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Letter of recommendation about Shinnosuke Taniya. His  
Common APP ID : 15941974

My work as advocacy director for the LGBT rights program at Human Rights Watch has brought me every year to Japan since 2009. During these visits I got to know Mamoru and Rika Taniya and their son Shinnosuke.

Shinnosuke took up an internship at the office of Human Rights Watch in Tokyo. My colleagues in the Tokyo office highly appreciated his internship. He worked on women's rights concerning abortion specifically, the rights of North Korean refugees denied of receiving Japanese citizenship, he studied international relations between Japan and China (especially after Senkaku Island), and attacks on Syrian schools endangering the lives of Syrian children and several other issues.

After sharing with Shinnosuke my work on the rights of LGBT people he was inspired to initiate his own project outside of HRW to create awareness for LGBT individuals in the Japanese community. He asked for my advice on how to approach this project whether it be resources, ideology, obstacles, or goals and carefully took my advice into account.

I shared with him my plan to conduct a big research project on homophobic and transphobic bullying in Japanese schools. Shinnosuke accompanied his parents to Berlin in 2015 and I noticed his attentiveness, enthusiasm, and grateful attitude during our conversation while I took his family and him around Berlin!


After returning to Japan Shinnosuke started working on his project to raise awareness for LGBT members in the Japanese community by meeting with prominent LGBT activist organizations in Tokyo (such as Colorful Cafe run by Masa Yanagisawa), talking to a Tokyo University professor and his partner about the social change Japan needs, and used HRW resources to contact multiple organizations outside of his community to ask if they were willing to help. During his internship at HRW he introduced many of his friends, mostly Japanese University students, who identified as LGBTQ to my researchers and thus helped HRW tremendously in conducting our research. He also used the

previous research he had done for his own project to inform the staff about key points he learnt throughout his investigation.

In June 2016 Shinnosuke came to Berlin as part of his HRW internship. As a volunteer he helped organize HRW's annual Summit, where hundreds of donors from all over the world (including Japan) gathered. I organized a special session on the rights of LGBT people in Japan, where I highlighted HRW's Japan report on homophobic and transphobic bullying, called "The Nail That Sticks Out Gets Hammered Down". On stage I interviewed a friend of Shinnosuke's, Tiger Shigetake. Tiger shared his experience as a victim of bullying. Shinnosuke took the floor and gave an impromptu speech where he expressed his emotions about his childhood inability to help Tiger. His speech was so moving, it brought many of the hundred plus attendees to tears.

Summarizing I can vouch that Shinnosuke is a devoted, honest, hardworking and very talented young man who will accomplish a lot in his life.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Boris Dittrich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter being a large, stylized 'B'.

Boris Dittrich,  
Advocacy director LGBT rights, Human Rights Watch