

2026

ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT

FROM KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION: IMPLEMENTING SCIENCE,
JUSTICE, AND HEALING IN PITTSBURGH

APRIL 8, 2026

HILL DISTRICT CEC

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

APRIL 9, 2026

ONEVALLEY, HAZELWOOD

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

APRIL 10, 2026

HOMEWOOD CEC

9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Dear Environmental Summit Participants,

We are profoundly honored to welcome you to our third summit, From Knowledge to Action: Implementing Science, Justice, and Healing in Pittsburgh. Since our first gathering in 2024, our vision has evolved from building connections to deepening the foundations required for real-world impact.

For years, the Pittsburgh region has documented environmental harm. We have borne witness to the slow violence of degradation on our land and the health disparities, including asthma, cardiovascular disease, and cancers, that impact our neighbors. This year, we are mobilizing our existing knowledge to build the solidarity and shared solutions we need to tend to our collective health.

By convening in the Hill District, Hazelwood, and Homewood, we ensure our dialogue is physically and intellectually rooted in some of the neighborhoods where implementation matters most. Our goal is to ensure that justice and healing are not abstract goals but lived experiences for our entire region—across racial, economic, geographic, and academic boundaries.

We want to extend our deepest gratitude to those who labored to make this summit possible. Special thanks to our Planning Committee members: Alyssa Sharma, Andre Green, and Rhonda Toth. We also extend heartfelt appreciation to our Pillar Leads who have ensured our core values are woven into every session: Fernando Tormos-Aponte (Science), Gabby Gray (Justice), and Sheba Gittens (Healing).

Forward together,

Tina Ndoh

University of Pittsburgh
tina.ndoh@pitt.edu

Dani Wilson

Cancer & Environment Network
dani@censwpa.org

About the 2026 Summit



“

“I will say when I was about to attend the summit, I was not in the best headspace because I was hitting a lot of roadblocks. And then after that, I've been like—Oh my goodness, like everybody's doing all this great work. Everyone's fighting the fight. Okay, let's get back to work.”

— 2024 Summit Attendee

The 2026 Environmental Summit is a three-day immersive experience designed to move the Pittsburgh region from the documentation of environmental harm to the active practice of implementation.

Our Pillars

The Summit is organized around three core pillars that guide our collective action: science, justice, and healing.

Our Strategy

We strive to translate data into justice-centered policy and community-led action. This interactive series integrates empirical science with lived experience to foster a regional culture of just restoration and collective health.

DAY 1 - THE HILL DISTRICT

AGENDA

9:00 AM	WELCOME AND SUMMIT OVERVIEW
10:00 AM	CENTER ON RACE AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS PRESENTATION AND ACTIVITY
11:15 AM	PANELS 1 AND 2
12:15 PM	LUNCH + BLACK FUTURES ART POP-UP
1:15 PM	PANELS 3 AND 4
2:15 PM	CLOSING REFLECTION
2:30 PM	CULTURAL SPACES

CENTER ON RACE AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS PRESENTATION

The University of Pittsburgh's Center on Race and Social Problems (CRSP) was designed to address societal problems through research, intervention, and education. The mission of CRSP is to conduct solution-oriented social science research on race, ethnicity, and color and their influence on the quality of life.

SESSION PRACTITIONERS



KYAIEN CONNER, PHD, LSW, MPH
DIRECTOR, CENTER
ON RACE AND SOCIAL
PROBLEMS



RON IDOKO
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
CENTER ON RACE AND
SOCIAL PROBLEMS

— PANEL ONE —

BRIDGING THE GAP SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS / ON-THE-GROUND REALITY SPONSORED BY THE RUST TO RESILIENCE CENTER

This panel examines how environmental data can be used to build justice-centered policy while remaining grounded in the wellbeing of the people.



MODERATOR: TINA NDOH, PHD

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
UNIVERSITY OF
PITTSBURGH



FELICIA SAVAGE FRIEDMAN

WELLNESS THOUGHT
LEADER, YOGA ROOTS
ON LOCATION



EMILY GREEN, MS

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL
COORDINATOR, OFFICE
OF ENV JUSTICE, PA
DEP



DESTENIE NOCK, PHD

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
CARNEGIE MELLON
UNIVERSITY

— PANEL TWO —

SOLIDARITY & SOLUTIONS PART 1: COLLECTIVE ACTION AND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

This panel explores how researchers and practitioners are translating data and lived experience into actionable solutions that promote collective health across racial and economic boundaries.



