



A Note of Much Gratitude to Andrew Park

By Michael Hirschhorn, Executive Director, International Human Rights Funders Group

I want to say a big note of thanks to Andrew Park. Andrew will be leaving Wellspring Advisors mid-April to assume the leadership of the International Program at the Williams Institute of the University of California, Los Angeles. In his thirteen years at Wellspring, Andrew led the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) program from 2001 to the present and he led the Human Rights Program from 2006 to 2011.

In addition to his roles at Wellspring, Andrew was my predecessor as director of the International Human Rights Funders Group. When I took the reins at IHRFG in 2008, I knew I had very big shoes to fill. With his creativity, insight, boundless commitment to human rights and his, um, idiosyncratic sense of humor, Andrew Park led IHRFG from 2005 to 2008. During that period I was a member of IHRFG's steering committee. I had a front row seat as Andrew steered us with his contagious intellect, wry wit, and keen instinct for what it means to shepherd an affinity group that truly fosters peer learning among human rights funders. I learned a great deal about that and about humility from Andrew.

Upon hearing the news, I decided to ask around. Not surprisingly many others also wanted to thank Andrew. "He was one of the first funding leaders to explore the potential of the human rights system and instruments to advance LGBT rights," noted one colleague. "His keen strategic insights contributed to the excellence of his own programs, and enriched the conversation throughout Wellspring." Noted another colleague: "Andrew built Wellspring's human rights program and has made a tremendous difference to the field. Andrew has worked on many facets of human rights work: marriage equality, state-based advocacy, LGBT youth, torture, accountability for war crimes, corporate accountability, rights of people with disabilities, strengthening the UN system, treatment access and many others. We are already all greatly missing collaborating with him!"

The Williams Institute is the leading research institute in the world on LGBT issues. The data derived from its studies have lent critical support to the advocacy efforts of the LGBT movement in the United States. Williams Institute's launch of an international focus promises to boost the effectiveness of LGBT advocacy around the globe. "Andrew's leadership of this initiative is an incredibly exciting development for the movement," said a co-worker. "We believe it is also an incredibly exciting development for Andrew."

Several I spoke with lost all hint of composure. "Andrew!!! NOOOOO!!! Say it isn't so!" blurted an IHRFG colleague. "You will be missed so much! You made such a difference, for IHRFG and for the human rights funding field. I have fond memories of conversations with you ranging from taxonomic codes for human rights, to human rights-focused HIV/AIDS funders, to French lessons and much more. You are brilliantly versatile and the Williams Institute is lucky to have you!!"

Thank you so very much Andrew.

Michael J Hirschhorn