

National Jewish Chamber of Commerce

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To Whom It May Concern:

I have been asked to write a letter of support to attest to whether I feel that Bagwhan Shree Rajneesh is a person of exceptional ability in science or art in his capacity as a religious teacher and spiritual leader. I can do so without reservation based upon my knowledge of his works and from my recent visit to Rajneeshpuram, his central Oregon spiritual community.

I was greatly impressed with the urban and rural development accomplishments of his community in the two years since its inception. I do not believe that these accomplishments could have occurred during this period without the religious inspiration that he provides to his followers. If our political leaders could provide similar leadership and devotion, our inner cities would stand a chance of being rehabilitated.

I believe that my educational and professional credentials both as a religious leader and as an urban planner provide me with the skill to judge the exceptional ability of Rajneesh as a religious leader who has demonstrated exceptional ability in the areas of urban and rural planning. I am the former Executive Director of the Co-op City Jewish Community Council, the largest religious council involved in urban planning in the United States. I have also served as the Assistant Director for the Toledo Jewish Welfare Federation and as the Director of Planning for the Jewish Federation of the East Bay. I served as an appointed public official for four years as a member of New York City Community Planning Boards. Community Planning Boards are responsible for land use planning, urban planning & zoning, and the monitoring and evaluation of government services in the community. I am a former member of the NYC Task Force on Economic Development; staff person to the City Council of N.Y. Transportation Committee; and a member of the Critical Choices For America Task Force on Human Services Planning. I have written public policy papers for many elected officials including the current Mayor of New York City, Ed Koch, and the current Governor of New York State, Mario Cuomo. My paper " American Cities In Trouble ", an analysis of the decline of fifty American cities has been used as a resource paper for both the Conference on Alternative State and Local Public Policies and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

EXHIBIT "A-88"

My educational training includes graduate degrees in Political Science and Urban Anthropology from the New School For Social Research in New York City and in Jewish Community Social Work from Yeshiva University, also in New York. I have additional educational training in Manpower Development & Human Resources Planning from the Center For New York City Affairs and in Systems Planning & Urban Design from the New York City Rand Corporation, America's premier think tank. I have taught urban anthropology at the New School For Social Research and religious studies at the Hillel Foundation in Berkeley, California. I referred to the works of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh in my religious studies course work because I believe that he is an internationally reknown religious teacher and spiritual leader.

I have had the opportunity to work with many religious leaders from different faiths and sects through my involvement with inter-faith councils and Jewish religious councils. I am aware that though many considered Bagwhan Shree Rajneesh to be very controversial with his beliefs they still recognized him as a spiritual leader.

When I visited his spiritual community last month, many of my professional colleagues expressed concern about my going because of alleged anti-semitic statements attributed to Rajneesh. I found no evidence of any anti-semitism and instead found a community that honors the tenets of Judaism.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the financial viability of his community and the positive impact it has had upon the distressed Oregon economy. I found the business leaders of his community to be economically astute and extremely ethical and I will be recommending to the Jewish business members of the National Jewish Chamber of Commerce that they should be willing to do business with his community.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 752-4093 or (415) 843-0207.

Sincerely yours,

Roger Abelson
Roger Abelson
Executive Director