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U.S. Department of State Hosts EMPOWER Conference to Advance Disability Rights Worldwide

by **Christopher Simmons** on Mon, 20 May 2013

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WASHINGTON, D.C. /eNewsChannels/ — The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces the first EMPOWER Conference on disability inclusive diplomacy. The EMPOWER program is a series of two-way exchanges aimed at bolstering the rights of persons with disabilities around the world. Persons with disabilities have the same rights as non-disabled persons, and must be provided access, opportunity, inclusion, and full participation on an equal basis with others.

The conference will take place on Wednesday, May 22, 2013 in the George Marshall Center, starting at 8:45am.

It will include 34 disability rights advocates from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Tajikistan, and Uganda who are here for one-month fellowships in cities across the United States.

Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the U.S. Department of State Judith Heumann will provide opening remarks at the conference. The event will feature clips from the documentary film “Lives



Worth Living” followed by an open discussion with leading disability rights advocates. John L. Wodatch, who wrote the first federal disability rights regulations in the 1970s and helped draft the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), will participate.

At its conclusion in the fall of 2013, the EMPOWER program, conducted in partnership with U.S. administrating organizations American Councils for International Education, Discovering Deaf Worlds and Global Deaf Connections, will have brought an estimated 75 foreign disability rights leaders from every geographic region to the United States for two-to-four week professional development programming, and sent approximately 60 American stakeholders abroad for reciprocal exchanges.

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About Christopher Simmons

Christopher Laird Simmons has been a creative artist, marketing specialist, working journalist and PR pro for more than 25 years (he started as a teenager). He founded Neotrope (formerly Mindset) in 1983, and has written widely for numerous national magazines, and is frequently interviewed by same. He is a member of the PRSA and ASCAP and resides in Torrance, California.

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