MODERATOR: JAMIL BEY, PHD

PRESIDENT,
URBANKIND INSTITUTE



FAWN WALKER-MONTGOMERY

CEO, TAKE ACTION
ADVOCACY GROUP



MARCELA GONZÁLEZ RIVAS, PHD

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
UNIVERSITY OF
PITTSBURGH



DARLA TIMBO, PSY.D, LPC

PSYCHOLOGIST, ATLAS
COUNSELING SERVICES

— PANEL THREE —

THE WAYS WE KNOW

We explore the diverse forms of knowledge—from academic research to lived experience—that guide our work. This panel asks how we can deepen our foundations by integrating experiential wisdom and community data with empirical science.



MODERATOR: DANI WILSON, MSW
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CANCER & ENVIRONMENT
NETWORK



ALISON STEELE, MBA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH PROJECT



ROBERT GRADECK
PROJECT DIRECTOR,
WESTERN PA REGIONAL
DATA CENTER



LAKEISHA WOLF
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
UJAMAA COLLECTIVE

— PANEL FOUR —

SOLIDARITY & SOLUTIONS PART 2: COLLECTIVE ACTION AND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

This panel examines how public health directives, legislative advocacy for green infrastructure, and community-led storytelling work in tandem to foster regional restoration.



**MODERATOR: JOYLETTE
PORTLOCK, PHD**



TWANDA CARLISLE
COMMUNITY
LEGISLATIVE LIAISON,
OFFICE OF STATE
SENATOR JAY COSTA



STEPHEN STROTMAYER, PHD
SENIOR EPIDEMIOLOGIST,
ALLEGHENY COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT



BEKEZELA MGUNI
FOUNDER, BLACK
UNICORN LIBRARY
PROJECT

CULTURAL SPACES

The 2026 Environmental Summit is designed to enhance participants' sense of holistic community involvement. Day 1 will feature opportunities for attendees to explore community and cultural centers located in the Hill District.



THE FUTURE IS BLACK ART POP-UP

The Future Is Black is a dynamic platform committed to empowering underrepresented creatives, amplifying their voices, and transforming cultural narratives.



AUGUST WILSON HOUSE

The August Wilson House is a historic home that once belonged to the family of the famed African-American playwright August Wilson. It now operates as a community arts center.



GRANDMA B'S CAFE

Community vision comes to life at our pop-up park in the vacant lot adjacent to Grandma B's. Locals know Grandma B's as a place for meals prepared with soul and intention



UJAMAA COLLECTIVE

Ujamaa Collective was founded with a social mission to act as a catalyst to advance Africana Women by providing a fair trade marketplace for cultural, artistic, and entrepreneurial exchange.

DAY 2 - HAZELWOOD

AGENDA

9:00 AM	SCIENCE KEYNOTE AND ACTIVITY
10:30 AM	BREAK AND NETWORKING
11:00 AM	JUSTICE KEYNOTE AND ACTIVITY
12:30 PM	LUNCH
1:30 PM	HEALING KEYNOTE AND ACTIVITY
3:15 PM	COMMUNITY IMMERSION

COMMUNITY IMMERSION EVENT

Day 2's concluding event offers participants two options: joining a walking tour along the Monongahela River or remaining at the Roundhouse to network with local community organizations.

THE MON WATER PROJECT

The Mon Water Project will conserve, restore, enjoy, and protect local tributary waters to the Monongahela River.

The Mon Water Project will be leading participants on the walking river tour.



— **KEYNOTE SPOTLIGHT** —
SPONSORED BY THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS



SCIENCE KEYNOTE

DR. GRETCHEN T. GOLDMAN

PRESIDENT AND CEO, UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS

Dr. Gretchen T. Goldman is the President and CEO of the Union of Concerned Scientists. Previously, she served in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy where she led Biden-Harris Administration efforts on science and environmental justice, scientific integrity, Indigenous Knowledge, and air quality and community health.



