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**Racial Inequity at the Core of
Human Rights Challenges in Pittsburgh**
Submitted by: Pittsburgh's Coalition for UPR 2019¹

Executive Summary

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.

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Overview²

1. Racial and social class disparities have been a long-standing and persistent obstacle to the realization of human rights in Pittsburgh. While this pattern of racial inequity is not unique—it reflects entrenched realities across the United States—a 2019 study³ showed that Pittsburgh is exceptional among cities for how poorly African American residents fare here.
2. Recent years have seen a worsening of the economic inequalities between various groups, and this is driven in part by the economic development strategies pursued by national and sub-national public officials. Moreover, national officials have been fueling racial animosities, and this exacerbates local patterns of discrimination and conflict, obstructing local work to defend human rights and remedy inequalities. This has had particularly harmful impacts on Pittsburgh’s immigrant and refugee communities, with especially worrisome impacts on children and other vulnerable populations.
3. As in other cities, Pittsburgh’s development strategies over recent decades can be summarized as largely corporate-led development centering industries of higher education, health care, and technology. Such industries are known to fuel inequality through monopolistic corporate practices, bifurcated wage structures, and limitations of worker rights.⁴ The employment structures of these industries have also exacerbated racial inequities locally, but denying equitable employment and educational opportunities to the City’s Black residents. For instance, an analysis of Amazon’s staffing showed that “The top position levels – likely the highest paid – are overwhelmingly male dominated and overwhelmingly white.”⁵ And data on student enrollments and employment at the University of Pittsburgh—one of the City’s largest employers—reveal dramatic racial disparities: While African Americans make up 25% of residents of the City and 13% of Allegheny residents, they comprise just 5.2% of the student body and 2.9% of faculty at the University of Pittsburgh.⁶
4. The national and international economic policies of the U.S. government shape this political and economic landscape that has contributed to inequalities and subsequent human rights violations in Pittsburgh and in other U.S. cities. Moreover, while economic development strategies undermine human rights, cuts to federal budgets for social welfare obstruct municipal authorities’ abilities to carry out their international human rights obligations.
5. The information provided below has been gathered by a coalition of activist groups, scholars, local human rights agencies, and policy and health professionals in the Pittsburgh region. The coalition includes both directly impacted residents and community leaders working closely with such populations. We have drawn from a range of local studies of human rights conditions as well as from a series of community forums, meetings of local organizers, and residents’ accounts to compile the data for this assessment and to develop the following analysis.
6. Since the last UPR review of the United States in 2015, Pittsburgh has seen growing racial disparities. Locally, we see little evidence that the U.S. government has made progress advancing any of the 53 most relevant recommendations made by UN Member States in the 2nd UPR review.

Moreover, national policies have contributed to conditions that have furthered racial discrimination and social class disparities in key areas of human rights, including housing, health, and policing policies.

Housing

7. Housing is perhaps the most important human right that requires strong government protections. Every human being deserves the opportunity to participate fully in community life, and this requires that their basic needs be met. The economic development policies of recent decades have sought to renew and expand economic growth in the region, but such development has contributed to the massive disruption of neighborhoods populated by people of color and low-income residents. The Black population in the city declined by 22% from about 102,000 in 1980 to 79,789 in 2010. At the same span, the city's white population grew 36% to 201,765, census figures show.⁷
8. Today, the nation faces a slowdown of economic growth and a transformation of the labor market that has reduced the availability of living-wage jobs, fueling housing insecurity and the demand for affordable housing. Inequities in education further challenge underserved communities, who face life-long employment instability alongside rising costs of housing and other necessities. The lack of affordable housing often forces displaced residents into homelessness, or pushes them outside the city, where they often lose access to their networks, preferred schools, jobs and transportation.
9. Cost controlled and Section 8 housing is not adequately accessible in Pittsburgh, although over 25% of all disabled people live below the poverty level. A 2016 needs assessment⁸ found that the city needs 17,241 cost-controlled units to provide for those earning 50% or less of the city's median income. Since 2016, Pittsburgh has seen a net loss of affordable units, as development policies have favored new market-rate development of smaller units. This **substantial deficit of affordable housing** is especially burdensome for families, and creates cost burdens for nearly a third of Pittsburgh residents, making it difficult to pay for other necessities, like food, clothing and medicine.
10. Today, the displacement of Black residents and families continues, and those working in impacted communities are now seeing an even more rapid exodus of residents from neighborhoods with concentrated Black populations. This exodus is shaped by the federal government's shift away from public housing and the growing marketization of housing and land in communities. Like other cities, Pittsburgh is seeing its traditionally Black neighborhoods—some of which have already been severely disrupted by previous policies aimed at urban revitalization⁹—displaced and transformed by economic policies that have privileged investors and higher-income residents over long-time residents, low-income families, and vulnerable populations.
11. Between 2000-2015 959 deeply subsidized affordable housing units were demolished in the East Liberty neighborhood. Just 233 new deeply subsidized units were built to replace them. Around 40% of these lost units were replaced with new developments that were less highly subsidized and not permanently affordable.¹⁰

