

Movement-building for a Just and Livable City for All – Community meeting Saturday
March 2, 2019

MEETING NOTES:

This summary compiles ideas and themes emerging from housing justice work over two housing summits (2016 and 2018) and Racial Justice Summit panels (2017, 2019) in Pittsburgh. Through networks associated with the Human Rights City Alliance, these gatherings have sought to emphasize human rights in housing policy and stem the displacement of low-income residents.

Meeting Summary:

- 1) We discussed existing work and ways to build on experiences of different groups to promote affordable housing, resist displacement of residents, and advance human rights in our region. A key concern was how we can **move from reacting to threats towards promoting transformative change** that addresses the growing gap in affordable housing.
- 2) There was agreement that we need to work to **shift the policy discourse away from market-based housing and towards the recognition that housing is a human right**. Until we get leaders and the wider public to understand housing as a basic human right, we will not be able to stem the displacement of residents.
- 3) We noted that a number of groups are working to promote affordable housing and to assist residents in need (See list below of groups and meeting times). However, the group agreed that there is a **need for a space to discuss ways to build a broader movement to support the human right to housing**.
- 4) We discussed strategies for moving this work forward, and identified **four key areas of work: building residents' power, democratizing policy and planning processes, shifting policy and public discourses towards human rights approach, and supporting alternatives to market-based housing**. (See more below) Helping connect groups working along these areas and building mutually supportive strategies is critical.
- 5) The group agreed that there is value in continuing to convene this discussion, and a **meeting will be planned in April** to help develop strategic thinking for the Affirmatively Forwarding Fair Housing Task Force Report strategy session, which will be in May.

Housing Justice Goals & Strategies

- **Build Collective Power:** Build and support **tenants' union organizing** being led by the Landless People's Alliance (<https://www.facebook.com/PghLandlessPeople/>). Build our connections to national and global movements.
 - **Support Affirmatively Forwarding Fair Housing Task Force Recommendations:** Support the follow-up to the AFFH Task Force. Now that the task force work is concluded, it is up to us to make sure our politicians follow through on the **Affordable Housing Task Force Recommendations**.
 - Promote a city/county/state **tenant bill of rights**. (See Washington DC as Model: <https://ota.dc.gov/publication/tenant-bill-rights>). Our discussions led to a proposed

change in how we frame this to make it a “**housing bill of rights**”—this would broaden the base to include rights for homeowners (many of whom are essentially renting their homes from a bank) and recognizing the legitimate rights of landlords.

- **Shift Discourses: *Housing is a human right, and homes and communities are not commodities!*** We need politicians and the public to see housing as a human right. Our homes should not be treated as real estate, and our communities should not be treated as commodities:
 - [Communities Over Commodities: People-Driven Alternatives To an Unjust Housing System](#)
- **Democratize Policy Process to ensure Community Participation and Consultation:** Reform existing practices to ensure robust and transparent social impact assessments and meaningful community participation in planning and development. Residents must be consulted at the start of new development proposals.
 - We need to oppose the [recent decision to limit participation in development and planning processes to Registered Community Organizations](#)
- **Build Community Resources:** Promote and develop community land trusts and housing cooperatives to establish collective control over access to housing. *More information at: Homes for All: <https://homesforall.org>

Next steps:

We will meet in April to plan for the AFFH Housing Strategy Session, which is to be held in May.

Affordable Housing & Housing Justice Work in our Region

- [Affirmatively Forwarding Fair Housing Task Force](#)
 - [Affordable Housing Task Force Recommendations](#)
- **Pittsburgh United Affordable Housing Roundtable** <http://pittsburghunited.org>
Celeste Scott leads this roundtable, which meets on alternate Wednesdays at 1:00PM at the Pittsburgh United Office: 841 California Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15212. The next meetings are Wednesday **March 6** and Wednesday **March 20**.
- **Landless People’s Alliance/ Pittsburgh Regional Tenants Union** --The Alliance is working to organize renters in the city and region to build our collective power to defend rights of tenants and to expand affordable housing in our region.
<https://www.facebook.com/PghLandlessPeople/>
- **Hill District Consensus Group** <http://www.hdcg.org/> --Works in the Hill District to organize and inform residents.

Resources on Housing Justice

- **Pittsburgh Housing Summit—Housing Justice Resources Page:** *This site has a number of links to resources that provide background on the housing crisis and its causes as well as solutions.* www.housingsummitpgh.org
- **Alternatives to Market-Based Housing:**

Yes! Magazine: [The Affordable Housing Issue](#)
[National Economic & Social Rights Initiative New Social Contract](#)

Upcoming Events:

- **Tuesday March 12 6-8PM Landlord-Tenant Town Hall & Speak Out** Bloomfield Garfield Corporation Community Activity Center 113 N. Pacific Ave. PGH 15224 [Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts](#) will hold this informational session to help residents learn procedures and laws that apply in landlord-tenant cases and to provide a safe space to express diverse and opposing views regarding affordable housing and landlord-tenant relations in the East End. **Free Childcare available**
- **Tuesday March 19, 6:00PM-8:30PM Economic Human Rights: It's Time for a New Social Contract!** Homewood [Community Engagement Center](#), 622 N Homewood Ave **Cathy Albisa** is co-founder and Executive Director, [National Economic and Social Rights Initiative](#) The National Economic and Social Rights Initiative is advancing a nation-wide call for a "[New Social Contract](#)" in this country to defend our economy, democracy and climate from threats posed by extreme concentrations of wealth in a few hands and economic development that prioritizes economic growth over maintaining the infrastructure, goods and services that families and neighborhoods need to thrive. A New Social Contract *flips the script on this abusive economy* and advances comprehensive, transformative, community-led solutions that protect human rights, build equitable systems for everyone and deepen our democracy. Learn about this initiative and how it can connect with struggles for human rights, democracy, and racial and economic justice in our city! (Light meal provided at 6:00-6:30PM; Speaker & discussion starts at 6:30) Co-sponsors: Pitt Human Rights Working Group & Community partners: Pittsburgh United (others TBA) *Free & Open to the Public*
- **Wednesday March 20 12:00-1:30PM Redefining the American Social Contract: From Social Exclusion to Equity and Rights**, **Cathy Albisa**, Executive Director, [National Economic and Social Rights Initiative](#) 109 Barco Law Building, University of Pittsburgh (3900 Forbes Ave.) *Free & Open to the Public*