

Human Rights Working Group
First Meeting November 17, November 20, 2017

Meeting Notes

Pitt Human Rights Project website—will have information on membership and links to meeting notes and other relevant information: Go to www.pghrights.org then click on “Pitt Human Rights Project” Direct link: <http://pgh-humanrightscity.wikispaces.com/Pitt+Human+Rights+Project> *Please check this listing and let me know of any changes to your affiliation listing.*

Some of you receiving these notes had not yet formally committed to being a member of this working group, given time constraints. Let me know if you wish to become a formal member or if you wish to be removed from this email list.

Action Items (See below for more details on these and other agenda items)

- **Tuesday December 5th** 12:00pm - 1:30pm “Place-based Engagement: The University of Pittsburgh's Engagement Centers” Dr. Lina Dostilio, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Community Engagement Room 2017 **Cathedral of Learning** (Lunch provided)
- **Friday December 8th 11:30-12 PM International Human Rights Day City Press Conference- City County Building** 414 Grant St.- In cooperation with the City Commission on Human Relations. We need volunteer to help hold Human Rights City Alliance banner, and all are welcome (students too!) to be present at the press conference which will include the mayor or city council representative. Highlights: immigrant rights and housing rights along with racial and gender justice.
- **DACA/immigrant rights statement-** Kari Kokka, Lisa Alfordson, and Roger Rouse agreed to be part of a task force to craft a statement to Pitt and to city officials and community. If anyone else wants to join this group, please contact Jackie jgsmith@pitt.edu.
- **SSRI Proposal- Due Jan 15, 2018** (up to \$50,000) Cory Holding, Roger Rouse, Noble Maseru, Jamie Ducar, and Jeff Shook have volunteered to be part of a team working to draft a proposal. If anyone else wants to join this group, please contact Jackie jgsmith@pitt.edu.
- Please share the word: This **postdoctoral fellowship for 2018-2020** will allow our group to help mentor a postdoc scholar: [Postdoctoral fellowship: Human Rights and Cities: Linking Local and Global](#)

Present (11/17 or 11/20): Scott Morgenstern, Sam Shepherd, Jeff Shook, Roger Rouse, Cory Holding, Noble Maseru, Jamie Ducar, Kari Kokka, Lisa Alfordson, Erika Gold Kestenberg, Shenay Jeffrey, Paul Nelson

1) This project connects with local and national human rights initiatives:

[Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance](#)

[US Human Rights Network National Human Rights Cities Alliance](#)

The National Human Rights Cities Alliance will meet in Jackson Mississippi (a human rights city) June 29-July 1, 2018. Our working group may be able to play some role here.

2) Identification of possible actions and priority areas* from the Human Rights Community Advisory Council

- Remediating Pitt diversity inequities- staff, faculty, student body
- Food insecurity and campus food justice
- Local hiring
- Housing summit II
- Statement on immigrant rights/ DACA (Working group created)
- Support City Gender Equity Commission
- Water privatization debate
- Amazon HQ2 debate and “Our wishlist” initiative—opportunities for discussing human rights centered development? [Open letter to Amazon Chief Executive Jeff Bezos—Our Wish List](#)
- Summit vs. racism, March 25 international day of remembrance...

3) Group discussion of possible actions

Ideas for public events

Campus and community education on timely human rights issues

NOTE: *The group discussed the following ideas for possible or planned events to help create spaces for learning and reflection on various human rights issues. Note that our group has about \$3500 to help host speakers during this academic year, so your suggestions about possible speakers are welcome, as are thoughts on the following list of events. If you'd like to help plan any of these, let me know (jgsmith@pitt.edu).*

Amazon H2PGH?--Let's Change the Debates *A look at the Movement to resist inter-city competition in a 'race to the bottom' **January 2018** (Amazon decision date is early 2018)*

A panel examining the implications of the city's proposal to host Amazon's new headquarters and the national response of labor and other human rights organizations around the country to Amazon's unprecedented ask of cities around the country. Pittsburgh's Urbankind Institute asks of the [City of Pittsburgh's proposal: Is this really for everyone? Q's about Amazon's HQ2](#). And [Our HQ2 Wishlist: Open letter to Amazon Chief Executive Jeff Bezos](#) is a popular challenge to the corporate-driven development that pits cities against one another. Our Wishlist presents workable alternatives for how cities could invite corporate investment that is centered in the needs of people who live in the cities where they wish to do business, rather than having cities compete in a race-to-the bottom to appeal to corporate interests. This meeting can generate ideas for building a Pittsburgh wish list to guide policy makers as they consider future development proposals from possible investors in our city.

