The Metro Human Relations Commission;
Tennessee United for Human Rights;
United Nations Association Nashville Cordell-Hull Chapter,
and others

Present...

The Tennessee Celebration of

International HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Challenging Hate:
Standing Together for Universal Human Rights

Celebrating the 77th Anniversary of the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights

International Human Rights Day

On October 24, 1945, in the aftermath of World War II, the United Nations came into being as an intergovernmental organization, with the purpose of saving future generations from the devastation of international conflict.

United Nations representatives formally adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948. The Declaration was drafted by representatives of all regions of the world and encompassed all legal traditions. It is the most universal human rights document in existence, delineating the thirty fundamental rights that form the basis for a democratic society.

Following this historic act, the Assembly called upon all Member Countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories."

Today, the Declaration is a living document that has been accepted as a contract between a government and its people throughout the world.

This year marks the 77th anniversary of the Declaration. Tennessee is celebrating with the theme Challenging Hate: Standing Together for Universal Human Rights.

In Tennessee, the Human Rights Day celebration has become a time to reflect and look to the future. During the event, we honor those who have given a lifetime of service to making human rights a reality, those who have given outstanding service to forward human rights and those who are picking up the torch and carrying it forward.

Program Agenda

Opening Music—Adrienne Ewing-Roush

Master of Ceremonies—Rev. Brian Fesler
Pastor, Church of Scientology

Greetings presented by—Brenda Perez
Public Information Coordinator, Metro Human Relations Commission

Special Remarks—Rev. Davie Tucker
Executive Director, Metro Human Relations Commission

2025 Human Rights Rising Advocate Awards
~ Kelly Chieng
~ Jermaine Cole, Jr.

Special Remarks from the UNA—Bill Zechman
Co-Historian Emeritus, UNA Nashville Cordell Hull Chapter

An Essay on Human Rights—Jaycee Henry
A top winner in the UDHR essay competition

2025 Human Rights Outstanding Service Award
~ Sheryl Allen Huff

Panel Discussion: Challenging Hate, Standing Together
~Tacuma Roeback, Director of Engagement and Opinion, Tennessean

2025 Human Rights Lifetime Achievement Awards
~ Albert Bender
~ Brenda Haywood

Closing Unity Prayer—Rev. Brian Fesler
Pastor, Church of Scientology

Master of Ceremonies Rev. Brian Fesler

Rev. Brian Fesler has served as senior pastor of the Church of Scientology Nashville since 2009, following a decade pastoring in Minneapolis. He is known for uniting communities and is active in interfaith work, previously serving on the board of the Interdenominational Ministers Fellowship and currently on the National Board of the Religion Communicators Council. Rev. Fesler is a key organizer of Nashville's annual MLK Day events and manages his church's community programs around drug prevention and human rights.

Special Remarks Rev. Davie Tucker, Jr.

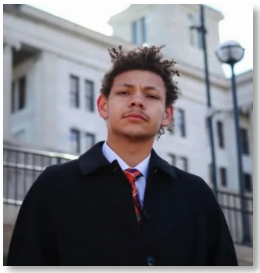
Rev. Davie Tucker, Jr. is the Executive Director of the Metro Human Relations Commission and pastor of Beech Creek Missionary Baptist Church. He has held numerous leadership roles, including president of the Interdenominational Ministers Fellowship and director of the Center for Equity, Change and Sustainability. He founded the Center for Imagination, an after-school program for at-risk youth. Rev. Tucker is dedicated to reforming the wealth-based criminal justice system and advocating for affected individuals.

Greetings from the UNA Bill Zechman

Bill Zechman has been active in the UNA-USA Nashville Cordell Hull Chapter since the 1980s. A University of Tennessee graduate, he has held multiple public offices, including 22 years on the Warren County Commission and two terms on the county school board. A State Farm agent since 1981, he also hosts a weekly public radio talk show in McMinnville. As a longtime member of the Union of Concerned Scientists, he works to raise awareness about human-caused threats to the global environment.

Rising Advocate Awards

Kelly Chieng is a dedicated advocate for Nashville's homeless and immigrant communities, fighting harmful policy, assisting individuals with urgent housing needs, and mobilizing support through grassroots fundraising. Kelly recently helped lead efforts to improve pedestrian safety and secure benches at Nashville bus stops as the city grows. She been highlighted for her work with Open Table Nashville and her ongoing involvement in community advocacy initiatives.



Jermaine Cole, Jr. is a 20 year old college student at Fisk University where he is empowering young people to learn about civics, registering to vote, and learning about government. He has lead student learning sessions and voter registration drives giving students a voice and giving them hope in their government. He is a student leader on campus and for young people in our state.

Outstanding Service Award

Sheryl Allen Huff is a longtime community organizer and civil-rights advocate in Nashville and Middle Tennessee, focused on the intersections of race, poverty, and civic engagement. As president of the Middle Tennessee chapter of the National Action Network (NAN), she works to expand voting rights, civic education, and social justice resources for underserved communities, especially youth. Beyond her NAN leadership, Sheryl serves on the Executive Committee of the Davidson County Democratic Party, representing District 8, where she supports community-based political engagement and voter participation efforts. Her advocacy extends to education equity, Known for her direct and unwavering commitment to justice.

