

# Celebrate a long history of human rights advocacy

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By Beverly Watts Published 10:30 a.m. CT Dec. 11, 2014 | Updated 12:11 p.m. CT Dec. 11, 2014

(Photo: David Plazas / The Tennessean.com)

Wednesday, Dec. 10, marked the 66th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This is the 64th year of the celebration of the UN International Human Rights Day. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

These two documents and the celebration of human rights day emphasizes that all human beings are entitled to justice and dignity through the application of the core principles of universality, interdependence and indivisibility, equality and nondiscrimination.

The international slogan this year is Human Rights 365 and the Tennessee theme is "Looking Back 50 Years: How far have we come? Where are we going?"

Both of these themes remind us that as a world, nation, a state and a city we have made gains but we are still challenged by issues such as those in Ferguson, MO, and Cleveland, Ohio, with the issue of race around police and community and criminal justice in general; the domestic violence issue in the NFL and the larger society; and the elimination of poverty and disparities in education, housing, employment and healthcare to name a few.

Dr. King, in accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in October, 1964 said "...problems, while appearing to be separate and isolated, are inextricably bound to the other."

It also reminds us, we must work daily and promote a common understanding of the rights, freedom and responsibilities to reach a place where all are respected, equal and free.

In Nashville, we used this day to reflect on our history and work with others to create a view to make our city, our state, and our nation better. We recognized Father Joseph Breen for his individual lifetime achievement and the First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill for its institutional role in Nashville's civil rights accomplishments and history; Yuri Cunza of the Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Avi Poster of A VOICE for the Reduction of Poverty In Nashville and Beyond for their advocacy and service in breaking down barriers; and Rising Advocates Eben Cathey with Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition and Daynise Joseph with Organized Neighbors of Edgehill.

We paused to remember John Seigenthaler and George Barrett for their leadership in this community until their deaths earlier this year. Their voices are missed but their legacy lives on for each of us to emulate.

The key note speaker: Dr. Dennis Dickerson, Vanderbilt University's James M. Lawson Professor of History. Dr. Dickerson helped us reflect on the history and put into context the challenges and options for the future.

The committee organizing the event for Human Rights Day includes the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, Metro Human Relations Commission, Church of Scientology, the Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the Muslim's Women Council.

The event was held at the First Amendment Center. More information can be found at [www.nashvillehumanrights.org](http://www.nashvillehumanrights.org).

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