

Human Rights City Alliance
Deliberative Forum on the *Human Rights City Action Plan*
December 17, 2014

MEETING NOTES

The purpose of this meeting was to provide space for people to review and give feedback on the Human Rights City Action Plan as we plan our priorities for the coming year.

Participants reviewed the [Human Rights City Action Plan](#) and met in small groups to discuss what ideas stood out for them. In the reports from these groups the following points were raised:

PARTICIPANTS Discussed a number of items that stood out as being important to our work or innovative responses to human rights challenges. A big point was that the Action Plan should be helpful in providing a ***unifying framework*** for the different groups and activities happening in our region.

A number of suggestions on how to advance or improve on the document were raised, including:

- We should do more research on what other human rights cities are doing and integrate that into report
- Establish measurable goals and document progress
- There is a gender analysis tool that can be added to the gender justice section.
- We need to find sources of funding to support the work on the action plan
- Define “affordable housing”
- Make sure we make the Action plan accessible to diverse audiences
- We need to work to connect different issues/ intersectionality
- ADD Restorative justice

Jackie asked anyone with specific suggestions on the Action Plan to send these to pghrights@riseup.net so we can review and integrate them as appropriate.

During the second half of the meeting, we again broke into small groups to discuss particular areas of work.

1) ACTION PLAN ITEM: Create a city or county agency responsible for monitoring progress towards the Human Rights City goals.

Because Pittsburgh is a Human Rights City we should have a structure in place to engage with our city, as well as provide oversight to measure our progress and success.

Pittsburgh has the capacity to be a model for communities in the United States and around the world. Participants: Mike Goodhart, Wanda Guthrie, Marcia Bandes.

Next Steps: 1) Meet as a task force with to discuss vision/strategy;

- 2) Identify persons to participate in this group. Look for an intern to help with the research. (We could use the Thomas Merton Center as the umbrella organization for the intern.);
- 3) Research what is being done in other locations. Some examples include: Mike G. knows a person on the [Human Rights Commission in Eugene, Oregon](#); There is work being done and resources in a [Democracy Collaborative group](#) at the University of MD
- 4) Identify what form(s) should these commission/oversight/auditing organizations take. Should part of it be within the city and part be independent and more of an oversight group?
- 5) Present a draft structure to Human Rights City Alliance Steering Committee and identify modifications/additional needs.
- 6) Research possible funding: Create a package and take it to various organizations (Heinz, others) to seek funding for expenses such as audits, etc. The audits and other analysis can be used to influence how the city budgets its money.

2) ACTION PLAN ITEM: Communication

- Following the observation from part 1 that the Action Plan helps create a larger framework within which many different groups can envision their work, we outlined a draft of an outreach letter that can be sent to our email contacts and also mailed to organizations we'd like to invite to the work we're doing. The letter is framed around the idea of inviting people and groups to complete the phrase "Because we're a human rights city..." –indicating what sort of changes they seek. The letter will suggest particular ways groups can support the work of building a human rights city *without changing what they do as an organization*. The group will have a draft ready for others to review by early January so we can send it out sometime in January. We'd like to have copies for the Summit Against Racism (Jan. 24).
- The group also discussed the need to try to raise funds to print more UDHR booklets so that we can share them widely, especially with educators. Perhaps the city will do this??

3) ACTION PLAN ITEM: Creating Opportunities for Intersectional Connections

Main theme: *Creating situations where people can come together productively and in a non-threatening way, in order for people to educate themselves and take ownership of learning about the issues affecting each of us; one example: experiential events, similar to "Jim Crow Day." In creating these opportunities, accessibility and good outreach are to be considered.*

Examples of things to do:

- Potluck dinners, rotating hosts from different neighborhoods
- Supporting locally and minority-owned businesses, artists, cultural events, etc.
- Community schools
- Show cause and effect of different social problems through storytelling, living examples – share these via social media, online videos, twitter campaigns, zines, etc.

- “Spiderweb” activity (as done by Transition movement) to show how everything is connected – have one in Point State Park
- Utilize public displays to raise awareness and educate and provide a safe space to bring things out into the open with less risk: public art projects, conversation salons, performances, etc.
- Provide education to organizations: show how their work intersects with/affects work done on other issues by other groups; inter-organizational networking: find local groups that do this effectively to use as a model for others
- Tap into local experts to demonstrate and teach the larger community; increase access to education cross-culturally
- Increase social capital by making more connections among groups/people

Thoughts/ideas:

- Equitable access to education: different communities/populations with different needs should have ways to present and teach in a way that is effective/accessible
- Collective liberation: “your liberation is bound up with mine”
- Continuity/intersectionality: many issues are connected; “one issue doesn't end where another begins”
- Truth in Reconciliation Commission: create one as part of work for Indigenous People's Day?
- Focus on tools that are alternatives to established economic structures and how they can be used successfully

4) ACTION PLAN ITEM: Police and Justice System Reforms

This group identified some of the things already taking place, such as meetings with Police Chief McLay, police training, and identifying the needs and demands of the communities most affected. The Summit Against Racism will have at least one workshop addressing these issues, and HRCA supporters should try to attend these to help us learn about where we can best support the work that is happening to advance significant reforms in the police department.

We have a [letter to Police Chief McLay](#) on our website, and we encourage people to send it to McLay so he hears about Pittsburgh’s Human Rights City status and takes seriously the proposals listed in our Action Plan, which come from the groups working in the most affected communities.