

National Human Rights Cities Alliance 2017 Report on our Work (Jan. 21 Draft)

At the national gathering of Human Rights Cities in Washington DC in May of 2016, participants outlined a set of commitments for our collective going forward. Below we include those commitments, following a summary of some of the accomplishments we have achieved in the 18 months since we met in Washington DC. Although we have not yet succeeded in raising major funding to support the institutionalization and staffing of our Alliance, and despite limited capacities of Steering Committee members and supporters of the Alliance, we have made some good progress in building our National Human Rights City Alliance and achieving many of our goals:

- Plans are underway to convene a third human rights cities gathering in Jackson Mississippi June 29-July 1, 2018, where a key goal is to integrate into our work the lessons and experiences from the U.S. South—which has not been represented in our earlier two gatherings in Pittsburgh and Washington DC;
- We have built a steering committee that has been meeting regularly and working to build our collective capacity and to coordinate national communications and actions to strengthen local implementation of human rights;
- We have developed and the Steering Committee has approved a [Draft Statement of Principles](#) that will be brought to the 2018 Human Rights Cities Convening for further discussion/refinement and approval;
- We have created four working groups to facilitate the National Alliance’s work: Communications, Local Implementation, National Days of Action, and the National Planning Committee for the 2018 Convening of Human Rights Cities;
- We are working to build our capacity to promote improved practices regarding communications justice and internet privacy/security and expect the Jackson meeting to move us further in this regard;
- We have been developing ideas and hope to implement more regularly national days of action to help raise the profile of human rights locally and nationally and to otherwise improve communications to assist human rights city/community organizers in their local work (Particular attention to the [International Decade of People of African Descent](#) and [International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade](#));
- We anchored workshop sessions on Human Rights Cities at the 2016 Conference at the Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy at Northeastern University Law School (December), the 2017 Left Forum in New York (June 2017) and at the USHRN Biannual conference in Atlanta (Dec. 2017)
- We have increased our international connections with leaders who are likely to participate in our future activities: Through an invitation from [ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability](#), sent a delegate (Michael Scott) to the [World Forum of Human Rights Cities](#) in Gwangju South Korea; and Joshua Cooper has made connections with human rights city leaders in Barcelona; and
- We have worked to develop connections with the larger national and international human rights movement through the US Human Rights Network.

In the coming year, as we work to convene a group of human rights defenders in Jackson, we hope to expand our capacities and energies to:

- Build our National Human Rights Cities Alliance and strengthen its connections with other parts of the national and global human rights movement;
- Consider the critical importance of human rights work at this particular political moment and discuss how our work can contribute to the defense of human rights;
- Help more organizers learn about the human rights city initiative as we build the human rights movement;
- Support organizers working to implement human rights in cities and other local communities;
- Facilitate communication between U.S. activists and the global human rights movement; and
- Document lessons and models that can inform human rights advocacy across the United States and in our global human rights movement.

Human Rights Cities National Convening,
Washington DC May 2016
Community Commitments/ Plan of Action

Organization/Coordination

- Participants agreed to re-convene a national gathering of human rights city organizers in two years (2018). The meeting should take place in a formally designated Human Rights City, ideally in the U.S. south (the first two were in the north).
- A national steering committee will be established to carry forward the lessons of this gathering and develop resources and plans for the 2018 meeting. The Steering Committee composition should be intentional about prioritizing the voices and needs of those most impacted by human rights abuses and to recruit national leaders experienced at coalition-building within a human rights framework. Representatives from past host cities and from upcoming host city should also be included on the Steering Committee.
- Participants expressed an interest in developing our capacity to use free and open source technology and to ensure online protections of people’s rights to communication and privacy. The next convening should be used to help develop our capacities in this regard.
- Participants expressed an interest in strengthening our capacity to share information and to coordinate our actions. There is an interest in exploring how this might be done within the US Human Rights Network, with which many participants are familiar.

Human Rights Actions

- Participants committed to taking some action on December 10 as part of a national day of action to promote human rights Cities
- Human rights cities—should encourage their international “sister cities” to become human rights cities

- Participants committed themselves to organizing around [March 25 day of remembrance](#)—and work together to build and promote the archive project
- Participants agreed to honor and raise consciousness around Indigenous Peoples Day-October 12
- Participants agreed to support national focal points of human rights work, including upcoming UN special rapporteurs, the International decade on people of African Descent (USHRN's Ubuntu Council); and work to improve local implementation of national human rights treaty commitments.