



## NONHUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT

**Position: Executive Director**

**Location: Remote**

### **Our Mission**

The Nonhuman Rights Project works to secure fundamental rights for nonhuman animals. Our groundbreaking work challenges an archaic, unjust legal status quo that views and treats all nonhuman animals as “things” with no rights. We work to achieve our mission in three ways:

- (1) Litigation (changing the legal status quo and catalyzing a global conversation about how nonhuman animals are viewed and treated under the law);
- (2) Legislation and Advocacy (building grassroots support at the local, national, and global levels and working to pass the first nonhuman rights laws in the US); and
- (3) Education (raising awareness of the need and basis for nonhuman rights and providing resources to empower others to join the fight).

### **Our Vision**

We envision a world where respect for freedom and dignity runs so deep that we don't hesitate to extend it to nonhuman animals and where we make decisions at all levels based on justice, scientific evidence, and the interconnectedness of life on earth.

### **About Us**

Steven M. Wise founded the Nonhuman Rights Project in 1995 because his decades of work as a lawyer and legal scholar led him to the core conviction that it is irrational and unjust to deny legal rights to nonhuman animals simply because they are not human. The rights of members of other species should be recognized according to the same principles of justice that govern human rights: liberty, equality, autonomy, dignity, and fairness.

Our work follows centuries-long global struggles against the denial of human rights based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other status. No one should be denied rights because of who they are - including nonhuman animals.

We are the only civil rights organization in the United States dedicated solely to securing fundamental rights for nonhuman animals.

## Our Programs

### *Litigation*

The NhRP is leading the legal fight to secure fundamental rights for nonhuman animals through a state-by-state, country-by-country, long-term litigation campaign. Our first-of-their-kind lawsuits demand recognition of the fundamental right to liberty of individual great apes, elephants, dolphins, and whales in captivity across the US. With the support of world-renowned scientists and other experts, we file habeas corpus petitions for our nonhuman animal clients. We argue that common law courts must free these self-aware, autonomous beings to appropriate sanctuaries not out of concern for their welfare but respect for their rights.

Just ten years ago and only one year into our first lawsuit, we secured the world's first habeas corpus hearing on behalf of nonhuman animals in New York, arguing that our primate clients should be freed to sanctuaries where their right to liberty would be protected and respected—as documented in Chris Hegedus and D A Pennebaker's 2016 Academy Award-nominated HBO film, *Unlocking the Cage*.

Nine years later, in 2022, the New York Court of Appeals became the highest US state court and the highest court of any English-speaking jurisdiction to hear arguments supporting a nonhuman animal's legal right to liberty. The nonhuman animal in this case was Happy, an elephant imprisoned and living alone in the Bronx Zoo. While the Court ultimately chose not to release Happy from imprisonment, two judges wrote powerful and lengthy dissents supporting Happy's right to liberty and release to a sanctuary - dissents that will help advocates fighting for nonhuman animal rights for years to come and that show that not even ten years after we filed our first nonhuman rights lawsuits, judges have begun to reject the rightlessness of nonhuman animals and embrace the idea that at least some nonhuman animals should be recognized as legal "persons" with the right to liberty.

### *Legislation*

As with our litigation, our legislative efforts are founded on the principle that science, morality, and sound public policy compel the recognition of rights for nonhuman animals. Our long-term goal is federal legislation recognizing rights for nonhuman animals in the United States, but we believe that the fastest path to progress leads through the states - specifically, city councils and state legislatures. We primarily pursue legislation that recognizes and protects the right to liberty of all members of a particular species in a specific jurisdiction - requiring their release to sanctuaries or, if no members of these species are imprisoned there, preventing future generations from being imprisoned and exploited.

This year, the NhRP assisted with the drafting and introduction of a bill in Ojai, California that defines and protects elephants' legal right to liberty. The Ojai bill became law in September – the first law in the US that recognizes the legal right of a nonhuman animal. Last year we also assisted with the drafting and introduction of a bill in New York City that will ban elephant captivity. We are currently working to add cosponsors to the bill ahead of reintroduction in 2024. If passed, this bill will be the first of its kind for elephants in the US.

## ***Education***

Educating humans about scientific developments related to nonhuman animal cognition, the mental and physical suffering autonomous nonhuman animals endure in captivity, and the importance of rights for nonhuman animals is an integral part of future success with our litigation and legislation. In turn, leveraging the media attention generated by our novel litigation and legislation provides us opportunities to reach more people and share information about nonhuman animals and animal rights.

This year, we have launched a new first-of-its-kind education and grassroots campaign. Free to Be Elephants is intended to educate the public about the extraordinary cognitive, emotional, and social complexity of elephants, how they suffer in even the “best” zoos, and why they need the right to liberty. At the core of the campaign is an online interactive map and comprehensive shareable index that tracks the more than 250 elephants held captive in AZA-accredited zoos across the US, sharing their stories and shining a light on the harmful practices employed every day by the zoos where they are imprisoned.

## **Position Overview**

The NhRP seeks an experienced Executive Director who is passionate about animal rights and has demonstrable leadership, management and communication skills that will help us achieve our goals and advance the next chapter of our work. They will be a strategic thinker who is able to envision the future while mastering the details necessary to get us there, successfully balancing long-term planning and short-term needs.