12. Immigrant families are being denied meaningful access to housing and other essential services in Pittsburgh.¹¹ Undocumented immigrants are frequently denied access to adequate housing. While it is difficult to collect documentation on this kind of discrimination, current U.S. policies of intimidation of undocumented resident exacerbate this problem. Landlords often will not rent to undocumented people or will take advantage of them by charging higher rents and by not maintaining units. Some landlords threaten to contact Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) if tenants complain. Language barriers and fear of ICE for the undocumented mean that immigrants are more likely to be victimized, because they won't report crimes, or do not have access to information. The lack of official identification makes it difficult to open bank accounts that facilitate saving and support rental and other applications.
13. The right to housing in Pittsburgh and surrounding regions has been difficult to realize for many due to the **lack of protections for tenant rights**. Nationally we are facing a housing crisis that is reflected in unprecedented rates of evictions and housing insecurity. In 2018 14,181 eviction court actions were filed by Allegheny County landlords, the highest figure in a decade. The county saw 40,000 eviction filings from 2014 to 2016. Tenants facing eviction are not provided with legal counsel and have rarely prevailed in these cases, as landlords have won their claims in 98% of all County filings.¹²
14. A recent Fair Housing Assessment by the City of Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations revealed patterns of discrimination that pose substantial barriers for low-income residents, people of color, and families facing housing insecurity. These include: discrimination by landlords who refuse to accept public Housing Choice Vouchers;¹³ poor quality and safety of available low-income housing, and inaccessibility of affordable housing. Participants also reported perceived discrimination against tenants based on race and family size. Local enforcement of anti-discrimination laws is constrained by a number of factors, with leading ones being the provisions of the city's home rule charter and legal challenges to new protections by landlords and employers. Also important are limited resources and staffing as well as the public's lack of awareness about human rights.
15. Pittsburgh residents' right to adequate housing is impacted by policies in other sectors, including public utilities and transit. Part of the right to housing is also the right to be able to turn on your tap in that housing and have clean water, without fear of it being contaminated and/or shut off. Housing must also be located in places that are accessible to where people need to go to work, shop for food and other necessities, attend school, and access health care and other services.
16. The United Nations General Assembly recognized the **human right to water and sanitation** on June 28, 2010 through Resolution 64/292.¹⁴ Yet, this right remains far from realized. The privatization of water has not, as proponents have claimed, expanded people's access to safe water. Instead, privatization has led to higher costs and lower quality water. The privatization of water also tends to have a disproportionate impact on communities of color, who have seen poorer quality service and more shut-offs.¹⁵ Like many other municipalities with aging infrastructure, Pittsburgh, PA also has a problem with high levels of lead in the water. Conflicts around water are inherently related to equity, power, and access, and thus implicate a range of other important dynamics—including trends of market deregulation, privatization, and austerity measures. Campaigns opposed to water privatization and for the "right to water" are often linked to campaigns countering privatization of other resources, with many of these campaigns framing water as a human right,

not a private resource to be commodified.¹⁶ Privatization of water is a threat to the human right to water because the idea of a profit-based solution (privatization) is at odds with the idea that human rights—must come before profit. This includes so-called “PPPs” or “public private partnerships” which turn all of the risk to the government/public and all of the profit to the corporation. In Pittsburgh, the public utility, plagued by administrative problems and financial distress, entered into a PPP with the French firm Veolia in 2012. The contract stipulated that Veolia would get to keep 50 cents to every dollar saved under its management. Under Veolia’s management workers were laid off and in 2016 an illegal chemical switch was made that spiked lead levels. Shortly after Veolia, was fired the news of the city’s lead problem was announced.¹⁷ Currently publicly run, activists continue to fight for safe, affordable, and publicly controlled water.¹⁸

17. Rising housing costs in Pittsburgh displaces the city’s most vulnerable residents into ring suburbs which are underserved by existing **public transit infrastructures**.¹⁹ There is a need for more integrated planning between municipalities, agencies, and community groups to ensure that residents have the access to transit that enables them to enjoy their rights to basic needs like living-wage jobs, food, health care, and opportunities to be full participants in the social and cultural life of communities. Community groups such as Pittsburghers for Public Transit have offered a wealth of information and granular knowledge of system operation that could be highly useful to integrated planning,²⁰ and such community-based data and reports on rider needs should be more integrated into policy and planning.

