

## **Human Rights City Alliance Updates August 29-September 2, 2014**

*This update covers things that have been happening over the summer, largely through individual networking and outreach to help more organizers around the city learn about our work and to get input as we plan the way to a human rights city. This summary presents the outlines of where we are with the Human Rights City alliance and what we hope to achieve in the coming months. In addition to meetings among our task force coordinators, we've met with leaders at the American Friends Service Committee and Thomas Merton Center's New Economy Working Group.*

*We look forward to inviting new leadership and building our voices for Human Rights Day 2014!*

### **Logistics updates**

- We have a new logo, designed by Jackie's brother, which will be used in our website updates and outreach materials. We printed business cards with the logo and our website and email, along with space for individual organizers to provide contact information for our outreach work.
- We have a new URL for the website to make it easy to remember: [www.pghrights.org](http://www.pghrights.org)
- We have a new email address that is more secure and politically preferable to gmail: [pghrights@riseup.net](mailto:pghrights@riseup.net) (the old gmail address is set to forward to this one).
- We have made 2000 more copies of our pocket-sized version of the UDHR for our organizing work. This version has our name, website, and email on the back cover.
- Brook will help coordinate the work on the website. Many updates and improvements needed.
- We will set up an email list with our existing list of contacts (using riseup.net)

### **Outreach/Expanding the work**

In addition to working on the racial justice task force, Melanie will be organizing with students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and we'll coordinate our efforts. We will work to bring IUP students to Pittsburgh for our major events, and they will meet to discuss how to carry out the human rights organizing project where they live. One idea is to press Indiana County to adopt a Human Rights City proclamation similar to Pittsburgh's/Allegheny's. If anyone knows folks in Indiana county, be sure to put them in contact with us.

### **Important dates-Human Rights City Alliance Fall 2014**

- Saturday October 11 International Day of the Girl (Gender Justice task force)
- Thursday October 23, 2014 7:30PM=Day Room Window Performance at [New Hazlet Theatre](#)
- Wednesday December 10, 2014= Human Rights Day

## **Task Force Updates**

### **Reversing Structural Racism/Racial Justice**

One initiative that emerged from task force meetings last spring is a focus on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). The U.S. underwent a review under this

international treaty during the past summer. Melanie Hilderbrandt has been learning more about the U.S. Human Rights Network's work on this treaty review and on the "Shadow Report" USHRN compiled and presented in Geneva. We are working to put together an event to help Pittsburghers learn more about CERD and the most recent review, and in addition to providing this background, we want to provide space for residents to consider our own review of practices in this region as we identify priorities that need to be addressed in our Human Rights Action Plan. Jeff will connect with Carl Redwood, and we need to contact Rashad Byrdsong –Community Empowerment Association (Melanie?)

We also are working on an op ed highlighting the UN report and the lack of attention in the mainstream press to the UN findings. A Human Rights City needs to be a place where the gaps between human rights values and practices are discussed openly.

### **Groups in the city demanding an end to racial discrimination in policing are protesting this Saturday**

**Sept. 6** at noon at Freedom Corner in the Hill District:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/527854510678706/> Following the rally, there's a film & discussion - "No Justice No Police: California's Battle Against Police Brutality & Racist Violence" 2:00 p.m. Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh - Hill District 2177 Centre Ave. This is a good space to listen and talk with people organizing on human rights, so hopefully some of our team can attend.

### **Gender Justice**

Sara met with student leaders interested in this task force. She is also in touch with Carmen Alexander of New Voices Pittsburgh to plan for International Day of the Girl event.

### **Economic Justice**

We're connecting with the Merton Center's New Economy Working Group to see how to link the work of our groups (WELCOME to the HRCA Organizing team list, Marko and Gabe!). There is interest in exploring how to use the human rights framework to organize projects that re-orient economy to meet human needs rather than market demands for profits. We should consider whether our "labor rights" task force should be encompassed in this larger economic justice frame.

The Merton Center Working Group is in the process of developing its mission statement and agreeing on a new name. But they have been promoting the participatory budgeting idea in local government and are making some progress here. This seems to be a natural place to collaborate, as participatory budgeting would help us realize a more human rights-oriented city. We've been invited to attend the next working group meeting, **Tuesday September 16 at 6pm at the Thomas Merton Center on Penn Ave.** in Garfield. Jackie will attend, and anyone interested in coming to this meeting is welcome. Please consider coming to hear what's happening on this issue and seeing how we can introduce these ideas to groups not yet familiar with the human rights city concept.

### **Justice System Reforms**

Jeff is involved in a performance of "Day Room Window" (see below) at [New Hazlet Theatre](#). The Human Rights City idea will be featured in a post-performance panel on Thursday October 23, 2014 (7:30PM). We should outreach to invite people to come to the play and learn more about HRCA.

- A bold new play about nine adolescent girls, incarcerated as adults in a women's prison. Who they are? How did they get there? Their individual journeys toward self-discovery, rehabilitation and the possibility of salvation will open your eyes. - See more at: <http://newhazletttheater.org/#sthash.NiiJnBuO.dpuf>

- An Advocacy Day is being planned that will include families and friends of juvenile lifers going to Harrisburg on Oct. 6<sup>th</sup> to talk to legislators and present a screening of “15 to Life.” Interested folks can contact Jeff.

