

Celebrate International Human Rights Day in Nashville

(Photo: David Plazas / The Tennessean.com)

Story Highlights

- An event is being held at the First Amendment Center on Dec. 10 to honor local champions.
- Lifetime Achievement Awards will be presented to Bernard Werthan and Kwame Lilliard.
- Ashford Hughes and Aisha Lbhalla will be presented with the Rising Star Award.
- Dr. Marisa Richmond and the late Francis Guess will also receive special recognition.



The United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on Dec. 10, 1948.

It represents the universal recognition that basic rights and fundamental freedoms are inherent to all human beings, inalienable and equally applicable to everyone, and that every one of us is born free and equal in dignity and rights.

These rights are internationally recognized and accepted norms and values that promote dignity, fairness and opportunity for all people.

It is a commitment to upholding dignity and justice for all — no matter our gender, nationality, race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language or any other status.

The 26 articles and its preamble frame the foundation and principle that all human beings have human rights that are interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

The UDHR defines how we should and should not act as we promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups. It states a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge.

The declaration includes the right to decent housing and education, freedom from gender, racial and other forms of discrimination, to have free thought and speech, to vote, to be free from violence, to have equal access to public service and to have fair working conditions.

International Human Rights Day is celebrated every year on Dec. 10 to commemorate the adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations. It is generally agreed to be the foundation of all human rights law.

Eleanor Roosevelt, chairwoman of the committee that drafted the declaration, noted that human rights “is the world of the individual person,” the neighborhoods and communities where we live, and we all have a role to play. She also said, “Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

In Nashville, this day has become a day to celebrate our history, honor Nashville's human rights advocates, reflect on the lessons learned and join forces with other human rights groups to commit to creating an even better future for our city and state. The theme for Nashville is "Human Rights: Know Them, Use Them, Protect Them."

This year's celebration will occur on Thursday at the First Amendment Center at 1207 18th Ave. S. #200 in Nashville.

The program will consist of recognition of human rights champions in our community who have embodied this year's theme through their work.

Lifetime Achievement Awards will be presented to Bernard Werthan and Kwame Lilliard. Ashford Hughes and Aisha Lbhalla will be presented with the Rising Star Award.

Dr. Marisa Richmond will receive the Outstanding Service Award. A special tribute and presentation will be made to the family of the late Francis Guess for his lifetime of human rights advocacy in our city, state and nation.

The program is set from 5 to 7 p.m. and will include presentations by Southern Word and the Nashville Community Choir.

A committee of human rights organizations and nonprofits, including the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, Metro Human Relations Commission, United Nations Association, Amnesty International, Tennessee United for Human Rights, the Church of Scientology and others, work together each year to plan the event.

More information is available at www.nashvillehumanrights.org.

Beverly Watts is executive director of the Tennessee Human Rights Commission.

