of the UDHR authors. They will also identify some of the key obstacles and opportunities for achieving dignity and justice for all people.

**Speakers** Noble Maseru, Director, Pitt Center for Health Equity- Health as a Human Right  
Leigh Patel, Associate Dean of Equity and Justice, University of Pittsburgh School of Education  
Dawn Plummer, Director, Pittsburgh Food Policy Council; Jackie Smith, Department of Sociology & Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance; Carlos Torres, Director, City of Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations; Moderator: Michael Goodhart [[Local media coverage Pitt News](#)]

***Cities, Human Rights, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Linking Grassroots & Global*** October 3, 2018 4:30PM

*This panel features leading national human rights advocate and scholar, Joshua Cooper, with commentary from Pittsburgh’s Chief Resilience Officer, Grant Ervin and Local educator and organizer, Michelle King. Joshua Cooper* is political science lecturer at University of Hawaii-West Oahu. He teaches advocacy at the International Training Center on Teaching Peace and Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland as well as the University of New South Wales Diplomacy Training Program in the Asia-Pacific region and the Oxford University Training Program for Unrepresented Diplomats at the United Nations. He is the U.S. Human Rights Network Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Task Force Co-Chair, coordinating the national campaign for the review of the U.S. human rights record between local and global forums. Cooper participated in the negotiation and adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and in reviews of U.S. human rights compliance at the UN Human Rights Committee, the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT). He is currently focusing on implementation of the UPR recommendations and SDGs at the local and state levels to realize human rights at home in Hawai’i.

**[Human Rights and Information Access in a Digital World](#)**

Tuesday October 30, Noon-1:00PM, Hillman Library Room 272

The United Nations has [recognized internet access as a basic human right](#). This moderated roundtable event aims to foster conversations about different approaches to ensuring the public access to information. Perspectives from the social sciences, law, and information technology will shape the dialogue about how human rights thinking about communications and technology has evolved since 1948 when the UDHR was signed. What does the right to the internet mean in practice? How do movements like the Open Access movement help advance the realization of this

right? Why is this right important for democracy, social cohesion, and human rights? How does the human right to internet access relate to our work as researchers, learners, and citizens?

A roundtable discussion featuring: Sheila Corral, Professor, Department of Information Culture and Data Stewardship, School of Computing and Information, Michael Madison, Professor of Law, and Jackie Smith, Department of Sociology.

**“Democracy for Social Emancipation: Lessons from Around the World”** Gianpaolo Baiocchi, New York University, **Friday November 9 12:30-2:00PM**

What does it mean for the people to actually rule? Formal democracy is an empty and cynical shell, allowing the nationalist Right claims to advance its anti-democratic project in the name of ‘the People’. How can human rights defenders respond in a way that is true to both radical egalitarianism and the desire to transform the real world? Gianpaolo Baiocchi discusses his new book, *We, the Sovereign: Radical Futures*, which draws from his work with social movements from Latin America, Southern Europe, and other parts of the world to examine how popular struggles are creating new forms of democratic participation aimed at making political parties and state institutions instruments of social emancipation. He argues that the ‘people’ must build on this explosive, creative energy to become truly ‘sovereign’ and to form a collective ‘we’ that is capable of deepening democracy and expanding its boundaries.

\*This event is part of the 2018 Pittsburgh Housing Summit, which addresses the human right to housing in Pittsburgh and beyond ([www.housingsummitpgh.org](http://www.housingsummitpgh.org))

***Rights Make Might: Global Human Rights and Minority Social Movements in Japan, Monday February 18, 2019 4:00PM***

Since the late 1970s, the three most salient minority groups in Japan - the politically dormant Ainu, the active but unsuccessful Koreans, and the former outcaste group of Burakumin - have all expanded their activism despite the unfavorable domestic political environment. In *Rights Make Might*, Kiyoteru Tsutsui examines why, and finds an answer in the galvanizing effects of global human rights on local social movements. Tsutsui chronicles the transformative impact of global human rights ideas and institutions on minority activists, which changed their understandings about their standing in Japanese society and propelled them to new international venues for political claim making. The global forces also changed the public perception and political calculus in Japan over time, catalyzing substantial gains for their movements. Having benefited from global human rights, all three groups repaid their debt by contributing to the consolidation and expansion of human rights principles and instruments outside of Japan. Drawing on interviews and archival data, *Rights Make Might* offers a rich historical comparative analysis of the relationship between international human rights and local politics that contributes to our understanding of international norms and institutions, social movements, human rights, ethnoracial politics, and Japanese society.

