

## **Pittsburgh's Human Rights City Alliance**

### **Reversing Structural Racism Task Force**

On May 21, 2014 the Reversing Structural Racism Task Force held its first meeting in collaboration with the *Dismantling Racism in Organizations* ongoing workshops affiliated *WWHAT'S UP Pittsburgh*. The intention of the task force's first meeting was twofold: to introduce community members to the Human Rights City Alliance's Reversing Structural Racism Task Force, and to initiate a conversation about what it would mean to reverse structural racism in Pittsburgh.

Jackie Smith provided an introduction on the Human Rights City Alliance and its goals to build a people's movement that will make Pittsburgh a real human rights city, to establish task forces to focus on different human rights issues, and to develop an action plan outlining objectives necessary for the city to realize its commitment to being a human right city. The action plan will be delivered to city council on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (International Human Rights Day) as part of press conference.

The meeting began with a discussion led by Wes Hiers of the definition of structural racism, which called out its inter-institutional effects, multi-generational effects, and the lack of attention it receives in society (e.g., media uproar over Donald Sterling's racial slurs, but little media attention to the fact that Donald Sterling had paid the largest fine to HUD for discrimination against Blacks and Latinos in apartment buildings he owned). The discussion also included Pittsburgh-specific housing data that demonstrate historical to present day racial inequities in the distribution of African Americans living in low-income areas regardless of income. Readings and Data discussed at the meeting are available at: <http://pgh-humanrightscity.wikispaces.com/>

The majority of the meeting involved group discussions about types of structural racism in Pittsburgh and what it would mean to reverse structural racism in Pittsburgh. Key ideas generated through discussion included:

1. People dying without wills and title transfers-house transfers without proper paperwork
2. Holding organizations accountable-money flows into community but little is happening
3. Stop funding gentrification projects!
4. Introduce structural racism into school curriculum
5. Teach personal finance in schools
6. Eliminate property tax financing of schools; or create unified school district; or make state spend much more
7. Transportation- how does Port Authority Board work; need equitable representation on board;
8. determine economic influences that drive transport decisions
8. Dismantle school to prison
9. Change mandatory sentencing
10. Stop criminalizing female black life & mental illness
11. Get access to the police to improve police-community relations
12. Raising minimum wage
13. Think about and apply these ideas regionally, at the county and southwestern PA level

The Reversing Structural Racism Task Force will meet again, June 16<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm, to move forward with outlining an action plan specific to structural racism in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Meeting location: Sisters of Mercy Convent at Carlow University in Oakland. Contact Katie Wooten for more information, 310-903-9661.