

Media Release
**Pittsburgh joins national network of cities & files report to
UN Human Rights body**

***Racial inequity at the core of
human rights challenges in Pittsburgh***

A coalition of Pittsburgh activist groups working to support various human rights filed a Stakeholder Report to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report was part of the [Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\) of the United States' human rights record](#), which solicits documentation from residents about local human rights conditions. International experts and national government leaders will use these reports on U.S. human rights conditions to evaluate the performance report provided by the national government.

The report theme highlights the role of racial inequity as a core obstacle to the region's human rights performance. It spotlights persistent and worsening racial inequities manifested in the realms of housing insecurity, immigrant rights, health and the environment, and local democracy.

A series of community forums helped identify key human rights concerns and informed the report, which will be used locally by organizers to demand local accountability for securing and protecting human rights for all residents. Pittsburgh is part of a national effort called the [UPR Cities initiative](#)—which includes activists in Chicago, Washington DC, Atlanta, Jackson, New Orleans, Providence, among others—to identify critical human rights concerns and use international institutions to advance human rights in urban contexts.

Citing the recent Gender Analysis of Pittsburgh, the report notes that “[r]acial and social class disparities have been a long-standing and persistent obstacle to the realization of human rights in Pittsburgh.” The national political climate and economic development policies have worsened inequities and deprivation in the region, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. In regard to the human right to housing, the report highlighted the substantial deficit of affordable housing, lack of adequate protections for tenant rights, discrimination, and a need to ensure that affordable housing is located in areas accessible to transit and healthy food.

The UPR report referenced a recent University of Pittsburgh study highlighting an alarming racial gap in life expectancy: There is a 22 year life expectancy differential between the lowest life expectancy neighborhood, which is predominantly Black, and the highest life expectancy (predominantly White) neighborhood. Pittsburgh's rate of infant mortality for Black babies is twice as high it is for White babies. These statistics result from significant racial disparities in economic security, access to healthy foods, safe living and work environments, and healthy environments. The human right to health is impacted by policies affecting water utility, the enforcement of national pollution standards, climate change, food security and access, and public transit.

A third area addressed in the report was policing and the criminal punishment system, which was criticized for persistent racial discrimination in policing and incarceration. Significant and highly disproportionate acts of racial profiling, official discrimination, and intimidation of Latinx residents have been documented in this region. Patterns of arrests and detention in Allegheny County Jail show a highly disproportionate impact on Black and Latinx people, individuals suffering from mental illness, and people living in poverty. Although making up only about 13.4 percent of the population of Allegheny County, Black people represent 49 percent of the Allegheny County Jail population. And 60 percent of those detained in the jail have demonstrated symptoms of a mental health disorder.

To remedy these injustices and improve U.S. compliance with international human rights obligations, the report offers the following recommendations, which will help shape local and national advocacy:

1. The U.S. government must work to advance a culture of human rights and democratic values to eliminate racial discrimination, promote racial equity and end racial profiling in the administration of justice;
2. The U.S. must be a better world citizen and take steps to ratify international human rights treaties like the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families. In addition, the U.S. must improve its compliance with its legal obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD);
3. To better protect the right to health in its cities and communities, the U.S. government must improve national policies to address climate change and to significantly strengthen corporate regulation and enforcement of existing regulations;
4. Cities and communities require more federal funding to allow them to adequately protect the health and well-being of all residents and to implement international human rights obligations. Following a 2017 resolution by the U.S. Conference of Mayors “the United States Congress [should] move our tax dollars ... from militarism to human and environmental needs,” and shift more federal funding to U.S. cities.

Coalition supporters will use the UPR report in upcoming forums and other activities to promote public engagement and raise consciousness about these issues while advancing the report’s recommendations (see below). Pittsburgh’s UPR coalition members envision a society where people have equitable access to their basic needs, and aim to build networks that support this vision. UN processes like the UPR provide opportunities to bring international attention to persistent human rights problems in Pittsburgh and other cities and to help change the discourse to make human rights the overriding goal of public policy.

- **Monday October 14- 6:00-8:00pm Human Rights and the Criminal Punishment System** 1 Smithfield Street, Downtown PGH, Homestead Grays Room.
- **Wednesday October 30, 6:00-8:00PM**-East Liberty Carnegie Public Library “**Bringing Human Rights Home**”-Overview of the Pittsburgh human rights report to the United Nations & discussion of strategies advancing concrete changes in our region. **All are welcome!**
- **Monday, November 11, 6:00-8:00PM *Human Rights Community Forum: Human Rights & Health*** 1 Smithfield Street, Downtown PGH, Homestead Grays Room.
- **Monday, December 9, 6:00-8:00PM *Human Rights Community Forum: Human Rights & Decent Work*** 1 Smithfield Street, Downtown PGH, Homestead Grays Room.
- **COMING IN 2020:** Watch for activities at the Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit (Saturday January 25), and our February forum on Education

The Pittsburgh Universal Periodic Review task force includes: Casa san Jose, Hill District Consensus Group, Just Harvest, Pittsburgh for CEDAW, Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance, City of Pittsburgh Human Relations Commission & Gender Equity Commission, and others.