

MUSEUM OF  
AMERICAN  
FOLK·ART

April 3, 1987

The Honorable Thomas Kean  
Governor  
The State Capitol  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Kean,

I am writing to you about a remarkable work of urban folk art in Newark which is being threatened with demolition. It is an "Ark," nearly three stories high, which is being built by a woman named Kea Tanawa with found objects and architectural elements from abandoned schools, churches and other Newark buildings.

While this structure, still under construction, reflects Ms. Tanawa's unique vision, it is part of a much larger phenomenon of American folk expression. Such folk environments exist all over the country, more often in rural settings than in a city. Another example of an urban site is the Watt's Towers in Los Angeles.

I spent a recent Sunday afternoon visiting Kea's Ark and was extremely impressed by the outpouring of support from a steady stream of neighborhood people. Kea Tanawa and her Ark have become compelling symbols of hope and human potential in a community that has suffered a troubled past.

I urge you to do whatever you can to stop the demolition, slated for April 13, 1987. Please encourage the city to look for a mutually satisfactory way to preserve the Ark. Its potential as a tourist attraction, a source of jobs for neighborhood children, and as a symbol of pride for the community and for the city deserves to be explored.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,



Didi Barrett  
Editor

The Clarion, America's Folk Art Magazine

cc: The Honorable Sharpe James