

Human Rights Day event focuses on child trafficking

Tennessee.com/story/opinion/2016/12/03/human-rights-day-event-focuses-child-trafficking/94771634/

Tennessee Human Rights Commission's Beverly Watts wrote this op-ed to commemorate Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

(Photo: State of Tennessee)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) will be 68 years old on Dec. 10. The world is a very different place but the document — its preamble and 30 articles adopted by the United Nations proclaims that “recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

It is as compelling today as it was in 1948. The UDHR defines how we should act as we promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all individuals and groups. It provides a common understanding of these rights and freedoms.

Without this understanding there will be no full realization of the UDHR pledge. The declaration includes the right to decent housing, education, to be free 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, to have fair working conditions and to not be subjected to slavery or servitude.

In Nashville, this day has also 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. This year we will have a public discussion on "Hidden in our Midst: Child Trafficking in Tennessee."

This is also a time for Nashville to come together to celebrate, commemorate, proclaim and renew our commitment to make these rights real for everyone in our community, our state, this nation and the world.

This year’s celebration will occur on Dec. 6 at the First Amendment Center at 1207 18th Avenue South No. 200 in Nashville. The program will consist of recognitions of human rights champions in our community. The Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented to Dr. Charles Kimbrough. Anna Carella, Justin Jones, and Mohammed Shurki will be presented with the Rising Star Award. Juan Canedo and Derri Smith will receive Outstanding Service Awards. The program is set from 5 to 7 p.m. More information is available at www.nashvillehumanrights.org.

A committee of human rights organizations and nonprofits, including the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, Metro Human Relations Commission, United Nations Association of the USA, Amnesty International, Tennessee United for Human Rights, the Church of Scientology, UNICEF, the Muslims Women’s Council, TN Board of Regents and others, work together each year to plan the event.

Eleanor Roosevelt, the Chair of the UDHR Committee noted that human rights “is the world of the individual person” the neighborhoods and communities where we live. 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.”

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

