

Human Rights City Alliance 2016 Annual Report

The following report summarizes some of the major activities of the Human Rights City Alliance in 2016. We continue 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 [Human Rights City Action Plan](#).

[Summit Against Racism 2016 Workshop](#). Together with the Cities for CEDAW coalition members, New Voices Pittsburgh, Hill District Consensus Group, and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, we organized a session at this year's Summit Against Racism which drew a large crowd of attendees and helped raise awareness about the work happening in Pittsburgh to defend and advance human rights. In particular, participants learned about how international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) can help us advance human rights locally. We identified some new volunteers interested in supporting work to translate CEDAW and CERD into local legislation, and we will continue to monitor international opportunities identified by the U.S. Human Rights Network, including activities that are part of the UN's [International Decade of People of African Descent 2015-2025](#).

[Homes for All Housing Justice Campaign](#): We are working in collaboration with a network of activists and organizers from around the city that is working to raise the public profile of demands for housing justice/ affordable housing. This campaign is part of the national Homes for All campaign being advanced by the national Right to the City Alliance. With support from the Global Studies Center at the University of Pittsburgh and Northside Coalition for Fair Housing,¹ we organized a major [Housing Summit](#) on November 9-12, 2016. Leading organizers working on housing justice in the most impacted communities helped form the steering committee that planned the event. Around 300 people participated in activities over four days, including a book launch for keynote speaker Mindy Fullilove's *Root Shock* at the Kaufmann Center in the Hill District and a neighborhood bus tour which visited the Northside, Beechview, and Hill District neighborhoods. Public education in the form of a continuing [website](#), [film list](#), [book discussion guide](#), and other [resources](#) is planned as part of an ongoing "housing summit process." We will be working with the Carnegie Library system and with community leaders to help engage residents in different neighborhoods in activities.

¹ These sponsors provided major funding for the event. Other co-sponsors include: [Casa San Jose](#), [Hill District Consensus Group](#), Hill House Association, [Homes for All Coalition-Pittsburgh](#), [Human Rights City Alliance](#), [Labor Council for Latin American Advancement](#) (LCLAA), [Northside Coalition for Fair Housing](#), United Steelworkers, [University Human Rights Network](#), University of Pittsburgh--[Global Studies Center](#), Architectural Studies, Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS), Consortium for Injury Research and Community Action (CIRCA), European Studies Center (ESC), Graduate School of Public and International Affairs ([GSPIA](#)), [School of Social Work](#), [Department of Sociology](#), Office of the Provost-Year of Diversity, United Students Against Sweatshops; University Center for Social and Urban Research ([UCSR](#)).

May Day March and Cultural Event for Immigrant Rights/Worker Rights/Human Rights We worked with the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and other groups to plan a May Day march and celebration to draw attention to the human rights needs and demands of immigrant workers and their families. The event also supported the YWCA’s Stand Against Racism. It helped mobilize support and engagement from diverse groups around the city to raise consciousness about the conditions immigrants face, countering the “culture of hate” reflected in the electoral campaigning with a “culture of human rights and solidarity.” Work on this event allowed groups to come together to learn about each other’s work, build connections, identify potential opportunities for cooperation, and to deepen shared commitments to building a city where all residents enjoy dignity and human rights. ([See photos](#)). On behalf of the Human Rights City Alliance, Jackie Smith delivered the following [Statement of Unity and Solidarity](#), which was shared on our website, social media, and email lists.