Human Rights and the Right to Free Speech—Contemporary Threats and Challenges in Broader Perspective—The state of current political discourse calls for more informed and thoughtful reflection on the responsibilities that come along with rights. We will work to convene a panel to address the broader issues raised by the current political climate. Jackie noted the importance of helping people see connection with international human rights law, including

the [International Tribunal on Rwanda Genocides](#), which were the first international court to hold members of the media accountable for human rights violations. Possible links: Global Studies, Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Lisa Alfredson will help lead a task force to plan an event on this during the spring semester. Contact jgsmith@pitt.edu if you are interested in helping on this task force.

January 26th 2018—Policy Briefing and Listening Convening on Women’s Health and Human Rights, an event being led by community group New Voices for Reproductive Rights PGH. More details to follow—we’ve been asked to help with outreach and participation from our group would be helpful to planning our future work and priorities. Contact person: Jamie Ducar

Water Rights & Privatization – This issue is one that is important in our community at this moment. In early 2018 a decision about the structure of Pittsburgh’s water authority will be made, and we want to help residents better understand the politics of water and the implications for human rights. We also have an opportunity to help people better understand the ways global and national forces are shaping local decisions about water provision. *Global Studies Center may help lead this?* Jamila Lahijuddin on our Advisory Council is part of the local water rights coalition and will be attending the national meeting of the Right to Water coalition in early December.

4) Other speaker ideas

Our working group has resources to invite one or more speakers for a public event related to themes of our work. Below is a list of possible speakers who could address issues on our agenda. Please share any other ideas or suggestions, including speakers who may contribute to panels proposed above.

Possible Speakers:

- [Jacqueline Patterson](#), Director, NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program—can speak to water rights issue and others
- [Manuel Pastor](#), Sol Price Center for Social Innovation, University of Southern California—Manuel’s work is helpful in thinking about cities and the links to broader regions and to the ways university personnel can engage in work to build just cities and regions.
- Kali Acuno, Sacajawea Hall, [Cooperation Jackson](#) and Jackson Human Rights Institute—human rights city organizing, race and just transition, cooperative economies based in human rights strategy
- Others? Send thoughts/input to Jackie- at jgsmith@pitt.edu

Looking ahead:

FALL 2018

September 2018 Conference on Low-Wage Work—Jeff Shook has an SSRI grant to host this conference in September 2018. Jeff invites input of ideas for how to connect the conference with

our Working Group's work and he **invites suggestions of speakers** for the conference as the planning unfolds. jes98@pitt.edu

Ideas for Building and Resourcing the Pitt Human Rights Project

Key to our survival and our ability to do any of these things is getting more support- both financing and personnel/ including staff who can help with logistics and other details that are hard for faculty members to do. The following ideas were discussed as ways we can further this work:

- Social Science Research Initiative [SSRI Proposal- Due Jan 15, 2018](#) (up to \$50,000). This call for proposals seeks projects that advance interdisciplinary approaches within and across social sciences. Support is provided for projects such as: working paper series, external speakers, building a research team, collecting data, or preparing proposals for external funding. Collaborations involving junior faculty are favored. Our proposal might propose to do some combination of these activities while building our working group and developing long-term funding proposal (ideas include Americorps/Vista, Pulse fellowships). Details on the requirements at: <https://upitt.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1765791>. Cory Holding, Roger Rouse, Noble Maseru, Jamie Ducar, and Jeff Shook have volunteered to be part of a team working to draft a proposal. If anyone else wants to join this group or send thoughts, please contact Jackie jgsmith@pitt.edu.
- Volunteer outreach and engaging students. Jackie will meet with Sheney (PittServes Outreach Coordinator) to discuss the possibilities here.

Other Business

- Kari is working in Education to organize a social justice issues forum to help engage local educators on the 3rd Thursday of each month starting Jan. 18th. Global Studies also has a regular issues forum. Possibilities for working group members to contribute content to these regular sessions.
- Watch for a call for scheduling our Spring semester meetings, which will be spaces for us to bring new ideas and updates on the above initiatives.