

April 5, 1987

Honorable Sharpe James  
Mayor  
Newark City Hall  
920 Broad Street  
Newark, NJ 07102

Dear Mayor James,

I send this letter to you as an additional plea to save the New Ark, a folk environment created by Kea Tawana in Newark.

First, let me identify myself. I am an Associate Professor of Art History at Seton Hall University; my field of specialization is American Folk Art. In addition, I am Director of the Folk Art Institute of the Museum of American Folk Art.

I feel that my background qualifies me to counsel you that to demolish a genuine folk art environment, such as the New Ark, will be destroying what well may become part of the cultural heritage of New Jersey. There are many similar folk environments in the United States, which have become cultural landmarks... Watts Tower in California and the Concrete Park in Wisconsin, to name just two. These environments are personal and touching folk places that draw thousands of people to them every year.

I know that the New Ark looks crude to persons who have not yet experienced folk art, and are accustomed to academic art. But an environment such as Kea Tawana's has meaning to so many people, who are moved by the creative expression and determination of one woman.

At least, delay the destruction of the New Ark, until an appointed panel can judge whether it should be saved.

Sincerely yours,

Barbara Kaufman-Cate