



April 2, 1987

Honorable Mayor Sharpe James
City of Newark
Newark, New Jersey

Dear Mayor James:

SPACES is a national organization concerned with the recognition and preservation of monumental and unique works of art on the American landscape. During the last few days we have received 10 phone calls and correspondence from some of our members and others who have read the New York Times the Washington Post and The Record, concerning Kea's Ark in Newark. I'm sure you are aware of the national interest in Kea's Ark.

What is going on parallels activities that surrounded the threat of destruction of the Watts Towers in 1959. Aesthetics of the site was found lacking by the building department of Los Angeles and some of the immediate neighbors and there were code violations. Fortunately there was time to access the loss of the structure.

Today the Towers still stand, they are a property of the State of California, a National Register of Historic Places monument which is managed by the City of Los Angeles. The Towers are a focal point and symbol of culture and renewal for that part of Los Angeles. It inspired an art center, built with private contributions and is a magnet for tourists who have little else to attract them to that particular area. This is only one story of how the protection of a folk/art site has been beneficial to the broader community and the sense of the city.

I would hope that some time be given to an assessment of the ark, to determine the long range benefits of letting it stay on this particular site or on a more appropriate site. Some of my correspondence suggests that the ark could generate many needed community services without burdening the city. This should be come part of that report.

None of the articles I read suggests the greater good to the city if the Ark is destroyed. There are to few monuments of culture and to the human spirit to leave its possible destruction wholly in the hands of a building department and not to the people of Newark. Personal aesthetics of building officials should not determine the cultural and social needs of Newark or the world view of your city. Violations of Building Codes can be corrected. I hope you will grant some time for the passions to cool and allow for a through report to be prepared.

Sincerely,

Seymour Rosen
Director

**CC: Honorable Thomas Kean, Governor
United States Senator Bill Bradley
Mr. Richard T. Dewling, State Historic Preservation Officer
Director, New Jersey State Council on the Arts
Barbara Kaufman, Seton Hall University**