

Human Rights City Alliance
Organizational meeting Monday June 2, 2014

ACTION ITEMS:

Volunteer [for a task force](#)

Volunteers needed to help gather testimony for Convention vs. Racism
(pghhumanrights@gmail.com)

Attending: Amanda Gross, Melanie Hilderbrant, Sara Hakimzadeh, Jackie Smith, Alex Habermann (notetaker)

1) Background and overview of the Human Rights City Alliance work plan
Since we had several new people at this meeting, Jackie provided an overview of the history of the Human Rights City Alliance and the 8 [task forces](#) that are helping to organize the work. The overall aim of the group is to develop a Human Rights Action Plan that provides a road map for our alliance and for city officials and members of the community as we move to make ours a real human rights city. A version of the plan will be made public on International Human Rights Day 2014, which is December 10th.

The task forces build on the work being done by groups around the city on the various themes. We'll identify key benchmarks and time frames for concrete changes that need to happen for our human rights city to be realized.

The task forces are complemented by the Human Rights City Alliance Coordination Team, which helps coordinate all of the working groups, facilitates internal and external communication, and develop ideas for building connections among working group projects. Jackie will work on getting business cards with the Alliance website, email and other contact info. so we can use these at events.

In addition, the coordination team has been working to develop a recommendation on whether the city needs a specific agency to implement the Human Rights City Proclamation (something other HR Cities have done) or whether the existing "Human Relations Commission" can be re-named and re-organized with a more expansive mandate. ([Click here for a preliminary report](#) done by Oscar Cariceo).

2) Task force reports

Amanda reported on the education and immigration task forces.

Immigration/ Welcoming City- saw an advance with the [Mayor's recent announcement that he's naming Pittsburgh a "Welcoming City"](#). Amanda circulated the article to the group. We have posted on the web page and need to share with organizational allies working on this issue, as well as with the overall network of contacts. This is an important success that we need to lift up and press the mayor to keep on his priority list. It will also be important for us to balance the mayor's and media's emphasis on the economic benefits of attracting immigrants to the region and ensure that workers coming here are able to enjoy economic and all other human rights. Amanda also noted the need to raise awareness that immigrants to the region are not just those who are made most visible in much of the policy discussions and media—i.e., those in medical,

IT and education industries. There are many low-income immigrants who are working all over the city whose rights are violated daily.

Education—Continuing discussions with groups and alliances working on this: Great Public Schools Pittsburgh, PIIN, Yinzercation, and A+ Schools networks. Figuring out best ways to connect the various efforts happening in this area and to bridge some of the differences among active groups. A key rift is over testing and teacher evaluation/unions. A human rights framework should guide our work here.

Human Rights Curriculum—Amanda noted that AFSC has been developing a curriculum for human rights education that will be ready to launch in the next few weeks. Jackie proposed doing an activity to invite teachers to a “human rights education institute” or workshop to review the curriculum and the experiences of AFSC in developing it and to consider ways of bringing it into area classrooms. The group thought about various networks that would be interested in such an activity. Amanda will bring idea to Scilla to discuss further.

Environment: Jackie is still working to follow up with speakers from Mother Earth Day event to get ideas for steps forward in this task force.

Reversing Structural Racism: Very good event on May 21—[report is on website](#). Next meeting of task force is Monday June 16 (details on location to come).

Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Shadow Report-

The US Human Rights Network is helping activist groups document the effects of racism across the U.S. as part of the people’s ‘shadow report’ to be filed within the United Nations process. As part of its CERD treaty obligations, the U.S. must file an official report on its progress to eliminate racial discrimination this August. We will be working to collect testimony from residents to add to this national report and to help define the priorities of our local Human Rights Action Plan while also raising consciousness of the treaty and of the effects of racism in our region. Melanie volunteered to research the US Human Rights Network’s resources on this and to coordinate the local testimony gathering.

- We’ll be looking for volunteers to help with video/audio recording –it will be especially good to invite young people and people of color to be part of this activity, so please put folks in touch with pghhumanrights@gmail.com

Gender Justice: Jackie reported that she met with task force chair Sara Goodkind who is looking to organize an event for the International Day of the Girl, October 11. We also met with Carmen Alexander at New Voices Pittsburgh to discuss areas where we can coordinate/cooperate. The Oct. 11 event is one, and there is interest in working together to collect testimony for the CERD Shadow report as well.

Other Task forces

Justice System Reforms

Economic and Worker Rights

Social Inclusion

Next meeting:

TBA (Not Wednesdays) Jackie will send out doodle poll

Agenda for next meeting: 1) Internal & External Communications Strategy-website and email improvements; 2) Oscar's report on Human Rights/Relations Commission; 3) Task force updates