

Rajneeshpuram, OR
July 28, 1983

To Whom It May Concern:

I understand there is some question about the viability of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's residing in the United States. As a social scientist and educator, I feel it is important to write about his influence in my work in the past 4 years.

I have a BA in sociology and anthropology from Swarthmore College and an MEd from Antioch University. I spent 8 years designing federal and local educational programs for children of all exceptionalities in the multi-cultural city of Philadelphia. Since I am bi-lingual, I also had access to the Spanish- and Italian-speaking populations, whose cultural predilections and feelings often are masked by a poor ability to communicate in English.

Six years into my socio-educational career I came across some audio tapes and books of Bhagwan at conventions I attended regularly. I was astounded by his clarity and simplicity; he happened to be speaking on parents, children and social sanctions. For years I had spent many words in conversation with parents and with other sociologists, wrangling about individual differences and cultural determinism. Bhagwan's words had a subtle but powerful effect on my orientation and the programs I designed. Instead of feeling frustrated with apparent deficits children would manifest, and limitations parents could impose, I grew more to challenge the perceived limits and cultural assumptions.

From sociology of education I moved into sociology of business, my current field. I have been fortunate to work with three Harvard graduates in our own firm and at The Forum in Boston. In planning our training programs for business milieu, we have access to current empirical data in the Harvard Business School computer as well as field literature and corporate example. Bhagwan's name and philosophies are well-known in our business and that of our Forum associate. His ideas punctuate conferences and brain-storming sessions, and in effect they summarize the intent of our most successful training packages.

Recently I finished reading The New Economy by economist and independent thinker Paul Hawken. The success of our programs fits with the budding, increasingly successful worldwide economic initiatives identified by Hawken. And the conservative, individual responsibility approach described in the book is exactly what Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh has advocated. It is curious and very important that Hawken, Rajneesh, and the world community are discovering the same things independently of one another. It means that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's efforts with his quarter-million disciples are a world-spanning force for positive social change which is measurable in sociological terms.

Further, he has provided our academic, commercial, and economic communities with a case study in the form of his commune in Oregon. I have visited the commune and consider it worthy of the most careful academic scrutiny. Here is a social, environmental and economic endeavor without parallel in any of the microfiche and computer memories we have reviewed in our fields. It seems that as long as Bhagwan is permitted to remain in the States, we will have another rich pool of empirical data close at hand. From this important experiment we can draw information to help us redesign our social programs to contribute to the rejuvenation of our once-healthy economy.

Very truly yours,
Mary Winters