Health

18. In a 2014 interview with *Pittsburgh City Paper*, former Allegheny County Health Department Director Dr. Karen Hacker was asked about which health disparities most concerned her. She replied, “The two that have just jumped out—you don’t need to be brilliant—are race and geography. Almost every single negative consequence that we have right now—by and large—blacks are more at risk than whites. But the other thing is we have a lot of disparities in our geography. We have communities that look dramatically different from other communities.” She added that such communities were largely drawn on socioeconomic lines, recognizing that low-income white/European American residents are not faring well either.²¹ The differences in health outcomes fall along race, class, and geographic lines.
19. Health disparities across racial divides are pronounced in the Pittsburgh region, exacerbated by economic factors as well as federal policies that limit access to universal health care and that restrict rights of immigrant residents to essential health services. The overwhelming reliance on health insurance policies linked to employment disproportionately denies un- and under-employed residents access to quality care. Pittsburgh’s Black residents face unemployment rates far higher than White residents (16% vs. 6%), and around four times the national average of around 4%.²²
20. A recent study by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health²³ has documented racial inequities in health, and this study shows an alarming gap in life expectancy between neighborhoods with large Black populations contrasted with largely White neighborhoods. The City of Pittsburgh 75.9 life expectancy is 2.7 years less than the United States. 9 of the 63 Pittsburgh neighborhoods are above the U.S. Life Expectancy (78.6). There is

a 22 year life expectancy differential between the lowest life expectancy neighborhood which happens to be predominantly Black and the highest life expectancy neighborhood which is White. The two neighborhoods are contiguous.

21. Pittsburgh's rate of infant mortality for Black babies is twice as high it is for White babies — 18 deaths per 1,000 births compared to 9 deaths per 1,000 births. Moreover, despite similar rates of pre-natal health care, Infant mortality for black females is higher in Pittsburgh than 70% of other cities. This statistic reveals other important racial disparities in the social determinants of health, including economic security, access to healthy foods, safe living and work environments, and healthy environments.²⁴
22. Another area where federal policies contribute to racial disparities in the enjoyment of health is in the enforcement of national environmental regulations. In particular, residents are concerned about the failure of the federal Environmental Protection Agency to serve the health needs of residents affected by the operation of US Steel facilities in Allegheny County. While these facilities contribute to Pittsburgh's overall poor air quality ratings and undermine all residents' right to health, they have far more disproportionate impacts on the low-income and largely Black populations of residents living closest to these facilities. Water safety is another area where the region fails to meet federal standards. Particularly vulnerable are children, the elderly, and disabled groups who are entitled to special protections under international human rights laws and standards.
23. Water pollution and lead contamination of Pittsburgh drinking water is a huge crisis, and it especially impacts the most vulnerable groups.²⁵ Since June 2016, Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) has conducted a lead compliance test every six months. Each test has had 10% of samples indicate 15 ppb or greater. For reference, in 2001, the top 10% were above 6 ppb, and in 2010, the top 10% of samples were above 10 ppb. PWSA's December 2017 lead compliance test sampled 118 houses that had or were suspected to have lead service lines or plumbing. Of these 118 houses, 15% exceeded the 15 ppb action level. Ten percent of the samples were *above 21 ppb*. In the December 2017 test, almost 50% of samples were above 5 ppb, a dramatic increase since 2001.²⁶
24. PWSA has repeatedly deferred its compliance with the Clean Water Act, contributing to the ongoing pollution of the region's waterways.²⁷ Following problems with elevated lead levels in drinking water, the City filed a lawsuit against Veolia, the company managing the city's Public Private Partnership, and returned the utility to public control. It is important that it remain so. While more still needs to be done to ensure that all residents have access to water, the fact that our water is from a public utility means that citizens have been able to push for more transparent and democratic governance to ensure that all residents have equitable access to safe and affordable water.
25. The region still fails to meet federal air quality standards for fine particulate matter and Allegheny County only met federal air quality standards in ozone (8-hour) for the first time in 2015. The American Lung Association's *State of the Air 2018* report ranked the Pittsburgh metro area as having the 8th worst year-round particle pollution (Annual PM2.5), the 10th worst for short-term particle pollution (24 hour PM2.5), and the 32nd worst for high ozone days across more than 180 U.S. metro areas. Residents in West Elizabeth Borough and the City of Clairton, next to US Steel's