**Speaker:** Kiyoteru Tsutsui is Professor of Sociology, Director of the Center for Japanese Studies and Director of the Donia Human Rights Center at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. His research has appeared in *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *Social Problems*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, and other social science journals. In addition to *Rights Make Might*—which will be the subject of Professor Tsutsui’s talk—he is co-author (with Alwyn Lim) of another recent book on human rights, *Corporate Social Responsibility in a Globalizing World* (Cambridge University Press 2015).

### ***Health, Human Rights, and Cities***

This panel will present perspectives on how the human right to health relates to the realization of the broader array of human rights. Why is it important to prioritize public health in urban planning and policy? What work is being done by social movements, global institutions, and by the University of Pittsburgh to help promote the realization of the human right to health? The event will help introduce Initiatives like the new **Pittsburgh Health Equity Index** being developed by the Center for Health Equity and provide space for cross-disciplinary discussions about how various disciplinary perspectives contribute to advancing the human right to health.

### ***Human Rights and Racial Justice: Can International Law and Institutions Advance Struggles Against Racism?***

This event introduces key international treaties that address racial discrimination, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, and programs such as the International Decade of People of African Descent to explore how these might better advance struggles against racism and racial discrimination. What are their limitations, and how might they be enhanced as tools for promoting human rights?

### **Community Forum: Pittsburgh after Amazon HQ2: Corporate Power, Democracy, and a “Future Forged for All”** Saturday January 12, 2019 1:00PM-3:00PM Human Services Building, 1 Smithfield St. Downtown Pittsburgh Homestead Grays Room

Following the City’s failed bid to attract Amazon’s 2<sup>nd</sup> headquarters to our city, we convene this community forum to provide a space for residents to learn more about and to examine the question of what that this unprecedented inter-urban bidding war means for the future of urban residents’ abilities to shape how their cities develop and to enjoy the full range of human rights—including the right to political participation, housing, education, and others.

### ***The Rights of Mother Earth: A Framework for Human Rights and Environmental Justice?***

How might concepts like the Rights of Mother Earth, frequently linked with discourses of indigeneity and oriented to a more responsible, sustainable ecological ethic, help us to think about challenges of environmental (in)justice in the face of growing evidence that the most marginalized people in society are already bearing – and will continue to bear – the brunt of the costs of catastrophic climate transformation?

### ***Not Enough? Can Human Rights Tackle Economic Inequality?***

Samuel Moyn’s new book *Not Enough* argues that the human rights framework is both conceptually and politically inadequate for tackling economic inequality and challenging neoliberal austerity and sufficiency policies. What kind of track record do human rights have on this issue? How are activists using the human rights framework to challenge social and economic injustices? What success are they having, what obstacles do they encounter, and what is the path forward?

### ***Water of Life: Privatization and the Challenge of the Right to Water***

Water is a fundamental human right (not named in the UDHR but so obviously essential to bare existence that it is widely accepted nonetheless). Increasingly, as neoliberal economic reform

encourages governments and public authorities to privatizes public assets and resources, water privatization has become a global issue. It is also a live issue in the City of Pittsburgh, where a recent Blue Ribbon panel recommended continued public ownership and operation of the troubled public water system but rumors of privatization are rampant. How has water privatization played out nationally and globally? How does privatized water affect the human right to water and the enjoyment of other human rights? **Speaker TBA**

**Program/Series Co-Sponsors:** Year of PittGlobal, Pitt Human Rights Working Group, Ford Institute for Human Security; Department of Sociology, Global Studies Center; World History Center-University of Pittsburgh; University Center for International Studies; Center for Health Equity-University of Pittsburgh; Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance ([www.pghrights.org](http://www.pghrights.org))