

Pitt Human Rights Working Group
Report on work: 2018-2019 (Preliminary)

This initiative was supported in 2017-18 by a seed grant from the University of Pittsburgh's Research in Diversity Initiative of the Office of the Provost and the University Research Council. Since then it has operated on a voluntary basis, and we are hoping to find more institutional support to sustain this initiative.

Background

In the fall of 2016, with the support of a Global Studies Center faculty fellowship, Pitt Sociology professor Jackie Smith, together with a [Housing Summit Steering Committee](#) made up of an equal number of Pitt faculty and community organizers, organized the first Pittsburgh Housing Summit. The Summit aimed to define new forms of cooperation between the University and community to address critical problems in our city. The experience of hosting the housing summit provided the framework for launching an ongoing human rights initiative in the fall of 2017. Work continues to find a way to provide ongoing logistical support and resources to help fund projects of the working group and to support human rights education and community-university cooperation for building a just city.

During the 2018-19 Academic Year, the Pitt Human Rights Working Group accomplished the following tasks and projects aimed at advancing human rights learning and practice while centering the perspectives of historically marginalized groups. The overall aim is to enhance inclusion and diversity at the University of Pittsburgh while promoting ideas and policies that advance human rights and inclusion in our city and region.

Human Rights Working Group Activities Fall 2018

- ***Human Rights in Pittsburgh and the World: A Year Honoring the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*** Working Group members solicited department and center funding to help us win a matching grant from the Provost's [Year of Pitt Global initiative](#) to support this year-long dialogue series celebrating human rights and exploring some of the contemporary challenges and opportunities for human rights in our community and world. In the fall term, we hosted three events: ***Human Rights in Pittsburgh and the World: Assessing Human Rights Impacts, Limitations, and Prospects at the 70th Anniversary*** (September 19), ***Cities, Human Rights, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Linking Grassroots & Global*** (October 3), ***Human Rights and Information Access in a Digital World*** (October 30-Open Access week), ***Democracy for Social Emancipation: Lessons from Around the World*** (Housing Summit 2019, November 9, keynote speaker Gianpaolo Baiocchi, New York University). We continue to plan the spring 2019 program, which will address water rights and health, among others (See Appendix).
- The Working Group is helping support a sociology department **postdoctoral fellow** whose work addresses human rights and urban housing issues. Dr. Emily Cummins is spending the 2018-9 and 2019-20 academic years with us and participating in and supporting working group activities. Her work on Detroit's contemporary redevelopment and its implications for people living in the city provides helpful insights and comparisons relevant to our work in Pittsburgh.

- **Pittsburgh Housing Summit 2018.** On November 9-10 a coalition of Pittsburgh community leaders helped convene a second Housing Summit. Pitt hosted the event at the Frick Fine Arts building, and Jackie Smith helped represent the working group in coalition meetings for months preceding the summit. In addition to hosting the keynote speaker, Gianpaolo Baiocchi, working group members helped do campus outreach and to engage students in the summit. We will continue to support work to educate and mobilize the community around issues of affordable housing and work for housing justice. (<http://housingsummit.org>)
- **Community-Human Rights Education.** Working Group member Sam Shepherd served as coordinator for a Working Group-sponsored OSHER Life Long Learning Institute course on [“Human Rights in Local and Global Perspective.”](#) Working Group members were invited to speak on different areas of expertise during the 5-week course, which drew 45 registered participants. Evaluations by course participants showed overwhelming appreciation for the course and its abundant content, and we hope to continue offering it regularly.
- **Health, Human Rights, and Cities in the 21st Century.** Working Group members Jackie Smith, Noble Maseru, and Cory Holding have been working to develop a grant proposal for Pitt’s Social Science Research Initiative to further cross-disciplinary and community-based work on the theme of Health, Human Rights and Cities. We hope to support a series of speakers and workshop that will further cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral work to address the social dimensions of health in academic work and in local practice.

Human Rights Working Group Activities Spring 2019

Human Rights in Pittsburgh and the World: A Year Honoring the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Monday February 18, 2019, 4:00PM. Rights Make Might: Global Human Rights and Minority Social Movements in Japan, Monday Speaker: Kiyoteru Tsutsui is Professor of Sociology, Director of the Center for Japanese Studies and Director of the Donia Human Rights Center at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. In his new book, *Rights Make Might*, Kiyoteru Tsutsui examines why minority groups in Japan have expanded their human rights organizing despite an unfavorable domestic climate. He finds an answer in the galvanizing effects of global human rights on local social movements.

Further details to come on other events, including: (volunteers/suggestions invited)

- *Water of Life: Privatization and the Challenge of the Right to Water* (Michael Goodhart)
- *Health, Human Rights, and Cities* (Noble Maseru)
- **Community Forum: Pittsburgh after Amazon HQ2: Corporate Power, Democracy, and a “Future Forged for All”** Saturday January 12, 2019 1:00PM-3:00PM Human Services Building, 1 Smithfield St. Downtown Pittsburgh Homestead Grays Room (Jackie Smith)

Other potential topics (volunteers needed)

- *The Rights of Mother Earth: A Framework for Human Rights and Environmental Justice?*
- *Not Enough? Can Human Rights Tackle Economic Inequality?* (Michael Goodhart?)
- *Human Rights and Racial Justice: Can International Law and Institutions Advance Struggles Against Racism?*

Coverage of our UDHR @ 70 Series:

- *Pitt News:* [Global issues localized at human rights panel](#)
- In statements released in honor of International Human Rights Day 2018, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) highlighted the work that [libraries and library associations are doing around the world](#). Our event, "[Human Rights and Information Access in a Digital World](#)" is featured here as the only event listed from the United States.