

# THE WAINWRIGHT TRUST

## **Baron Lester of Herne Hill QC**

### **Winner of the Wainwright Trust's 'special' Breakthrough Award 2007 for "a lifetime's dedication to equality and human rights"**

Anthony Lester was born in 1936, studied history and law at Trinity College, Cambridge and went to Harvard Law School. He was called to the Bar by Lincoln's Inn in 1964 and became a QC in 1975. He sat as a Recorder at the Crown Court and a Deputy High Court Judge before being created a Liberal Democrat Life Peer in 1993. He is still a practising member of Blackstone Chambers.

He is probably best known by the public for his human rights work, having campaigned for 30 years to make the European Human Rights Convention directly enforceable in British courts, introduced two Private Members' Bills which became models for the 1998 Human Rights Act and co-founded Interights, the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights.

However, it is above all for what specialist equality lawyers and practitioners regard as his inspirational work in the world of discrimination law and equal opportunities over a similarly long period that the Wainwright Trust has chosen to present him with its special Breakthrough Award.

Between 1974 and 1976 he was Special Adviser to the then Home Secretary Roy Jenkins, with special responsibility for developing policy on race relations and sex discrimination. In that capacity he worked on both key pieces of legislation in the field – the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976, of which he was effectively the chief architect.

During the 1980s he took landmark equal pay and sex discrimination cases to the European Court of Justice on behalf of the Equal Opportunities Commission and in 1984 co-authored with David Wainwright, by then a good friend, a guide to the workings of the equal pay for work of equal value regulations. He has continued to be involved in many major cases that have influenced the direction of the law at appellate level.

More recently, together with Bob Hepple, he was responsible for drafting and arguing for a Single Equality Bill, which the Government has now committed itself to bringing in; and he also introduced a Private Members' Bill to give legal protection and recognition to unmarried couples (both same sex and opposite sex) and another to outlaw forced marriages; this last has also now been adopted by the Government.

He chaired the Advisory Group of the University of Cambridge Independent Review of the Enforcement of UK Anti-Discrimination Legislation, and is currently Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Women and Equality issues, Vice-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Equalities and chair of the Equal Rights Trust. He has been a Trustee of the Wainwright Trust since its inception 20 years ago.

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