

PORTRAITS BY MARK BURNETT



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To whom this may concern,

I wish to convey my concern about the immigration status of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh which I heard on the TV is in question. I don't know all the details of the case but I am familiar with the man and his teachings and I certainly hope he will be allowed to stay in this country.

I am a professional portrait artist and I feel that I owe my inspiration and development as an artist to Rajneesh's impact.

My training in Art came through my father and grandfather who are both artists. However, I resisted the family tradition and chose instead to study Architecture at the University of Colorado in Boulder, CO. I became a Designer/Builder of vacation homes in Estes Park, CO. until I designed and built a bookstore/cafe in Denver which I later became a manager of.

It was at this bookstore that I first came across the teachings of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. People were demanding his books, which were very difficult to get from India. I found his books to be a beautiful synthesis of the ancient teachings of the East with the practical viewpoint of the West and very appealing to modern man. His words spoke to me with great wit and clarity whenever I would open one of his many books.

After about 2 frustrating years of trying to deal with India to get Rajneesh books for my customers, I was overjoyed when an American couple approached me with questions about how they should go about setting up to distribute Bhagwan's books in this country! I worked with them for about 5 months as a consultant in setting up Rajneesh Center Publications. I found them to be very warm and loving people who worked incredibly hard so that his books could be more easily available here. They never exerted any pressure on me to become a follower, which I appreciated. I did, however, practise some of the meditation techniques which were fun and also very helpful for getting me out of my intellect so much and more in touch with my body and feelings. As a result I felt more balanced and more whole.

During the next two years I lost track of this couple. I became involved in Marketing with Merchants Advertising of Denver and then as a magazine editor of the "Dining Around in Broward County" in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

I chose to attend the First World Celebration at RajneeshPuram in Oregon in July of 82. There I experienced an incredible amount of love, clarity and authenticity both from his followers from many nations and especially from him. In the deep communion of his Silence I felt a peace, love and joy that I had never felt so strongly before. It was a profound and deep recognition of the basic unity of life. I felt that my alienation and unacceptance had simply dissolved.

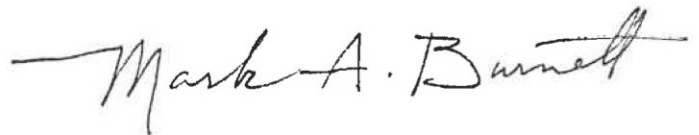
After I returned to Nashville, I began to feel that my artistic nature, which I had blocked for 10 years, was coming alive in me once more. I soon began doing art of a much higher quality than anything I had previously done! Soon I opened my own studio and I am now drawing and painting portraits of the people of Nashville which have been widely praised.

I attribute this explosion and flowering of my artistic gifts to the beautiful impact that Bhagwan's presence had on me. Now, as I continue to meditate daily and meet him in the Silence within, I feel renewed and inspired, which informs my art with beauty and harmony.

I feel that I am very fortunate that this man, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, is here in this country and I look forward to being in his presence again. I believe that it would be a great tragedy for this country's spiritual unfoldment if he were not allowed to stay. He has so much to give us all.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Burnett

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark A. Burnett". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the left of the name.