Clairton Coke Works, face cancer rates 20 times greater than areas outside of Allegheny County. Allegheny County residents themselves face rates two times greater than the counties around it.²⁸

26. **Climate change** will further transform our environment and threaten our health. It will make existing environmental health problems even worse. Unless actions are taken to fix existing environmental and public health disparities, those residents suffering the worst today will suffer more dramatic health threats in the years to come. At the same time, the petrochemical industry is expanding closer to the city and is constructing at least one processing facility upwind from the city, leaving us all vulnerable to more toxic air pollution. Climate change and the extreme weather events it causes threaten to transform our landscape and economy, destroy lives and property, and make some of our existing environmental problems, especially air pollution, worse. These changes stand to bring even more harm to populations already at risk.²⁹
27. In 2016, nearly 1 in 7 (174,000 people) in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania are facing **food insecurity**. Of these, 42,000 are children.³⁰ There are more than 1.8 million participants in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Pennsylvania. These residents will face new threats from federal cuts to this vital program's budget. The lack of access to healthy food is strongly linked with far higher rates of heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and infant mortality. The Allegheny County Health Department's *Plan for a Healthier Allegheny County* identified the interrelated issues of **food deserts** and **transportation** as two of the most important areas for addressing the human right to adequate nutrition for the region's residents.

Policing & Criminal Punishment System

28. Like other U.S. cities, Pittsburgh has faced a number of high profile shootings and killings of unarmed Black youth by police officers. Community groups have been active in working to improve transparency of police investigations and are currently working to establish a county-wide citizens police review board.³¹
29. **Discriminatory policing practices** and racial disparities in incarceration rates have serious and repercussions for people's enjoyment of the right to health, further complicating efforts to remedy long-standing racial inequities and discrimination. A recent article in *The Lancet*³² determined that incarceration "has profoundly harmful effects on physical and mental health after release," in addition to negatively impacting the health and well-being of female partners and children of incarcerated men.
30. A 2019 report by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) showed that Pennsylvania experienced highly disproportionate rates of ICE "community arrests," where ICE personnel make arrests at people's homes, workplaces and other community spaces. Pennsylvania, although it ranks 15th in numbers of undocumented residents, ranks 1st in ICE detentions, with 25.6 arrests per 1,000 undocumented immigrants, compared to a national rate of 6.0 per 1,000.³³ This indicates significant and highly disproportionate acts of racial profiling, official discrimination, and intimidation of residents of this region. Within Pittsburgh residents have documented frequent instances where ICE violates U.S. law by stopping Latinx-looking

people and asking them to produce legal documentation and by abusing warrant authority, such as by using administrative warrants in place of judicial warrants.³⁴

31. Researchers have documented serious human rights abuses in the Allegheny County Jail. Eighty-one percent of people in the Allegheny County Jail are unconvicted, compared with 62 percent nationally.³⁵ Patterns of arrests and detention in the Jail show an increasingly disproportionate impact on Black and Latino people, individuals suffering from mental illness, and people living in poverty. For instance, 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.³⁶
32. Many people held in the Jail have serious mental illness or substance use disorders. In Allegheny County, 75 percent of inmates have drug and/or alcohol or mental illness issues, and 48 percent have both, and 60 percent have demonstrated symptoms of a mental health disorder in the preceding 12 months.³⁷
33. Families and communities are continually disrupted by people going in and out of prison. Incarceration contributes to poverty by creating employment barriers; reducing earnings and decreasing economic security through criminal debt, fees, and fines; making access to public benefits difficult or impossible; and disrupting communities where formerly incarcerated people reside.