Human Rights Cities workshop-National Gathering in Washington D.C. We were part of the national planning committee organizing a workshop to bring together human rights city organizers from around the country and internationally. This workshop, held May 26-27 in Washington D.C. (the nation’s first Human Rights City), built upon the initial meeting we helped organize in June 2015 at the University of Pittsburgh (See the [Conference Summary Report](#)). The 2016 meeting generated a national Human Rights City Network Steering Committee, on which Jackie Smith currently serves. The national coordination continues as [a project of the US Human Rights Network](#). In addition to planning the next Human Rights Cities convergence in Jackson, Mississippi in 2018, the national network helped call for [national actions recognizing International Human Rights Day](#) (December 10), and we expect to provide essential resources and to help share experiences across communities working to counter new challenges to human rights emerging from the Trump administration. In early December, Steering Committee members met as part of Northeastern University Law School’s Program on Human Rights in the Global Economy Institute, [“Global Justice Goes Local: The Emergence of Human Rights Cities,”](#) which allowed us to consider how human rights cities can help our nation respond to the challenges ahead (See [Statement](#)).

University Human Rights Network—We are continuing to cultivate this network, and expect it to grow in the coming year as we engage local university faculty and staff in our work to respond to new human rights threats and to engage local universities in *meaningful* community work. Participants at the University of Pittsburgh hosted a workshop in April that helped support and connect with the Homes for All campaign, and local human rights/affordable housing advocates spoke and participated in the workshop, entitled [MOVING: Gendered Experiences of Migration, Gentrification, and Displacement](#). The November 2016 [Housing Summit](#) built upon these conversations and connections and will continue our efforts to mobilize new participants in the university network.

International Human Rights Delegation On April 27-28, we coordinated a visit by four delegates from the [Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions](#) (SALAR), who visited Pittsburgh as part of a 3-city study trip funded by the Swedish government. Delegate members met with local elected officials, researchers, and human rights advocates to discuss the possibilities and challenges of implementing human rights at the local level, as part of their work to support Human Rights cities in Sweden. [Their report](#) is currently available mostly in Swedish, and we expect to make more results available in English.

Fighting Mass Incarceration and Racial Discrimination in the Criminal Justice System. Following our strategic emphasis on the needs of people who are most impacted by human rights violations, we are working to raise resources for a project with local allies to host national human rights leaders, Chicago human rights lawyer, [Standish Willis](#), and Sali Vickie Willis for a multi-day visit which will involve a public lecture that will address residents from area universities, community organizations working for social and racial justice, and the general public. The Willises are leaders in the National Conference of Black Lawyers and in the US Human Rights Network's Human Rights City initiative. We expect this project to help us raise consciousness about structural racism and its manifestation in both criminal justice and housing policies as we build connections with human rights defenders in other cities.

Annual Human Rights Picnic. This year we celebrated the "2nd annual" human rights picnic by renting a shelter in Frick Park on the last Sunday in August. We co-sponsored the picnic with organizations we've been collaborating with through the Homes for All coalition and Immigrant Rights march (Pittsburghers for Public Transit, Homes for All, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, Cities for CEDAW). The turnout was strong, and the picnic generated conversations across different groups of activists. There was a general sense that we should continue this tradition and keep the format for the last Sunday of August, and Frick Park/ Forbes and Braddock for next year.

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](#). Building upon past work, the November Housing Summit drew attention to the connections between today's housing crisis and the long-term history of "serial forced displacement" that is inherent to this economic and political system based in colonialism and genocide against native peoples.

Cities for CEDAW—We helped support the coalition coming together to pass a local ordinance to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, which was successful in making Pittsburgh the sixth city to pass a local CEDAW ordinance. We have highlighted this as a critical step towards advancing the city's commitment to becoming a Human Rights City, and we will continue to encourage residents to engage in the work to implement this new ordinance.

International Human Rights Day—December 10th is the anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "[the greatest achievement of the international community since World War II](#)". Our local [Human Rights Day Press Conference](#) was part of a [national network of local actions recognizing this](#) day. This year we celebrated the recent passage of our CEDAW ordinance (see above) and to highlight the importance of coming together to defend groups whose safety and dignity are threatened by the current political climate. We worked with the new leadership in the City's Human Relations Commission to organize this celebration of Human Rights Day, and we plan to work with the Commission to honor this day annually to raise public awareness about human rights.