

Report on the 6th Annual Human Rights Cookout 2020

Thanks to all those who tuned into their computers on a beautiful Sunday evening for our 6th Annual Human Rights Cookout. This was one year we didn't wish for good weather, but we got it anyway! This annual event celebrates our connections to one another and our shared commitment to strengthening human rights in our community. The cookout helps generate new energy and ideas for the work ahead. Below we share a report from this gathering and hope folks will help step up at this critical time. There are truly urgent threats to human rights today, but we believe that working together we can turn the tide.

First, the Menu! Our cookout was virtual, but folks attending brought a great meal together. Here's what was on our virtual **"Cookout" Potluck Table**: Spiced rice and mung beans, corn on the cob, carrots and celery, watermelon juice, sparkling strawberry juice, snickerdoodles, mac and cheese, aloo pakora, soda water, kombucha, peanut butter pretzels, peaches, pasta salad, cranberry juice, carrots, coconut macaroons. Yum!

Notes/Campaigns/ & Links from community leader presentations:

Housing Justice (Helen Gerhardt) Recently, Governor Wolf denied the renewal of the state's anti-eviction legislation, which protected those who've lost income due to the pandemic from also losing their homes. We all need everyone to be able to shelter in place safely, and protecting people's right to housing is essential. Groups in Pittsburgh and elsewhere are mobilizing to demand emergency protections of the right to housing, especially now. Demands: Extension of eviction moratorium through at least Nov. 30; streamlining of statewide rent relief programs; Lifting of \$750 rent relief caps.

Upcoming possible housing actions around the right to housing is [World Habitat Day on October 5](#), And the [International Alliance of Inhabitants](#) a worldwide organization that stands on a platform of zero evictions, has always declared ***the month of October World Zero Eviction Month***. We'll work to try to connect Pittsburgh housing justice work with these global movement efforts. The IAI asks groups to post actions and events on the IAI Facebook page or by using the hashtags [#WorldZeroEvictionDays2020](#) and [#HousingisaHumanRight](#)

Racial Justice and Public monuments/Public art (Miguel Sague) Residents are coming together to demand attention to the ways public space is used to tell our history. The need to recognize past human rights violations and their lasting effects is critical to building an inclusive and just human rights city. It is important for people to express support for this work, as national right-wing groups are mobilizing interventions here and elsewhere to try to convey the sense that there is broad support for keeping monuments to genocide and oppression.

- Petition to get Columbus statue removed: https://www.change.org/p/bill-peduto-pittsburgh-city-council-remove-the-statue-of-christopher-columbus-from-pittsburgh?source_location=topic_page
- Art commission is handling hearings: <https://pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/virtual-ac>

Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit (Thea Young) The Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit, will be held virtually during the weekend of January 23, 2021. If you or someone you know would be interested in helping with planning, please contact: info@PittsburghRacialJusticeSummit.org. Phone 412-407-2147 email PittRacialJustice@gmail.com website: pittsburghracialjusticesummit.org

Public Transit: Pittsburghers for Public Transit (Laura Wiens) has been active working to ensure that people working on the front lines in health and service industries can get to work, shopping and other locations essential to living. **The bus lines are lifelines** for these people especially, but cuts to transit are continuing to threaten our transit system. Reduced government budgets from the pandemic are being used to justify new transit cuts from a system that already was in need of more public funding and greater attention to achieving equity. PPT is working to lower fares for low-income residents and to defend essential lines from threatened cuts. Transit needs to be treated as a human right!

PPT Campaign: LET PORT AUTHORITY KNOW THAT BLACK LIVES MATTER! Local transit workers are being punished for wearing BLM masks. Support them in their demand that Port Authority change their dress code to support black lives. **Wednesday September 2nd at 4 PM at 345 6th Street.** Masks required, bring signs. For more info. and flier, see <https://twitter.com/Pgh4PubTransit/status/1300501453040234501/photo/1>

Casa San Jose- (Laura Perkins) protecting immigrant residents amid new ICE crackdowns.