JUSTICE KEYNOTE

DR. JAMILA M. PORTER

CHIEF OF STAFF, DE BEAUMONT FOUNDATION

Dr. Jamila Porter is an award-winning researcher, evaluator, and public health practitioner who works to transform the interconnected systems and structures that impact health. She is an outspoken leader and public speaker on a range of issues, including the root causes of health inequities, the social determinants of health, and data justice.



HEALING KEYNOTE

SAGE HAYES

SOMATIC EXPERIENCING PRACTITIONER, EMBODIED LIBERATION

Sage Hayes is the founder and practitioner of Embodied Liberation, a healing arts practice exploring liberation, healing, and justice in the body. For over 30 years, Sage has been a devoted, politicized healing arts practitioner who believes deeply in both individual and collective liberation.

DAY 3 - HOMEWOOD

AGENDA

9:00 AM	IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE CONVERSATION
10:15 AM	WARM DATA LAB
12:00 PM	LUNCH
1:00 PM	COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

— IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE —



TINA NDOH, PHD
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
UNIVERSITY OF
PITTSBURGH



SARAH KRIER, PHD
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
UNIVERSITY OF
PITTSBURGH

This science implementation session will synthesize key feedback from Summit Days 1 and 2 to identify shared priorities and gaps, translating insights from community, practice, and research perspectives into actionable implementation science questions aimed at improving health in our region.

— WARM DATA LAB —



PHAHSA
HOST,
WARM DATA LAB



DANI WILSON, MSW
HOST,
WARM DATA LAB

Grounded in a lineage of systems thinking, the Warm Data Lab transforms complexity science into an experiential approach, deepening the perception of complexity through personal stories. Together, people are building relationships that build relationships—a vital ingredient of how systems change happens.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Participants will have the option of selecting one of three community activities: a live podcast recording featuring Gabby Gray, visiting Operation Better Block, or a farm tour at Oasis Farm. All organizations are pillars in Homewood and collectively strive to ensure community prosperity.



LIVE PODCAST RECORDING

Come be part of our live studio audience for a thought-provoking podcast conversation that explores how communities can reclaim their stories and amplify their collective voices.



OPERATION BETTER BLOCK TOUR

Operation Better Block is dedicated to creating a future where Homewood is a stable, economically viable, safe, and attractive neighborhood.



OASIS FARM TOUR

Oasis Farm is a vibrant, community-centered hub dedicated to fostering food access, sustainable agriculture, and deep connections.

— CLOSING CEREMONY —



SHEBA GITTENS
HEALING PILLAR LEAD

The closing ceremony, led by Sheba Gittens, will take place at Oasis Farm following the completion of our community activities. This gathering is intended as a collective reflection on our experience and a thoughtful acknowledgement of the historical harms committed against our land.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our sincere thanks to the Planning Committee members, partner organizations, sponsors, funders, and vendors. The summit's success is a direct result of their unwavering guidance, dedicated effort, and invaluable expertise.

PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ALYSSA SHARMA, PITT, MPH STUDENT, SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
ANDRE GREEN, CANCER & ENVIRONMENT NETWORK OF SWPA
DANI WILSON, CANCER & ENVIRONMENT NETWORK OF SWPA
RHONDA TOTH, PITT, SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
TINA NDOH, PITT, SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PILLAR LEADS



FERNANDO TORMOS-APONTE, PHD
SCIENCE PILLAR LEAD

ASSISTANT
PROFESSOR,
UNIVERSITY OF
PITTSBURGH



GABRIEL "GABBY" GRAY
JUSTICE PILLAR LEAD

ORGANIZER, OUR
WATER TABLE,
PITTSBURGH
UNITED



SHEBA GITTENS
HEALING PILLAR LEAD

FACILITATOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND
PROGRAM SUPPORT,
UJAMAA COLLECTIVE



SPONSORS AND FUNDERS

Deepest gratitude is extended to the sponsors and funders whose remarkable and generous support was instrumental in making the summit possible. Their dedication to this cause and their hard work are inspiring; their belief in this mission and investment in our shared goals are sincerely appreciated.

SPONSORS AND FUNDERS INCLUDE:

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

HOWARD HEINZ ENDOWMENT • VIRA I. HEINZ ENDOWMENT



School of Social Work
Center on Race and Social Problems



Mascaro Center for
Sustainable Innovation



VENDORS

Deep appreciation is extended for the tireless efforts of all vendors. This involvement was vital in creating a nourishing, sustainable, and memorable experience for all. We value their support and look forward to future collaborations.

