

Human Rights City Alliance 2018 Annual Report (mid-year)

The following report summarizes some of the major activities of the Human Rights City Alliance in 2018. We continue to build upon the lessons and relationships cultivated since our first joint action on Human Rights Day in 2013 to host and participate in events and actions that helped create spaces for residents to dream, plan, and demand a city that prioritizes human rights over profit and economic growth. In addition to the activities discussed here, we are engaged in ongoing efforts to deepen connections with human rights organizations and leaders in the region and to promote the [Human Rights City Action Plan](#).

Work with the [City's Commission on Human Relations](#). Over the past year, we have been expanding our cooperation with the Commission in the following ways:

- The Commission's Executive Director, Carlos Torres, serves on the Pitt Human Rights Initiative's Community Advisory Council, through which we are able to identify new opportunities for cooperation and mutual support for human rights in our region;
- Commissioner Winford Craig served on our panel organized for the 2018 Summit Against Racism on "Fighting Everyday forms of Institutionalized Racism." He was able to familiarize participants in the work of the Commission and to meet human rights leaders in our region;
- Co-coordinator Jackie Smith assisted with the production of a summary report of the Commission's recent and first effort to develop a Human Rights Assessment for Pittsburgh;
- We collaborated with the Commission to organize a public event on Pitt's campus on "Housing and Human Rights, Ethical and Legal Considerations" on April 24, as part of the Commission's effort to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act.
- We are working with the Commission to help plan the 2018 Housing Summit.

Expanding work with Local Universities. Jackie Smith led an effort at the University of Pittsburgh to establish the [Pitt Human Rights Initiative](#). The purpose of this initiative is to strengthen working relationships between the University of Pittsburgh and community leaders working to address a variety of human rights concerns in our region. The aim is to amplify human rights on the city's and university's agenda and to raise public consciousness and discourse around human rights. We can help build an organized constituency for human rights in Pittsburgh by bringing diverse groups together and mobilizing university resources. Support for this initiative was provided by the University of Pittsburgh's Research in Diversity Initiative of the Office of the Provost and the University Research Council. Starting with the relationships built through the 2016 Housing Summit organizing process, Smith built a larger **Community Advisory Council** that helps advise a faculty/staff/student **Human Rights Working Group** of over 20 members. During the 2017-2018 Academic Year, the Pitt Human Rights Initiative helped convene public events on economic development and the city's bid to host the 2nd Amazon headquarters, and on environmental and racial justice and housing rights. This group will help support the plans for the 2018 Housing Summit. It is expected that this initiative will strengthen the [University Human Rights Network](#).

[Summit Against Racism 2018 Workshop](#). We organized a session at the annual Summit Against Racism entitled, "**Fighting Everyday Forms of Racism in our Neighborhoods and Beyond.**" The session drew a full room of about 100 participants, and the following panelists participated in a lively and informative panel discussion on these themes: Jamilah Lahijuddin, Youth Organizing Program, Hill District Consensus Group; Carlo Hardeman Hill District Consensus Group; Winford Craig, City of Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations; Monica Ruiz, Casa San Jose; Randy Francisco, Sierra Club; Michelle King, Learning Instigator; and Marcia Bandes, Pittsburgh for CEDAW Coalition

“Environmental Justice is Gender Justice is Racial Justice” Public lecture and meetings with community organizers by Jacqueline Patterson, the director of the NAACP’s Climate Justice Program. During her visit, Patterson met with leaders involved in the City’s newly established Gender Equity Commission and with members of our Working Group and other community organizers working to address racial, economic, and environmental justice issues in Pittsburgh. She also met with students from different programs. Her public presentation was open to the public and drew around 100 participants from different programs across the campus and from the larger community. This event was co-organized with the Pitt Human Rights Initiative.

Following the [Housing Summit](#) we organized in November 2016, plans are underway to organize a similar gathering on November 10, 2018. We are currently forming a working group to develop the plans based on discussions of key goals and objectives that draw from our prior experience. We expect to better connect the Summit with local work to organize tenants unions and to build on our prior models of the housing summit [website](#), [film list](#), [book discussion guide](#), and other [resources](#) that can help support and advance this work. We hope to with the Carnegie Library system and with community leaders to help engage residents in different neighborhoods in activities aimed at fostering greater understanding of housing policies and human rights.

Promoting Human Rights Internationalism. 2018 is the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and we will use this opportunity to work with partners to organize events to advance public dialogues on human rights and stimulate human rights learning and advocacy. Human Rights work requires networks between local groups and international movements as well as an understanding of the system of international law that can help support local human rights. Our regular communications (email and facebook as well as [our website](#)) inform participants about work by international human rights organizations and about relevant UN human rights treaties, reports, and initiatives such as the [International Decade of People of African Descent 2015-2025](#). We raised awareness of the [International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade \(March 25\)](#). We continue work to find effective ways to raise consciousness on this day of the lingering effects of slavery, as a parallel to work on Indigenous Peoples Day and historical truth-telling. The National Human Rights Cities Alliance will help strengthen this work by providing resources to promote and support these coordinated days of action nationally.

May Day March and Cultural Event for Immigrant Rights/Worker Rights/Human Rights We promoted this march and displayed the Human Rights City Alliance banner at this annual celebration and mobilization.

Annual Human Rights Picnic. This year on the last Sunday of August, we will celebrate the 4th annual human rights picnic. Last year’s event was co-sponsored with organizations with which we’ve been collaborating, including: Casa San Jose, Pittsburgh Cities for CEDAW, Hill District Consensus Group, Homes for All, and Pittsburghers for Public Transit and Pitt’s Global Studies Center.

Indigenous Peoples Day. We will work to follow up the [2014 City Council decision to recognize October 12th as Indigenous Peoples Day](#). Building upon past work, the November Housing Summit drew attention to the connections between today’s housing crisis and the long-term history of “serial forced displacement” that is inherent to this economic and political system based in colonialism and genocide against native peoples.

Cities for CEDAW—We have highlighted the important work done to pass our local ordinance to implement the Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women as a critical step towards advancing the city’s commitment to becoming a Human Rights City, and we will continue to encourage residents to engage in the work to implement this new ordinance.

International Human Rights Day—December 10th is the anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “[the greatest achievement of the international community since World War II](#)”. We plan to work with City’s Human Relations Commission to organize annually some public event to recognize Human Rights Day and raise public awareness about human rights. In 2016, our local [Human Rights Day Press Conference](#) was part of a [national network of local actions recognizing this](#) day.

Ongoing Work

National Human Rights Cities Alliance Smith serves on this group’s Steering Committee, which operates as [a project of the US Human Rights Network](#), and is working to plan the next Human Rights Cities convergence in late 2018.

As part of our work to expand human rights education and dialogue and to strengthen the involvement of area universities in promoting human rights, the Human Rights Working Group at the University of Pittsburgh will be organizing a **series of events to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. The series will help highlight some of the lessons from past human rights work and the need for a re-evaluation of these rights in light of historical changes and new understandings of the intersections of human rights and other concerns, such as environmental protection.