Campaign: Driving PA Forward: Prior to 2002, residents of Pennsylvania were able to legally obtain a driver's license with a Tax ID Number, or ITIN, a federally issued identifier used to pay taxes by those who do not have a social security number. In 2009, PennDot cancelled the licenses of tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians who had obtained their licenses legally. There are estimated 150,000 – 200,000 undocumented immigrants in Pennsylvania. Currently immigrants without legal status are not eligible to access driver's licenses and therefore risk deportation every time they go to work, school, commerce, or access health care. **Support the petition** to allow immigrant residents to drive legally in our state: <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/tell-pas-state-legislature-and-governor-let-pennsylvania-drive-forward/>

City of Pittsburgh Gender Equity Commission (anu jain)

The Gender Equity Commission works within the Mayor's office to improve gender and racial equity. The Commission meets monthly and its meetings are open to the public. (See <https://pittsburghpa.gov/gec/>). The Commission recently issued a report recommending policies to improve equity and racial justice as we work to "build back better" after the pandemic. See: ["Building an](#)

[Equitable New Normal: Responding to the Crises of Racist Violence and COVID-19](#) This report provides 11 comprehensive policy recommendations to city of Pittsburgh to respond to needs of our community's most vulnerable residents.

City of Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations (Jam Hammond) <https://pittsburghpa.gov/chr/> The Commission on Human Relations helps protect residents from discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations. It supports work to promote human rights education and anti-discrimination activities in our community. The Commission meets monthly and its meetings are open to the public.

Green Party of Allegheny County: Is working to support and elect local candidates who are advancing a human rights policy agenda. Here are some of the key campaigns this season. The Green Party works to promote consciousness raising on the links between different human rights and public policies. Among its key platforms is universal health care as a human right & a green new deal, among other important human rights concerns. **Campaigns & actions:** Saturday, September 5, 2020 at 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM **PNC-Stop Banking on the Bomb Picket** at PNC/Oakland 4600 5th Ave - <https://www.facebook.com/events/1046374542486609>. Information and Petition for PNC to sell off all loans, investments, and bond issues that it has in nuclear arms producers: PNC Petition: <https://www.abetterpncbnk.org/sign-onto-petition.html>

Campaigns for local offices: mikeforpa64.com- (64th District PA House of Representatives) <http://jaytingwalker.com/> (for District 23 state representative)

Student Human Rights Organizing (Chiara Rigaud)- Students at Pitt are forming a student organization to support human rights education and action and better connect the university with the larger Pittsburgh community. Two of the student task force organizers, Karena and Ro, are developing a club at the University of Pittsburgh to enrich understanding of current events and promote community engagement among college students. All interested Pitt students should reach out to Ro at ADA61@pitt.edu.

Environmental Justice

Work is happening around intersections of environment, racial justice and the whole range of human rights. Participants mentioned the following, and we'll continue working to connect these conversations and advance our thinking about how the right to a healthy environment can best be advanced in our region. The Black Environmental Collective, [UrbanKind](#), and other black-led organizations have been having a series of online forums to change the narrative and lift up the leadership of those most impacted by climate change and environmental justice issues. Dr. Joylette Portlock, ED at Sustainable

Pgh and AC Board of Health members, works in including intersectionality and inclusion of the interests of POC in environmental issues.

The discussion generated some further ideas, but a key one is that all of our issues and concerns can benefit from a collective effort to change public debates, or “flip the script” away from language that prioritizes money and profits towards a focus on the well-being of people and our communities. As the pandemic has led politicians to prioritize a rush to open the economy at the expense of public health, we can work to point to the dangers of a policy framework that subordinates life and health to business as usual. We need new ideas to reduce the polarization and conflict we’re seeing at this time.

To learn more, see how you can get involved in this work, and sign up for our email updates, visit: The Human Rights City Alliance of Pittsburgh: pghrights.org or Facebook PGHrights