VENDORS INCLUDE:

COMMUNITY KITCHEN	ONEVALLEY AT THE ROUNDHOUSE
HILL DISTRICT CEC	PENNSYLVANIA RESOURCES COUNCIL
HOMEWOOD CEC	PITT CATERING CO.
JOHN ALTDORFER PHOTOGRAPHY	PURE GRUB
KDC PRINTING	THE FUTURE IS BLACK

BIOGRAPHIES



ALISON STEELE, MBA

Alison earned her undergraduate degree in physics from Drew University in Madison, NJ and her MBA in Sustainable Business Practices from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. At EHP, Alison and her team strive to reduce and prevent harmful exposures to oil and gas pollution in frontline communities by weaving together scientific research, lived experiences, and real-time air quality data.



BEKEZELA MGUNI

Bekezela is a queer Trinidadian artist, birthworker, librarian, and cultural organizer. She has over 20 years of community organizing experience, working with LGBTQIA+ communities, youth, and women. She is the founder of the Black Unicorn Library and Archive Project, a community initiative cultivating libraries as sites of possibility and freedom.



DANI WILSON, MSW

Dani is a social worker and Warm Data Host dedicated to unbinding the oppressive patterns that stifle our collective vitality. Her practice centers on cultivating transcontextual sense-making of our shared histories and nurturing the emergence of new responses to complex challenges. She hosts spaces that challenge ingrained perspectives to foster deeper possibilities for collective justice and healing.



DARLA TIMBO, PSY.D, LPC

Darla is a psychologist and licensed clinician, redefining the path to wellness through integrative mental health care. With 20 years of experience, she builds and empowers businesses, students, and communities of color by blending traditional therapeutic approaches with holistic practices to support learning, healing, and transformation.



DESTENIE NOCK, PHD

Destenie is an Associate Professor at Carnegie Mellon University with joint appointments in Civil and Environmental Engineering and Engineering and Public Policy. She is also the founder of Peoples Energy Analytics, a research-driven company focused on improving energy affordability.

BIOGRAPHIES



EMILY GREEN, MS

Emily is the Department of Environmental Protection's Southwest Regional Coordinator for the Office of Environmental Justice. Emily transitioned to the Office of Environmental Justice in 2024 and works to ensure all Pennsylvanians have a voice in the decision-making processes facilitated by DEP.



FAWN WALKER-MONTGOMERY

Fawn is a proud Black woman, Mother, wife, community leader, healer, activist, and consultant who is deeply committed to supporting her community, advocating for social justice, Black & collective Liberation. The principal consultant at Fawn Walker Montgomery Consulting and CEO/Co-Founder at Take Action Advocacy Group.



FELICIA SAVAGE FRIEDMAN

Felicia is an interdisciplinary artist, educator, and founder of YogaRoots On Location and The Cussin' Yogini, whose work integrates art, environmental practice, and community healing. Through YogaRoots On Location, she offers AntiRacist Raja Yoga teacher trainings, embodied collective joy workshops, and community learning experiences.



FERNANDO TORMOS-APONTE, PHD

Fernando is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Pittsburgh. He seeks to understand the drivers and consequences of building solidarity across social group differences and how social movements develop an intersectional organizing approach.



GABRIEL "GABBY" GRAY

Gabby is a Pittsburgh native, longtime community activist, and founding partner of the Extra Concerned Citizens Group in Homewood. Spurred into action by the injustices in her community, Gabby has made environmental reform and people-led solutions her life's work.

BIOGRAPHIES



GRETCHEN GOLDMAN, PHD

Gretchen is the President and CEO of the Union of Concerned Scientists. Previously, she served in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy where she led Biden-Harris Administration efforts on science and environmental justice, scientific integrity, Indigenous Knowledge, and air quality and community health.



JAMIL BEY, PHD

Jamil stirs critical thinking by facilitating tough conversations around race, equity, and systemic change. In addition to his role as UrbanKind's visionary, he serves on many boards and councils throughout Pittsburgh to drive real systemic change in policy and programming that affects underserved populations.