Lifetime Achievement Awards

Albert Bender is a respected attorney, writer, historian, and lifelong advocate for Indigenous people's human rights. Of Cherokee descent, he has spent most of his adult life championing Indigenous sovereignty, cultural preservation, and historical truth—often working quietly but powerfully behind the scenes to ensure that Native voices are heard and honored. His deep commitment to justice, combined with his scholarly approach to history, has made him one of the region's most influential Indigenous rights advocates. A prolific writer and commentator, Bender has contributed to numerous publications, where his columns explore Native American history, land rights, political struggles, and ongoing resistance to erasure. His articles and essays highlight both historical injustices and contemporary challenges facing Indigenous communities, helping educate broad audiences and expand public understanding. Through his work as an attorney, he has also supported issues related to tribal sovereignty, land protection, and the Indian Child Welfare Act, advancing legal efforts that uphold the rights and dignity of Indigenous families and nations. One of Bender's most visible achievements has been his leadership within the Indigenous Peoples Coalition, where he served as a key voice behind the successful effort to rename Cumberland Park to Wasioto Park—the original Shawnee name for the Cumberland River. The historic decision, approved unanimously by the Metro Parks Board, marked one of Nashville's most meaningful recognitions of Indigenous heritage. Bender's leadership connected Indigenous, African American, Latino, and white community members behind a shared goal of restoring Indigenous presence to the city's public spaces. In addition to public advocacy, Bender has worked extensively to protect and bring awareness to the ancient Indigenous sites buried beneath modern-day Nashville. He emphasizes that the region was once home to thriving Native American civilizations and that development must not continue at the expense of erasing thousands of years of history. His collaborations with community leaders, civic organizations, and scholars have helped bring wider recognition to these sacred and historically significant places. Bender's dedication has been featured in a PBS NewsHour segment titled "A Brief But Spectacular Take on Upholding Indigenous Cultures," he spoke about Tennessee's deep Native roots, the vitality of Indigenous cultures, and the importance of honoring the histories beneath our cities. His calm, authoritative voice and thoughtful storytelling have made him a beloved educator for those wishing to better understand Indigenous contributions and struggles. His legacy is one of resilience, leadership, and a lifelong dedication to ensuring that the stories of Indigenous peoples are rightfully honored and remembered.

Brenda Harris Haywood is a Nashville trailblazer whose life's work has been defined by courage, service, and an unwavering commitment to equity. A lifelong public servant, she previously served as Nashville's Deputy Mayor of Community Engagement and earlier represented District 3 as a Metro Councilwoman. Before her leadership in city government, she dedicated nearly four decades to Metro Nashville Public Schools as a teacher and administrator, shaping generations of students with compassion, integrity, and high expectations. Her impact on education and civil rights spans more than sixty years, beginning with her extraordinary and historic role in public school desegregation. In 1963, at just twelve years old, Brenda Harris—alongside three other young girls—integrated the seventh grade at East Nashville's Stratford High School under the Nashville Plan for school desegregation. This plan, created in the wake of Brown v. Board of Education, required schools to be integrated one grade at a time beginning in 1957. Brenda had been a standout student at Moses McKissack Elementary School and later at Inglewood Middle School. When selected to integrate Stratford, she stepped into history with profound courage, guided by her deep faith and the support of her family and community. Despite the blatant racism and hostility she encountered, she became a beloved classmate, a celebrated member of the girls' basketball team as its first Black player, and the recipient of the Stratford High Citizenship Award—a testament to her perseverance and character. Brenda graduated from Stratford High School in 1969 and continued her education at Tennessee State University. Her four-decade career with Metro Nashville Public Schools included service as a gifted educator, where she inspired countless students, including the daughter of one of her fellow desegregation pioneers. In 2008, she was ordained as a minister, deepening her lifelong devotion to faith and service. In 2015, Haywood was elected to the Metro Council, where she championed issues of equity, education, and community wellbeing. Four years later, she was appointed Deputy Mayor of Community Engagement, a role in which she strengthened relationships across the city, amplified marginalized voices, and helped address Nashville's most pressing community needs. Known for her strength, humility, and servant leadership, Brenda continues to be deeply admired by colleagues and community members alike. Today, Brenda Haywood remains not only a respected community leader but a symbol of Nashville's ongoing commitment to justice, equality, and empowerment. Her life's story—rooted in bravery, service, and unwavering faith—continues to inspire new generations to meet challenges with courage and to believe in the transformative power of love.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non –self–governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6. Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7. All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8. Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10. Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11. (1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence. (2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14. (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. (2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

1st Place—Atticus Todd
UNA Poster Contest

Article 15. (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16. (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17. (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

2nd Place—Esther Tran
UNA Poster contest 2025

Article 19. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21. (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country. (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22. Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23. (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25. (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26. (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27. (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28. Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

3rd Place—Reece Summar
UNA Poster contest 2025

Article 29. (1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible. (2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society. (3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

Acknowledgements

Event Chair
Rev. Brian Fesler, *Church of Scientology*

Planning Committee Members
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Katherine Lay Miller, *United Nations Association, Nashville Cordell-Hull Chapter*
Brenda Perez, *Metro Human Relations Commission*
Rev. Davie Tucker, Jr., *Metro Human Relations Commission*
Rev. Kelli X, *Scarritt Bennett Center*
Olivia York, *Office of Tennessee Attorney General*

Awards
Thank you to Tennessee United for Human Rights for providing the awards.

Music
Thank you Adrienne Ewing-Roush for opening our event with beautiful music.

Panel Moderator
Thank you Tacuma Roeback for leading our panel discussion.

Program Booklet
Thank you to the Church of Scientology for program design and printing and hosting the event this year.

Refreshments
Thank you to Metro Human Relations Commission for sponsoring the refreshments.

Next Year
If your organization would like to participate in the planning for next year, please contact the Chair at info@tnuhr.org.

More Information
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