

# TANGATA GROUP

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **TANGATA GROUP WELCOMES JUDITH E. HEUMANN, A SEMINAL FIGURE IN THE DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT, AS A BOARD MEMBER**

Tangata Group announced the addition of the Honorable Judith E. Heumann to its board of directors. Heumann is an internationally recognized leader in the disability community and a lifelong civil rights advocate for people with disabilities. She served as the first Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the U.S. Department of State from 2010 – 2017 under the Obama administration. She previously served as the Director for the Department on Disability Services for the District of Columbia, where she was responsible for the Developmental Disability Administration and the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

The leadership of Tangata commented on the addition of Heumann to its board:

“The members of Tangata Group are thrilled that Judith has agreed to join our board,” said Professor Brent C. Elder, assistant professor of inclusive education at Rowan University and president and co-founder of Tangata. “Judith has been a pioneer of disability rights in the United States and around the world. We are humbled and honored that she has consented to join our team.”

“Judy Heumann brings a lifetime commitment to disability rights and multiple groundbreaking successes as a legendary leader,” said Professor Janet E. Lord, a key drafter of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and also a co-founder of Tangata. “She also brings experience as a global advocate who has travelled to the far corners of the world to counsel disabled people's organizations and advance their cause. I look forward to working with her and learning from her as we focus on advancing the principles of the UN Convention in places where disabled advocates most need our support.”

Professor Michael A. Schwartz, associate professor of law at Syracuse University and secretary/treasurer and co-founder of Tangata added, “Judith has inspired me by her example since the 1970s, and I’m thrilled to call her a partner in the good fight for disability rights at home and overseas.”

Heumann’s work in disability rights distinguishes her as one of the movement’s most important figures. From June 2002 - 2006, she served as the World Bank's first Adviser on Disability and Development, expanding the Bank’s knowledge and capability to work with governments and civil society in addressing issues pertaining to disability in the Bank’s discussions with client countries. She also spearheaded the Bank’s support for improving policies, programs, and

projects that allow disabled people around the world to live and work in the economic and social mainstream of their communities. She was also Lead Consultant for the Bank to the Global Partnership for Disability and Development.

From 1993 to 2001, Heumann served in the Clinton Administration as the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the US Department of Education. She was responsible for the implementation of legislation at the national level for programs in special education, disability research, vocational rehabilitation and independent living, serving more than 8 million youth and adults with disabilities.

For more than 40 years, Heumann has been involved on the international front working with disabled people's organizations and governments around the world to advance the human rights of disabled people. She represented Education Secretary Richard Riley at the 1995 International Congress on Disability in Mexico City. She was a US delegate to the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. She has been active with Disabled Peoples' International, Rehabilitation International and numerous Independent Living Centers throughout the world. She co-founded the Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, California, and the World Institute on Disability in Oakland, California.

Heumann graduated from Long Island University in 1969 and received her Master's in Public Health from the University of California at Berkeley in 1975. She has received numerous awards, including being the first recipient of the Henry B. Betts Award in recognition of efforts to significantly improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. She has received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Long Island University in Brooklyn, an Honorary Doctorate of Public Administration from the University of Illinois, Champaign, and an Honorary Doctorate of Public Service from the University of Toledo. She recently established an online presence, *The Heumann Perspective*, through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

### **About Tangata Group**

Tangata Group is a non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to the proposition that disability rights are human rights. The organization was officially launched in December 2016 with Professors Brent C. Elder, Janet E. Lord, and Michael A. Schwartz as founding members. The focus of the organization is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), an international treaty establishing disability as a critical category of human rights. Over 165 nations have ratified the UNCRPD, and our NGO provides technical assistance and guidance in the work to realize disabled people's human rights. Technical assistance consists of qualitative research, community-based participatory research, action research, and decolonizing and indigenous methodologies. Tangata Group's interdisciplinary collaborations focus on disability rights, international human rights law, inclusive education, and access to justice and health care.

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