JAMILA PORTER, PHD

Jamila is an award-winning researcher, evaluator, and public health practitioner who works to transform the interconnected systems and structures that impact health. She is an outspoken leader and public speaker on a range of issues, including the root causes of health inequities, the social determinants of health, and data justice.



JOYLETTE PORTLOCK, PHD

Joylette is a leader and a builder who has made a career out of fostering collaboration across sectors and disciplines and translating complex information into useful action toward building thriving communities. She was an appointed member of the PA DEP's Environmental Justice Advisory Board, and serves in many other roles, including her current service as Chair of the Allegheny County Board of Health



KYAIEN CONNER, PHD, LSW, MPH

Kyaien is a Professor and Endowed Chair at the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work where she directs the Center on Race and Social Problems. Her research investigates the factors that influence disparities in health and mental health service utilization and treatment outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities.

BIOGRAPHIES



LAKEISHA WOLF

LaKeisha is a self-taught artisan whose insightful skills were honed in the embrace of the Africana cultural community in Pittsburgh, PA. She is the founder of a micro-enterprise centered on natural bodycare and provides direction for the non-profit cooperative, Ujamaa Collective, supporting a group of Black artists and makers based in the Hill District neighborhood.



MARCELA GONZALEZ RIVAS, PHD

Marcela is an Associate Professor at the School of Policy and International Affairs, where her research focuses on sustainable water policy, water equity, and governance. She leads the “Closing the Water Gap” working group with two interrelated aims: advancing understanding of the human right to water in practice and examining the global environmental justice dimensions of U.S. water policy.



PHAHSA

Phahsa is a subject matter expert on Data Sovereignty with a goal of building tools that support conscious attention in the Attention Economy. His work intersects with emergent technologies, civic systems, and cultural best-practices that can be used to real-world utility and healthy outcomes.



ROBERT GRADECK

Robert has spent his career helping people find and use civic information. He co-founded and manages and the Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center (WPRDC) at the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Social and Urban Research.



RON IDOKO

Ron is the Associate Director of CRSP and leads the day-to-day operations and strategic and programmatic initiatives with a focus on research, education, and praxis to advance positive social change. Ron founded and directs the Racial Equity Consciousness Institute, an expansive engagement platform that guides learners & teachers through the critical systems thinking racial equity consciousness framework.

BIOGRAPHIES



SAGE HAYES

Sage is the founder and practitioner of Embodied Liberation, a healing arts practice exploring liberation, healing, and justice in the body. For over 30 years, Sage has been a devoted, politicized healing arts practitioner who believes deeply in both individual and collective liberation.



SARAH KRIER, PHD

Sarah is an Assistant Professor and Vice Chair for Public Health Practice in the Department of Infectious Diseases and Microbiology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health, where she also serves as Associate Director of the Center for Public Health Practice.



SHEBA GITTENS

Sheba is Co-Director of Yoga Teacher Training with YogaRoots On Location. She is an Arts Educator, Co-creator of Space, Facilitator of Joy, Organizer with Community, and a Weaver of Truth. She received her BA in Africana Studies and a certificate in African Studies from the University of Pittsburgh.



STEPHEN STROTMAYER, PHD

Stephen earned his PhD in Epidemiology from the University of Pittsburgh. He has had academic papers published in several scientific journals such as the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health and the Archives of Adolescent and Pediatric Medicine. He currently serves as a Senior Epidemiologist at the ACHD.



TINA NDOH, PHD

Tina is passionate about environmental justice and has worked toward efforts that allow all people to enjoy the natural environment free of pollution. Her work at the U.S. EPA focused on advancing environmental justice through air quality policy. She managed national programs, co-chaired agency-wide capacity-building efforts, and developed regulatory frameworks that prioritized equity and community engagement in environmental decision-making.

BIOGRAPHIES



TWANDA CARLISLE

Twanda has been involved in Pittsburgh Local Government for over 25 years. She began her career with Pittsburgh City Council working as Chief of Staff for multiple representatives. Twanda currently is with the office of State Senator Jay Costa, as his Community and Legislative Liaison, which gives her the opportunity to be in the community and to bring information and new ideas to his office.

**THE SUCCESS OF THE 2026 ENVIRONMENTAL
SUMMIT IS DEEPLY INDEBTED TO THE
INCREDIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALL EXPERT
PANELISTS AND DEDICATED PARTNERS.**

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