

Human Rights City Alliance 2015 Annual Report

The following report summarizes some of the major activities of the Human Rights City Alliance in 2015. We were able 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 various initiatives identified in the [Human Rights City Action Plan](#).

[Summit Against Racism 2015 Workshop](#). In line with the intentionality of our “people-centered human rights” agenda, we participated in a panel with African American leaders in the city, jointly identifying key priorities for work to address the needs of residents who have been denied the ability to enjoy all their basic human rights.

[Days of Action for Human Rights: Earth Day to May Day](#). We joined with groups around the region to support diverse actions lifting up demands for human rights—including the right to a clean and healthy environment *for all residents*.

Making the Global Local: Human Rights Cities workshop. In collaboration with allies at the University of Pittsburgh, we participated in the *Making the Global Local: Human Rights Cities* workshop on June 22-23, hosted by Pitt’s Global Studies Center. The workshop enabled us to meet organizers from around the country and world and to gain more insight into how the Human Rights Cities model is being used in other communities. The conference generated some connections that have led to plans for a follow-up meeting in Washington DC, and we hope to bring some Pittsburgh organizers to this meeting. This [Conference Summary Report](#) provides an overview of some of the key lessons and resources identified by workshop participants. We hope to continue to learn from and build upon these resources as we move forward. A particularly valuable outcome of the meeting was a conversation begun within the U.S. Human Rights Network, which may develop a national coordinating network for Human Rights Cities projects.

[University Human Rights Network](#)—Another outcome of the *Human Rights Cities* workshop was the recognition of a need for better coordination and communication among faculty, staff, and graduate students at the universities around our region. Given the large numbers of institutions and their wealth of resources and skills, we want to help support people advocating for human rights on campuses and to encourage folks working in universities to pressure their own institutions to engage in practices that help advance our vision of a human rights city. Universities affect the region’s labor practices and economic development plans (including the displacement of low-income and African American residents from neighborhoods near campuses). More can be done to mobilize university workers to advocate for human rights. In addition, the network can connect Pittsburgh organizations with researchers and centers that can help provide information and other resources to support human rights advocacy, education, and organizing in our region.

Indigenous Peoples Day. We continued to work with the Council of Three Rivers Native American Center and our steering committee member, Miguel Sague, who serves on the Council, to follow up the [2014 City Council decision to recognize October 12th as Indigenous Peoples Day](#). We helped publicize activities honoring Indigenous Peoples Day and co-organized events at the University of Pittsburgh, in

collaboration with the Native American Student Organization, to raise consciousness and deepen participants' understandings of the history and significance of Indigenous Peoples Day. In collaboration with our allies who joined us this past year, we are discussing ideas to expand on this work in 2016; any interested volunteers should get in touch (pghrights@riseup.net)

[2015 Human Rights Days of Action](#)—Following a successful initiative last year to mark the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we again invited groups around the region to organize and join in a variety of actions and activities aimed at educating, energizing, and activating residents around human rights. We promoted this [outreach letter to faith congregation leaders](#), urging them to spread the word about International Human Rights Day in their congregations. This year, some of our partners reached out to us to get their events on the calendar, which we promoted through our email and Facebook networks and through our website. We also issued a [Media Advisory for Human Rights Days of Action](#). Together, this helped amplify our collective demands for a city and region where *all residents can enjoy dignity and human rights*.

Building connections— The Human Rights City Alliance is not an effort to replicate the work being done in our city, but rather we seek to strengthen and amplify the strong leadership of activists and organizations already active here. Thus, our small core group of volunteers continues to work to connect organizers and groups around the region and to foster creative thinking and collaboration around visions of what it would mean to be a true “human rights city.” One example is our work with the Pittsburgh Food Policy Council to expand conversations about the *right to food*, and you can watch the [video recording of the October 2015 panel on the Right to Food](#). We will continue to build on these connections and find new ways to advance the vision of a human rights city, and we encourage all area groups to consider appointing a liaison or otherwise contacting us to explore how the Human Rights City Alliance might be a space to help extend and strengthen your organization’s work.