Recommendations

34. In the Second UPR Cycle, the United States received 343 recommendations, 53 of which were related to racial discrimination. It Supported 30 of these recommendations. Below we identify recommendations that relate to some of the recommendations provided by UN Member States that we think will help improve human rights conditions in Pittsburgh and other U.S. cities.
35. The most frequent recommendation made by Member States during the 2nd UPR Cycle, and the type of recommendation that was supported by the U.S. government, was to reduce racial discrimination and to ensure more racial equity and an end to racial profiling in the administration of justice. Far more must be done to make progress on these 30 recommendations. In Pittsburgh and possibly other cities, there is little evidence of improvement in regard to these recommendations.
36. In regard to the issue of longstanding, persistent, and deepening racial inequities we document here, we note that particular attention must be paid to implementing international human rights agreements and treaties, and we note especially the importance of the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. (See 2nd UPR Cycle Recommendations³⁸ by Bangladesh (S), Namibia, Cuba, Iran, South Africa, Cape Verde, Kazakhstan (S), Ghana, Bangladesh (S))
37. We also note that conditions in Pittsburgh would be improved with greater overall participation of the United States Government in the full range of international human rights conventions. Related to this report, we encourage steps to ratify 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 United States must do far more to comply with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

38. To better protect the right to health, both for underserved residents and for the overall population, the U.S. government must improve national policies related to corporate regulation, and take steps to improve enforcement of existing regulations.
39. Following recommendations made by Nicaragua, Bangladesh, and Maldives in the 2nd UPR Cycle, the U.S. government must be more engaged in global efforts to combat climate change and its effects.
40. Following recommendations by Spain and Nicaragua, the United States must better support the human right to water and sanitation. In this regard, analysts and advocates have observed that the remunicipalization of key services such as water utilities can substantially improve human rights protections and reduce public costs. Pittsburgh and other cities have moved in this direction, and better federal policies and supports could make local utilities more accountable to local populations while enforcing guidelines that ensure greater equity in access to essential resources.
41. Despite international expectations that all UN Member States have “pledged themselves to achieve...the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms” and that they will “strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction,”³⁹ the United States Government has done little to promote human rights education among residents or among sub-national government officials, and local officials remain uninformed about their international human rights obligations.⁴⁰ We therefore encourage the United States to carry forward its obligations under the Paris Principles to establish a national human rights institution to coordinate and streamline national policies. (See 2nd UPR Cycle Supported Recommendations by Nepal, Panama, Ukraine, DR Congo, Indonesia, Kazakhstan). At a minimum, steps to provide better financial support and recognition for existing human rights commissions and agencies, promote human rights learning, and to foster a climate that actively discourages discriminatory practices and values would help improve local human rights conditions in the country.
42. Federal and local policies must be designed to ensure that adequate resources are devoted to the health and well-being of all residents. Public funding in the United States to support affordable housing, education, and health has declined over recent decades, while military spending and funding for prisons and policing has increased or remained steady.⁴¹ The prioritization of human rights of residents in budgetary policies would help remedy racial disparities while also enhancing human rights realization for all U.S. residents. Pointing to the fiscal challenges faced by cities, in 2017 the U.S. Conference of Mayors “[urged] the United States Congress to move our tax dollars in exactly the opposite direction proposed by the President, from militarism to human and environmental needs,” and called for more federal funding for U.S. cities.⁴²

43. Securing resources to promote human rights is critical in order to address growing inequities in communities around the United States. In addition to shifting budgetary priorities away from military spending and towards housing and health concerns, policies that ensure more fair taxation policies and that ensure greater public accountability for public expenditures and restrict government entanglements with business entities are essential.
44. In a 2019 letter to the United States Government,⁴³ UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing and Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises pointed out how U.S. government policies were promoting the financialization of housing, calling this a “retrogressive step, [which] accordingly puts the State at odds with its obligations under international human rights law.” These human rights officials noted that the U.S. “must develop policies and laws that include a full range of taxation, regulatory and planning measures in order to re-establish housing as a human right, promote an inclusive housing system, prevent speculation and limit the extraction of profits at the expense of tenants.” They observed that “This will require a transformation of the relationship between your Government and the financial sector, whereby human rights implementation becomes the overriding goal.” Our experiences confirm that such transformation of federal policies would dramatically improve the access to housing for residents in this region while also enabling us to reduce this City’s glaring racial disparities in human rights protections.

End Notes

¹ *Participating groups include:* Casa san Jose; Hill District Consensus Group; Just Harvest; Pittsburgh for CEDAW; Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance; Pittsburghers for Public Transit; City of Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations; City of Pittsburgh Gender Equity Commission § *Additional community partners participated in the effort to compile this document, but time constraints did not allow them to offer final endorsement before submission to the UN UPR.*

² This report draws upon a series of “Human Rights Community Forums” organized by members of our UPR 2019 coalition to engage affected residents, organizational leaders working with affected populations, and other concerned residents in conversations about key human rights issues in our region. The Forums also invited participants to discuss ideas and strategies for building solutions to these problems.

