

Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance
Workshop at the 2015 Summit Against Racism

At the 2015 Summit Against Racism, the Human Rights City Alliance organized a strategic planning and networking workshop to help identify priorities and build a strategy to advance the [Human Rights City Action Plan](#), which aims to make peoples lived experiences in Pittsburgh more consistent with our status as a “Human Rights City.” Panelists discussed ideas for using the Action Plan to advance racial, cultural and economic justice.

Panelists included: Carmen Alexander from [New Voices Pittsburgh](#), Julia Johnson from [We Change Pittsburgh](#), and Carl Redwood from the [Hill District Consensus Group](#).

- **Three key policy priorities and focal points** emerged from our workshop discussion. We will put these at the forefront of our agenda in the coming year:
 - **End the police “stop and frisk” policy**, which unfairly and disproportionately targets Black residents and neighborhoods. Julia Johnson reported that more than 60% of all such stops were of Black residents, who make up just 26% of the city population. The policy contradicts Chief McClay’s stated intention of wanting to improve relations with Black residents and must be stopped as part of the overall work of ending racism in the police department and its operations. (For more details see from [We Change Pittsburgh](#)).
 - **End the displacement of Black and poor residents from the city. Ensure that all new development provides 30% of truly affordable housing**—that means using the average incomes for low-income populations rather than overall averages, which don’t reflect affordability for the working poor and those who are excluded from high paying professions. Carl is heading up work on this and we’ll be providing updates on this work.
 - **Enact and enforce local living wage legislation**. For starters, we insist on a \$15 minimum wage so that all working people can afford to live in the city and support their families in a dignified manner. Human rights and dignity also require that we ensure everyone’s access to affordable health care. We will keep you informed about upcoming actions to support the “fight for 15” and other struggles for living wages. An action is planned for April 15.... Stay tuned.

- **Build a human rights culture**. Human rights cities require more than just changes in policy. We need to change our mindsets and culture. This is essential to **ending internalized racism and oppression**. Promoting and protecting human rights for all residents shouldn’t be just a by-product of economic growth and corporate investment. Human rights don’t “trickle down.” We need to re-orient government around entirely new principles and policy priorities. But to re-orient our government we need to re-orient our culture to place primary value on human rights and dignity for everyone. This means changing the stories we tell, the ways we treat our neighbors, and the everyday practices of our organizations and neighborhoods.

- **Decentralize the leadership for human rights city: WE are the ones we’ve been waiting for!** Human rights cities rise from the grassroots up, and thus the Human Rights City Alliance strategy is to support and draw attention to the work being done by human rights defenders around our city. We also work to find ways to bring new resources and energy to the work of advancing human rights, and to unite our voices around a common demand for dignity and justice for all of us—including future generations. We don’t want to duplicate work or draw energy away from

the ongoing initiatives and struggles of local groups. Rather, we seek to develop a structure that can help bring greater unity and attention to our shared demands for a city that allows all people to live dignified lives and where the wealth of our society is shared in a just, equitable, and sustainable manner.

We invite you [to share this letter of invitation with community leaders](#), neighborhood associations, church congregations, etc. to bring more people to the work of building our human rights city. If you have ideas, questions or suggestions related to the Human Rights City Alliance, please contact us at pghrights@riseup.net.

[Sign up for our email list to learn about upcoming events.](#)

For more information, see www.pghrights.org