The Executive Director will be responsible for overseeing all aspects of the organization’s operations, including strategic planning, program development and administration, fundraising and financial management, and staff supervision. They will work directly with our Board of Directors to ensure that we are honoring the vision of our Founder, fulfilling our mission, and serving our supporters effectively. The Executive Director will also be responsible for cultivating and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders, including donors, partners, members of the media and others.

This is a full-time remote position that reports directly to the NhRP Board of Directors. The Executive Director will oversee a core staff of 8-10 and a larger associated network of volunteers and pro bono partners.

## **Position Description**

### **Mission and Strategy**

- Lead the development and oversee the execution of the NhRP’s strategic plan, ensuring operational priorities are in alignment with the organization’s mission and vision as defined by our Founder and our Board of Directors

- Proactively identify and explore new opportunities for the organization to maximize its impact and deliver on its mission, including growth and development of existing programs, creation and development of new programs, campaigns, projects, and partnerships
- Lead the development and implementation of an annual organizational operating plan, including defining specific annual goals priorities, determining budget and resource allocation, and analyzing results and performance for each program area from year to year (litigation, legislation/advocacy, education)
- In collaboration with department directors, manage the day to day operations of all programs, regularly evaluating the progress, impact, and budget outlined for each department, coordinating with department directors to ensure that short and long term priorities are met, staffing plans match program priorities, financial resources are managed effectively, and processes and systems are optimized to maximize effectiveness and achieve results
- Serve as a mentor and leader, supporting alignment across departments, ensuring the high performance of each/every team and team member, creating and implementing management systems that provide support with career pathing, goal setting, mentoring and other professional development activities
- Be active and visible in the animal advocacy community, developing NhRP's brand and identity and positioning the organization as the leading voice for legal rights for nonhuman animals
- Serve as a thought leader in the field, engaging with leading thinkers and contributing to the dialogue about nonhuman animal rights
- Increase public understanding about the need for legal rights for nonhuman animals through publishing high profile articles and op eds, engaging in media interviews and events, and giving talks and lectures that draw attention to NhRP's mission (some travel required)
- Serve as the primary spokesperson with our supporters, the media, and the public

#### Financial Management and Fundraising

- With the Chief Operating Officer, protect the fiscal integrity of the NhRP, assuring that the NhRP operates within the annual budget approved by the Board, maintaining a positive financial position for the organization, taking proactive and quick response measures against financial challenges as they arise, and ensuring the NhRP's long-term financial health to support its mission
- With the Chief Operating Officer and the Director of Development, develop and lead the implementation of a comprehensive fundraising and development strategy that aligns with the organization's mission and goals and expands and diversifies our portfolio of top donors and prospects
- With the Chief Operating Officer, provide leadership and direction to staff involved in fundraising and development activities, ensuring that all efforts are aligned with the organization's goals and priorities

- Develop and implement donor stewardship plans to maintain strong relationships with donors and secure ongoing support, including regular communication, recognition, and engagement opportunities
- Cultivation and solicitation of individual, foundation, corporate donors and other funding sources
- Ensure that the organization raises enough funds to meet its annual goals and expand its mission reach and impact, monitoring progress toward fundraising goals and making adjustments as needed

### Board Relations

- Collaborate and partner closely with the Board to deliver on organizational goals and priorities
- In coordination with the Board President, lead the reporting and activities of the Board of Directors
- Provide relevant and timely updates and information to the Board

### **Skills and Experience Needed**

- Powerful commitment to civil rights and civil liberties consistent with the mission and goals of the NhRP; genuine passion for NhRP's mission with the ability to communicate this passion to others
- Enthusiasm for animal rights law; an appreciation of the difference between animal welfare and animal rights
- Strong management skills with demonstrated experience leading teams and managing projects, including the ability to cultivate and motivate a national team that is fully remote; at least fifteen (15) years of experience in a leadership/management role at a nonprofit/advocacy organization preferred
- Demonstrated experience successfully conducting a litigation campaign from start to finish; at least ten (10) years of experience developing and litigating significant cases or projects
- Experience overseeing the development of a budget and operating plan
- Experience with nonprofit fundraising
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including experience as an effective public speaker; experience serving as a media spokesperson in an advocacy context
- Positive attitude, exceptional people skills, sense of humor, and comfort in fostering and contributing to a friendly, supportive, inclusive, and team-oriented environment
- Juris Doctor degree from an accredited law school
- Admission to the bar in at least one U.S. state

### **Salary**

The salary range for this position is \$180,000-\$195,000, commensurate with the candidate's skill and experience. The NhRP also offers health insurance reimbursement, flexible paid time off, professional development stipends, and home office equipment subsidies.

## **How to Apply**

Interested applicants should submit a resume, cover letter describing why you are a good candidate for this position, three references, and two writing samples. This material should be submitted to: [jobs@nonhumanrights.org](mailto:jobs@nonhumanrights.org). Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until a candidate is hired. Select candidates will be contacted and invited to participate in next steps in the selection process.

The Nonhuman Rights Project is an Equal Opportunity Employer and acts in accordance with applicable laws in all of our hiring and employment practices. NhRP considers applicants for all positions without regard to race, color, religion, creed, gender identity, national origin, age, ability, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or any other protected factor under federal, state, or local law.