³ “Pittsburgh’s Inequality Across Gender and Race”, September 17, 2019, City of Pittsburgh Gender Equity Commission. At: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6417271-Pittsburgh-s-Inequality-Across-Gender-and-Race.html?embed=true&responsive=false&sidebar=false>

⁴ For a detailed look at how an Amazon 2nd headquarters would be likely to impact Pittsburgh housing, employment and other sectors, see, “Is this For Everyone? Questions about Amazon’s HQ2” Jason Beery, Urbankind Institute. October 2017. https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/4691da36-2e74-4c4c-99f0-19c3eee5ac9e/downloads/lcgcdtb9v_813373.pdf?ver=1558223417409. Demonstrating the problems with the widespread urban development strategy of appealing to key industrial investors, the 2016 *World Cities Report* by UN Habitat argued that, “[f]rom an economic perspective, the model of urbanization is unsustainable due to widespread unemployment especially among the youth and the existence of unstable and low-paying jobs and informal income-generating activities, which create economic hardship, unequal access to urban services and amenities and poor quality of life for many” (p. 5).

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- ⁵ “Is this for Everyone? Qs About Amazon HQ2” Jason Beery, Urbankind Institute, Oct. 2017, p. 6.
- ⁶ <https://pre.ir.pitt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Fact-Book-2019.pdf>
- ⁷ <https://archive.triblive.com/local/pittsburgh-allegheny/hill-district-group-civic-arena-plan-unfair-to-black-residents/>
- ⁸ https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/Pittsburgh_Housing_Needs_Assessment.pdf
- ⁹ On Pittsburgh’s Hill District Neighborhood, see: Fullilove, Mindy Thompson. 2016. *Root Shock: How Tearing up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It, 2nd Edition*. New York: New Village Press.
- ¹⁰ *Black Homes Matter*, Pittsburgh Fair Development Action Group, January 2016. At: https://prrac.org/pdf/Black_Homes_Matter-Pittsburgh.pdf
- ¹¹ See, United States National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21. (2016) para. 68 “The United States has an unwavering commitment to respect the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their immigration status, and vigorously prosecutes crimes committed against migrants and enforces labor, workplace safety, and civil rights laws. All children have the right to equal access to public elementary and secondary education, regardless of their or their parents’ immigration status, and such schools must provide meaningful access to their programs to persons with limited English proficiency, including migrants.”
- ¹² <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/state/2019/05/14/shorten-eviction-process-legislation-Pennsylvania-greg-rothman-landlords/stories/201905140116>
- ¹³ This is despite the legal prohibition of discrimination based on source of income.
- ¹⁴ See https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/human_right_to_water.shtml
- ¹⁵ https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/Water_Report_Executive-Summary_5_21_19_FINAL-V2.pdf
- ¹⁶ Barlow, M. and Clarke, T. (2002). *Blue gold: The fight to stop the corporate theft of the world's water*. New York: New Press; Sultana, F., & Loftus, A. (2012). *The right to water: Politics, governance and social struggles*. Routledge; Bakker, Karen. 2007. "The “Commons” Versus The “Commodity”: Alter-Globalization, Anti-Privatization And The Human Right To Water In The Global South." *Antipode* 39.3: 430-455.
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³⁰ <http://www.justharvest.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Just-Harvest-Fact-Sheet-on-Hunger-in-Allegheny-County-2017.pdf>

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³²“Mass incarceration, public health, and widening inequality in the USA” Christopher Wildeman, Emily A Wang. *The Lancet, Vol. 389, No. 10077* (2017).

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³⁴ <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2018/06/a-court-found-that-ice-agents-violated-constitutional-rights-the-defendants-were-deported-anyway/>

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³⁸ Recommending states indicated by (S) indicate recommendations that were supported by the U.S. government. All other recommendations were Noted in the 2nd UPR Cycle.

³⁹ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Preamble.

⁴⁰ “Role of Local Government in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights”– Final report of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, September 2019. At: https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/30/49

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<https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/report-increases-spending-corrections-far-outpace-education>;
<https://www.nationalpriorities.org/works-on/military-security/>
- ⁴² U.S. Conference of Mayors Resolution Calling for Hearings on Real City Budgets Needed and the Taxes our Cities Send to the Federal Military Budget (2017)
- ⁴³ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/Financialization/OL_USA_10_2019.pdf