

MARIST BROTHERS

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To Whom It May Concern:


This letter is in support of the application for permanent resident status of Bhagwan Rajneesh of India.

I am a member of the Marist Brothers of the Schools, a religious order of the Roman Catholic Church, to which I have belonged for thirty-three years. Having been Provincial Superior of the order in the United States, and then a member of its General Council or world-wide governing body in Rome, I am presently a judge of the ecclesiastical tribunal of the Roman Catholic diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia.

While I have never had personal contact with Bhagwan Rajneesh, I have come to know of him and his work through my reading, and through listening to tapes he has made, but most particularly through my correspondence and conversations with a friend of many years, who has been his follower both in India and in this country, for at least a decade.

While I do not agree entirely with the theology or spirituality propounded by Bhagwan Rajneesh, nor with some of his techniques of indoctrination and group dynamics, as I understand them, it is never the less quite evident to me that this man exerts a tremendous influence on young people from a wide variety of nations and cultures. They have found in him a leader in whom they can place confidence, a teacher they can believe and whom they are willing to follow. In his teachings and the way of life he propounds, they have found something to fill the emptiness and hunger so many of them have experienced for years. For all of that, I believe he is worthy of attention and respect, totally apart from all differences of opinion about teachings and methods.

Time will prove whether his influence will be long-lasting or transitory, as is the case with all human institutions. For the present, I believe he has been a source of good to many young people, and that positive influence deserves recognition. For that reason, I believe he represents no threat to the government or people of the United States, and should be favorably considered for permanent-resident status in this country. Experience shows we have granted it to many others far less outstanding and far less deserving than Bhagwan Rajneesh.


Leonard A. Voegtle, B.M.S.