



Human Rights City Alliance
Human Rights City Action Plan
December 10, 2014

*In April of 2011 the City of Pittsburgh became the 5th Human Rights City in the United States. In doing so, it promised to “provide leadership and advocacy to secure, protect, and promote human rights for all people” and to be “a model for communities in the United States and around the world.” This **Action Plan** draws from work of local activists to identify proposals for change that will help us achieve these commitments. It is intended to be a dynamic, evolving document that can guide our actions and support community cooperation that will make ours a city where there is dignity and justice for everyone.*

*The Human Rights City initiative recognizes that leadership for positive social change will not start in our national capitals; it will only come from the people. We cannot wait for changes in national policy, but **we need to become a living example to show that a society based on human rights is possible.** A key lesson from history is that any work to lift up a community requires popular struggle and conscious attention to the particular needs of historically oppressed and marginalized groups. This includes people of color, Indigenous peoples, women, LGBTQIA people, immigrants, people with disabilities, youth, older adults, and future generations.*

*As public servants in our Human Rights City, elected officials are required to see that the policies they support and enact help reduce inequalities in our community and that they do not impose new harms on vulnerable groups. The Human Rights City Alliance is committed to working with elected officials and community leaders and residents to develop and implement new policies and practices that will help us be a city where there truly is **dignity and justice for all of us.***

Cultural and Institutional Change

- **Create a city or county agency responsible for monitoring progress towards the Human Rights City goals.** This body may be created by restructuring an existing agency (such as the Human Relations Commission) or as a new body. It should include meaningful and routine participation by all sectors of the population, *especially those who have been most subject to human rights violations.*
- Explore and support **innovative social and economic policies** that make human rights their primary and principal objective.
- **Nurture a culture of human rights.** Institutional change requires cultural change, including a re-thinking of our core values and principles. A culture of human rights is the foundation for a Human Rights City, and must guide all of our public and private institutions.
- **Transform media practices** that reinforce discriminatory ideas and perspectives.
- Incorporate [Social Wealth Indicators \[1, 2\]](#) into public planning and policy. The actual lives of people and communities rather than monetary measures should be used to evaluate and prioritize policies.

Economic Justice

- Enact **living wage laws** to allow workers to support their families and enjoy dignified lives.
- Make it a policy priority to ensure adequate affordable housing for all residents.
- Ensure access to affordable and nutritional food for all residents.
- Nurture a culture that recognizes that it is a **human and civil right to form and join a union** and that ensures that all workers are protected in the exercise of their labor rights.
 - End all tax benefits and subsidies to any public, private, or non-profit entities that violate workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively.
- Implement **local procurement laws** to require government, corporate, and large 'nonprofit' agencies in the city and county to make at least a portion of their external purchases from **locally owned and minority-owned businesses.**
 - Fully implement a Department of Equal Opportunity to monitor hiring of minority contractors.
 - Residents and community groups such as universities, churches, local businesses, etc. should also strive to purchase from locally owned businesses and producers.
- Further a municipal **participatory budgeting process** that allows people and neighborhoods to contribute directly to deliberations about public spending.
- Support **public banks** to ensure greater public accountability and transparency in our financial sector and to reduce the inequities and vulnerabilities that produced the recent financial crisis.
 - Implement **responsible banking laws** requiring banks with city deposits to invest in our communities and to better serve low-income residents.
- Implement policies that nurture and support locally owned and minority-run and -owned cooperatives.

Education

- **Provide adequate public funding for education**, including efforts to restructure public school funding to enhance fairness and equitable opportunities.
- **Ensure universal access to free, quality public education, regardless of income.** This includes small class sizes and programs that serve nutritional and recreational as well as educational needs.
- **Revise school curricula to provide complete and accurate perspectives on the history** of European settlement and slavery in North America and its impacts on Indigenous and other people of color.
- **Eliminate high stakes testing and the focus on "achievement gaps" to address the "opportunity gap"** between students of different class and racial/ethnic backgrounds. This requires attention to the living environments of our students, not just their school learning environments.
- **End school closures** and develop **community schools** to enhance community resources and connect schools with neighborhoods.

