

✘ Get your Wikispaces Classroom now: (<https://www.wikispaces.com/ty/classroom-switch/banner/1/>) the easiest way to manage your class.

- **Q: Pittsburgh doesn't have the legal authority to enact policies on a variety of important issues, because the state legislature has restricted the powers of the city. What's our response to people who say the city doesn't have the power to regulate a policy we support, such as living wage?**

Response: One of the reasons our current system of institutions and policies fails to provide adequate protections for human rights is that they have become increasingly undemocratic. That is, they are not responsive or accountable to the people they are designed to serve. Economic globalization has reduced the ability of local communities to affect the decisions that most affect their lives, including decisions about how land and other community resources are used, how the environment and public health will be protected, and how our social and economic priorities are defined. International trade agreements, among other laws, have [shifted decision making authority](#) away from communities and elected bodies and have favored technical bodies and corporate actors.

The [Human Rights City initiative](#) seeks to help people re-think our society's institutions and policy processes and to re-define government. We want policies that prioritize human rights, not ones that promote "economic growth," with the idea that other social priorities will follow. Treating human rights and the environment as by-products of growth assumes both that economic growth will continue and that it will "trickle down" to serve the groups that need it. Neither of these assumptions [has a very good track record](#), so we're arguing that we need a new approach. If we design policies to achieve human rights, we're more likely to achieve them and possibly also see benefits in our economic life.

But we're not just hoping that things will start changing locally and 'trickle up', we're working to push government at all levels. In 2013, Allegheny County passed a Human Rights County proclamation, which will allow us to push for human rights reforms at the county level. We're working with organizers in other Pennsylvania counties to replicate this work in other counties and at the state level. As people get involved in trying to change local practices, they learn about where we need to change our laws, and this will lead us to bring pressure beyond the city level if we need to do that to achieve our rights. For instance, Detroit residents brought their case for the right to water to the United Nations, which brought world attention to a crisis UN officials called "[an affront to human rights](#)."

Resources/ Read More:

[Institute for Local Self Reliance](#)

[States' Power Grab Quashes Local Governments' Authority](#)

[International Forum on Globalization](#)

-
- **Q: My community is working hard to defend our rights and values. This keeps us**

busy enough! Why should I put time and effort into working for other people's rights?

Universal Human Rights means *Human Rights for everyone!* A long history of struggle to improve human dignity illustrates how those in power are able to benefit from and maintain their power by creating divisions between different groups. Workers have been divided by race and ethnicity as employers sought to undermine their organizing abilities. National income differences are based on the exploitation of immigrants and the exclusion of rights to those who cross national boundaries for economic opportunity. Human rights workers recognize that, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. famously said, "**injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.**"

Not only do these kinds of divisions allow economic exploitation, but they also pave the way for outbreaks of violence and war. The United Nations has stepped up to defend vulnerable groups as part of its work to "end the scourge of war."

- Highlighting the importance of fighting all forms of discrimination, [UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon met with the "Queen of Eurovision,"](#)  Conchita Wurst, to promote rights, dignity, equality.
- [Taking Action against Violence and Discrimination Affecting Migrant Women and Girls](#) 
- [The New Faces of Hate: Confronting Hate Crimes in America](#) 
- [Ending Violence Against Women is Global Responsibility: UN Women](#) 

-
- ***Q: I thought human rights was about the right to vote and civil rights. Why does the Human Rights City Alliance address economic concerns?***

Without the ability to provide for one's basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and education, people cannot defend their other rights such as political participation and freedom from discrimination. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is comprised of 30 articles which its framers saw as indivisible. Governments are expected to recognize them as a full package. Historically, economic and social rights became separated as a result of Cold War tensions, but at the time the UDHR was first established leadership in the United States was a leading proponent of an integrated approach to human rights. As Franklin D. Roosevelt said in his famous State of the Union speech in 1941 (known as the [Four Freedoms Speech](#)) 

"In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

- The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world.
- The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.
- The third is freedom from want—which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world.
- The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in

a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation... Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights or keep them. Our strength is our unity of purpose. To that high concept there can be no end save victory.” (Audio available here, [Part 1](#), [Part 2, includes "Four Freedoms" quote \(mp3; 04:36:00\)](#))

[Help](#) · [About](#) · [Blog](#) · [Pricing](#) · [Privacy](#) · [Terms](#) · [Support](#) · [Upgrade](#)

Contributions to <https://pgh-humanrightscity.wikispaces.com/> are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike 3.0 License. 

Portions not contributed by visitors are Copyright 2015 Tangient LLC