### **Environmental Task Force**

We have met with Merton Center environmental committee which is organizing a [bus to the NY City Climate Justice March Sept. 20-21](#) (to get on the bus contact wanda.guthrie@gmail.com). That group has a **meeting at the Unitarian Church in Oakland Monday Sept. 8 at 7 PM**. Jackie will attend, and others are also encouraged to come if you can to learn how folks are talking about climate justice organizing. There is also a meeting at the **Sierra Club (Oakland/425 N. Craig St.) on Thursday Sept. 18 at 6pm**. Miranda is in community organizing class, and the class project on sustainability may be linked to the work of the task force. One of the ideas in play is to bring into the Human Rights Action Plan the goal of passing a [Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth](#) to be considered an essential part of our being a Human Rights City and County. The task force hopes to outline some more specific goals as well, relating to climate change and energy extraction, clean air, and clean water. Also, link with transit. The UN Climate Summit meeting 18-23 September is a teachable moment, so hopefully we can draw attention to our work as the news focuses on that event and protests in New York City.

### **Immigration**

Groups working on shaping the “welcoming city” initiative have not been meeting recently. Amanda will help keep us posted on any new developments, but we at least should keep in our HRC Action Plan the “Welcoming City” language –with priority attention to low-income and immigrants of color.

### **Education**

We will be following up with Great Public Schools Pittsburgh and its allies as we develop the HRC Action Plan. One idea that is likely to be included is the ‘community schools’ initiative GPS has been discussing.

### **REPORT ON COOPERATION WITH AFSC**

Amanda is beginning to meet with the high school Racial Justice Through Human Rights youth group, and they will be defining their projects for the coming months. She will let them know what we’re doing and how they can get involved if they would like. Also, we asked her to invite them to help us with planning for Human Rights Day.

AFSC also has a Racial Justice Through Human Rights curriculum that is about ready to be posted online. We want to promote this in our networks and possibly organize a meeting where educators and trainers can come and learn about the curriculum and its uses.

AFSC is also involved in a quilting project on victims of gun violence that involves listening across economic, racial and other divides.

### **Summary of Tasks for the HRCA Organizing team—FALL 2014**

- Make sure task forces convene; compile input from task forces
- Submit grant proposal to Resist foundation (next deadline Oct. 3)-need to identify fiscal sponsor
- Draft Human Rights Action Plan—Produce draft to circulate **by late October** (See below)
- Coordinate planning for Human Rights Day-Wed. December 10

- Make sure we develop the **cultural components of the Human Rights City** work—visual and performing arts, music, etc.
- Outreach/mobilize new participants & publicity
- Plan next steps, starting with [Summit Against Racism](#) in January (Note the fall deadline for workshops)

## Human Rights City Action Plan

### Draft

*Below and at this [link \(https://pad.riseup.net/p/PGHRightsActionPlan\)](https://pad.riseup.net/p/PGHRightsActionPlan) is an initial list of ideas that are emerging in the discussions we're having. Organizing team members should participate in the work of building this this list based on our outreach and conversations with other community groups. We need volunteers to do research on different proposals to help us make these as specific as possible, to set realistic timeframes, and to strengthen our case for them.*

*[Note: we may want the final version of this action plan to eliminate the issue-based categories, but for now they will help us channel ideas from task forces]*

### **Economic Justice**

- Implement local procurement laws that require government agencies and other large corporate and 'nonprofit' entities in the city/county to use locally owned businesses for at least a portion of their external purchases. Community groups can also implement such policies within institutions such as universities, churches, local businesses, etc.
- Participatory Budgeting
- Living Minimum Wage Laws

### **Eliminate Structural Racism**

- Housing/Development---Residents must be at the table when decisions about economic development the sale/development of land in our neighborhoods are made. Development must be in the interests of existing neighborhood residents, regardless of their income levels.
- Racial discrimination in law enforcement and racial profiling must end. (**Article 7 of the UDHR**)
- Community youth programs that beautify neighborhoods and give young people opportunities to develop valuable skills and networks can help remedy racial and income inequities and should be well-funded and publicized. We need to tell the positive stories of initiatives in low-income neighborhoods, not just the reports of crime, decay, etc.

## Environmental Justice

- Adopt and work to implement the [Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth](#)
- City, County, and local/regional institutions must divest from fossil fuels

## Education

- Article 26 of the UDHR guarantees the right of all people to free public education that will ensure their ability to be full participants on our society. This means that regardless of income, students must be provided with quality education, including small class sizes and programs that serve nutritional and recreational as well as educational needs.
- We need to move away from high stakes testing and the focus on "achievement gaps" to address the "opportunity gap" between students of different class and racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- GPS Pittsburgh is working to demand a **community schools model** for our schools to connect schools to neighborhoods. Community schools serve many functions in neighborhoods to build community and enhance the enjoyment of basic human rights through programs such as nutritional and health initiatives and after school recreational activities.
- Quality education requires that teachers enjoy their rights to form and join trade unions (UDHR Article 23) to ensure that they can determine how their classrooms are run and ensure the highest quality education for our young people.

## 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.
- Transit Bill of Rights (Pittsburghers for Public Transit)
- Affordable Health Care

## Gender Justice

- Gender justice requires major changes to law enforcement policies. Following the death of Ka'Sandra Wade, we are reminded that policies must be in place to better protect women and other vulnerable people. Women must be involved in policy decisions and in the monitoring of police.
- Prison practices such as the shackling of pregnant women and other practices that violate human rights must end.

## Justice System Reforms

### 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 most subjected to human rights violations.