



## Nonhuman Rights Project

### Media Contact:

Stacey Doss

Sagon-Phior

949-285-2362

[stacey.doss@sagon-phior.com](mailto:stacey.doss@sagon-phior.com)

### FIRST-EVER LAWSUITS FILED ON BEHALF OF CAPTIVE CHIMPANZEES TO DEMAND COURTS GRANT THEM RIGHT TO BODILY LIBERTY

*~Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP) files landmark suits in New York Supreme Court – based on scientific evidence – on behalf of all four captive chimpanzees in that state~*

*~Suits are first in a series of cases planned throughout the US on behalf of captive animals scientifically proven to be self-aware and autonomous~*

Dec. 2, 2013 – New York, NY – The Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP) announced today that it has filed the first-ever lawsuits on behalf of captive chimpanzees demanding that the courts grant them the right to bodily liberty via a writ of *habeas corpus*. The suits, filed in New York Supreme Court, are based on scientific evidence proving that chimpanzees are self-aware and autonomous, and therefore entitled to be recognized as "legal persons" with certain fundamental legal rights.

The four captive chimpanzee plaintiffs\*, all located in the state of New York, are:

- Tommy – a 26-year-old chimpanzee living in a used trailer lot in Gloversville, NY, isolated in a cage in a dark shed on the owner's property.
- Hercules and Leo – two young male chimpanzees owned by New Iberia Research Center, used in a locomotion research experiment in the Anatomy Department at Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, NY.
- Kiko – a 26-year-old chimpanzee living in Niagara Falls, NY, on private property where he is caged and was previously used in the entertainment industry.

The lawsuits ask the judge to grant the chimpanzees the right to bodily liberty and to order that they be moved to a sanctuary that's part of the North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA), where they can live out their days with others of their kind in an environment as close to the wild as is possible in North America.

"No one has ever demanded a legal right for a nonhuman animal, until now," said Steven M. Wise, founder and president of the Nonhuman Rights Project. "When we go to court on behalf of the first chimpanzee plaintiffs, we'll be asking judges to recognize, for the first time, that these cognitively complex, autonomous beings have the basic legal right to not be imprisoned."

Legal claims made by the Nonhuman Rights Project are rooted in genetic, cognitive, physiological, evolutionary and taxonomic evidence that the plaintiffs are self-aware and autonomous. The species has been studied long and extensively by some of the world's most well-respected scientists. The organization is seeking rights that are appropriate for the plaintiffs based on existing scientific evidence.

"Not long ago, people generally agreed that human slaves could not be legal persons, but were simply the property of their owners," attorney Wise continued. "We will assert, based on clear scientific evidence, that it's time to take the next step and recognize that these nonhuman animals cannot continue to be exploited as the property of their human 'owners.'

"Abraham Lincoln put it best when he said that 'in giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free.'"

The cases filed today are the first in a series that the Nonhuman Rights Project plans to file throughout the United States on behalf of captive animals who are scientifically proven to be self-aware and autonomous. Those include great apes (gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans and bonobos), elephants and cetaceans (dolphins and whales).

### **About the Nonhuman Rights Project**

The Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP) is the first and only legal organization demanding that, based on scientific evidence, courts recognize the entitlement of certain nonhuman animals to such basic rights as bodily liberty and bodily integrity. Comprised of attorneys, legal experts and scientists, the Nonhuman Rights Project is focused on raising awareness and educating the public about rights for nonhuman animals. The organization uses the common law, not legislation, to gain legal rights for great apes, elephants and cetaceans (dolphins and whales).

Nonhuman Rights Project Founder, attorney Steven M. Wise, began his mission to gain rights for nonhuman animals in 1985. He holds a J.D. from Boston University Law School and a B.S. in chemistry from the College of William and Mary. He has practiced animal protection law for 30 years and is admitted to the Massachusetts Bar. Professor Wise has taught "Animal Rights Jurisprudence" at the Harvard Law School and several other law schools, and is currently teaching at Lewis and Clark Law School, Vermont Law School and St. Thomas Law School. He is the author of four books: *Rattling the Cage – Toward Legal Rights for Animals*; *Drawing the Line – Science and the Case for Animal Rights*; *Though the Heavens May Fall – The Landmark Trial That Led to the End of Human Slavery*; and *An American Trilogy – Death, Slavery, and Dominion Along the Banks of the Cape Fear River*.

The Nonhuman Rights Project has captured the interest of dozens of well-respected lawyers, scientists, mathematicians, biologists, predictive analytics professionals, professors, and researchers who donate their time and energy to this project.

For more information on the Nonhuman Rights Project, please visit [www.nonhumanrightsproject.org](http://www.nonhumanrightsproject.org).

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\* Note: The first three plaintiff chimpanzees selected by the Nonhuman Rights Project all died in captivity before the organization was able to file its first lawsuits.

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