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Press Advisory

Announcing Press Conference Friday November 11th 10:30AM @ Pitt Campus
(Bigelow Blvd. Entrance-Posvar Hall)

Pittsburgh Housing Summit: *Human Rights and Housing in the 21st Century*
Diverse Groups Gather to Discuss Pittsburgh's Global Housing Crisis

Next weekend hundreds of people will come together to learn about and discuss solutions to the affordable housing crisis impacting Pittsburgh and other cities around the world. A press conference will take place on Friday November 11th at 10:30AM at the University of Pittsburgh, featuring invited speakers who will address the Summit.

The Housing Summit is being sponsored by the [Global Studies Center](#) at the University of Pittsburgh, in cooperation with the Northside Coalition for Fair Housing, Pitt's Year of Diversity Committee, and a number of other community organizations and university programs and departments. A diverse crowd is expected, including internationally known scholars, public housing residents, community organizers from Pittsburgh and other cities, public officials, students, and others from around the city.

BACKGROUND

A key goal of the Summit is to move the debate beyond a focus on the *supply* of affordable housing—which is woefully inadequate—and to consider the forces shaping the *demand* for more affordable housing—namely rising rents and a lack of living-wage jobs. Pittsburgh currently has an affordable housing deficit of around 17,000 units.

“The forces shaping the affordable housing crisis here and elsewhere are not things we can address in Pittsburgh alone” said Housing Summit Coordinator and Global Studies Center Faculty Fellow, Dr. Jackie Smith. “International decisions in regard to finance and development affect local economic development and housing policies.” Moreover, Smith notes, “a global and historical perspective on the housing crisis reveals that processes similar to those relegating African Americans to inner-cities are now operating to push low-income people and especially people of color out of our cities altogether.”

Recent decades have seen an exodus of more than 20,000 African Americans from Pittsburgh. This includes many people whose families worked in the steel industry and helped build this city.

The Summit will highlight connections between immigration and housing, showing how the forces leading to the displacement of residents in Pittsburgh resemble those that have forced people from outside the U.S. to leave their home countries. The continued challenges faced by immigrant residents after arriving in the U.S. exacerbate the trauma of what keynote speaker, Dr. Mindy Fullilove, has called “root shock.” Fullilove’s research with Hill District residents appears in her book, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It*.

In addition to highlighting the high toll displacement takes on individuals and communities, the Summit will help participants understand and address the forces contributing to rising costs of housing and the diminishing abilities of workers to afford quality housing. The Local Homes for All Coalition links Pittsburgh's efforts with national work happening as part of the Right to the City campaign, which supports nation-wide efforts to resist rising housing costs and displacement. Long-time housing leaders including Ronell Guy, Executive Director of Northside Coalition for Fair Housing and Housing Summit Steering Committee member, are working to build a city-wide tenants union to enable the city's renters to resist housing discrimination and to ensure that landlords adequately maintain residences.

Students with United Students Against Sweatshops are among the local groups focusing on the need to raise local wages, including those of University workers. According to Alyssa Lieberman, "With the \$15 for Pitt campaign we are calling for \$15 an hour for student and campus workers, because we need \$15 to meet the increased costs of working at and attending this university. One of the main costs is housing. It is getting more and more difficult for students to afford to live in Oakland because skyrocketing rents are pushing out local residents and hurting low-income students."

The Summit includes a neighborhood tour, which will travel through the Hill District, North Side, Beechview, and East Liberty neighborhoods, giving participants a sense of housing conditions and community organizing in Pittsburgh. Co-organizer Dr. Michael Glass notes that "Residents have stories to tell. Whether it is new migrant communities in Beechview, tenant activism in the North Side, or the development pressures experienced in East Liberty and the Hill District, there's a lot to learn from our communities." The tour includes a taco lunch hosted by Beechview residents, and finishes back on campus with a group discussion.

Friday evening will feature a keynote panel examining the role of global finance in shaping displacement and urban gentrification in countries around the world. Saturday's activities at the Frick Fine Arts building will focus on the popular movements emerging to help protect people's right to housing, and featured speakers have deep connections to national and global human rights and housing movements. Workshops will enable participants to deepen their knowledge about strategies for advancing more just housing policies. In addition to speakers and workshops, there are cultural programs and displays of artwork and posters.

Full details about the Housing Summit are available at <http://housingsummitpgh.org>

Housing Summit co-sponsors: [Casa San Jose](#), [Hill District Consensus Group](#), Hill House Association, [Homes for All Coalition-Pittsburgh](#), [Human Rights City Alliance](#), [Labor Council for Latin American Advancement](#) (LCLAA), [Northside Coalition for Fair Housing](#)*, [United Steelworkers](#), [University Human Rights Network](#), [University of Pittsburgh--Global Studies Center](#)*, [Architectural Studies](#), [Center for Latin American Studies](#), [Consortium for Injury Research and Community Action \(CIRCA\)](#), [Graduate School of Public and International Affairs \(GSPIA\)](#), [School of Social Work](#), [Department of Sociology](#)., [Office of the Provost-Year of Diversity](#)*, [United Students Against Sweatshops](#); [University Center for Social and Urban Research \(UCSR\)](#)

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