- Protect teachers' rights to form and join trade unions so that they can determine how their classrooms are run and ensure the highest quality education for students.
- Support working parents and youth through affordable early childhood development programs.

Environmental Justice

- **Implement the [Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth](#):** without a healthy environment, *no one* can enjoy *any* human rights.
- **End class and racial inequities in the distribution of environmental risks.**
- **Divest from fossil fuels.** The City can be a model for action and encourage and reward organizations and institutions that shift to non-polluting sources of energy.
- **Promote research and education on the long-term environmental and health impacts** of fossil fuel extraction.

Gender Justice

- Implement locally the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and **become one of the ["100 Cities for CEDAW"](#).**
- Work towards **reproductive justice**, so that all women can choose whether and when to have children and have the resources and support they need to keep and care for their children.
- Support efforts to **ensure equal pay and fair employment practices** for all people regardless of sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation.
- Work to **end all forms of gender and sexuality-based violence**, including intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and street harassment.
- Ensure that all public policy decisions **account for the differential impacts on women and LGBTQIA people.**
- Community leaders, including public officials, must work to **foster a culture of gender justice.**
- Implement **changes to law enforcement policies and practices to ensure gender justice**, that is, to better protect women and other vulnerable people.
 - Involve women and LGBTQIA people in policy decisions and in the monitoring of police.

Police and Justice System Reforms

- **Implement the Federal Consent Decree of 1997** which called on City officials to "adopt and implement policies and procedures to prevent Pittsburgh Bureau of Police officers from depriving persons of rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States."
- **Work with community leaders to identify priorities and strategies for reform** that will repair mistrust, reduce officers' resort to violent methods, cultivate respectful police-community relations, and allow effective policing in our neighborhoods.
- Enact significant reforms to **address racial profiling, discrimination, and police brutality.**
- **End racial discrimination in police hiring** and take steps to **remedy the effects of past discrimination.**
- Develop and expand community-based alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenses.
- Follow international human rights conventions in the treatment of juveniles in the justice system.

Racial Justice

- Implement locally the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**, one of the key international human rights treaties to which the United States a party.
- **Implement equitable, democratic, and just housing and development policies.** Include residents in all decisions about economic development in our neighborhoods. Ensure that all development decisions advance the goal of improving the lives of *existing* residents, regardless of their income levels.
- Implement policies that **effectively eliminate discrimination** in hiring, promotion, and housing.

- Ensure that all public services serve communities where economic need is greatest and that **all racial and ethnic groups are served equitably**.
 - Following the Human Rights City of Seattle, implement the [Racial Equity Toolkit](#) in local government.
- **End racial discrimination and racial profiling** in all public agencies, especially law enforcement.
- **Generously fund and support community youth programs** that beautify neighborhoods and give young people opportunities to contribute to the community and develop valuable skills and networks.
- **Designate October 12 of each year Indigenous Peoples' Day**. The Columbus myth erases the humanity of Indigenous Peoples and legitimates white domination over people of color.

Social Inclusion

- **Make the “Welcoming City” a meaningful designation**, especially for immigrants to our region who are most vulnerable, including youth, immigrants of color, and low-income workers.
 - Provide municipal I.D. cards for all residents, regardless of immigration status (following cities like Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Washington D.C.)
- **Implement the Transit Bill of Rights**: We have a right to a public mass transit system that includes:
 1. Safe, reliable, environmentally-sustainable, and affordable transit that is accessible to all
 2. Living wages, benefits, safe working conditions, and union rights for transit workers
 3. Dedicated and sustainable funding for public transit
 4. Equitable distribution of public transit costs, with corporations paying their fair share
 5. Transit that meets the needs of each community with no communities left out
- Work towards achieving **universal health care**.
- Implement locally the **International Convention on the Rights of the Child**.
- Improve the **accessibility** of our community organizations, facilities, and services to residents with physical and other disabilities.
- Following cities like Chicago and Raleigh, NC, develop the **Open Source City Hall** model to improve transparency and access to local government.

*For further documentation, supporting evidence, and background on these proposals, see: www.pghrights.org
Send suggestions or comments to: pghrights@riseup.net*