

Dear Friend:

We owe a debt of gratitude to Jim Geary; as do many people here in the Bay Area and around the world, who have benefited by his long years of service at the Shanti Project.

We also owe a debt to ourselves to speak the truth and stand up for our friend.

For the past three months, we have been in communication with many people connected with the Shanti Project, who are interested in clearing Jim Geary's name. All the accusations made against Jim Geary in the recent media smear campaign were false. We knew this in our hearts--as we are certain many of you do also--so we contacted Jim and informed him of our intentions to expose these lies.

We know that many of you will be gratified to get this letter. We asked Jim for a list of names of the people whom he considers to be his friends and associates whom he respects; people who mean something to him. Since he has included you in his list we know that he must mean something to you also.

Every person has a right to the truth. You have that right, we have that right, and certainly Jim Geary has the right to have the truth about his personal integrity and his contribution to the Shanti Project made known to the world.

We have enclosed the following documents for your information:

- I. A letter written to the Shanti Board of Directors.
- II. A letter written by Shelley Fernandez, former member of the Shanti Board of Directors, that was recently published in the Bay Area Reporter.
- III. A rebuttal to [REDACTED]'s letter.
- IV. A letter written by Carol Tocher, Chair of the Shanti Board of Directors and signed by three other members of the board. This letter is not to be published in any manner.
- V. A letter by the late Andrew Lewallen, member of the Shanti Board.

These documents will serve--each in its own way--to bring the truth to light.

The attack on Jim continues. More vicious, anonymous

letters were sent to city officials in the town where he relocated.

We have contacted several of Jim's friends and supporters. We have made a commitment to clear his name. After you have reviewed the enclosed documents; if you would like to join us--Friends of Jim Geary--in standing up for him, please let us know.

The way to make the truth known is simply to speak it.

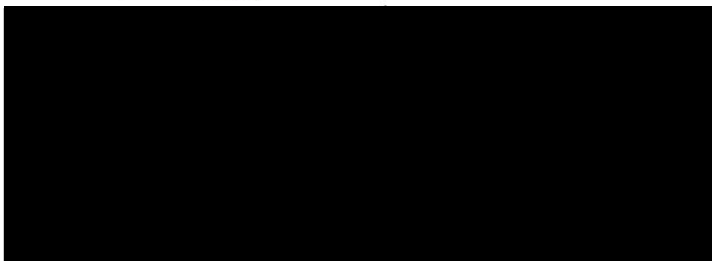
We are gathering statements of support and love from Jim's friends and associates. We plan to put these statements, together with a brief introduction, into what could be described as a verbal mosaic--a tribute to, perhaps even a portrait of--Jim Geary. This mosaic of love and truth will then be run in full-page ads in Bay Area newspapers.

If you would like to contribute your experience and vision of Jim and/or if you would like to make a cash contribution that will go towards the cost of the ads, please send your check to:

 / Geary Fund


We would like to invite you to a meeting on March 23 at 7 p.m.  At this gathering, we will offer help to people who feel they need some assistance in writing their statements of support. Also, anyone who cares to may read their statements to the group out loud--in order to get feedback for themselves on offer inspiration to others. We have a basic game plan for clearing Jim's name that we would like to share with you. We also would like to invite you to share your ideas with us at that time.

Om Shanti,

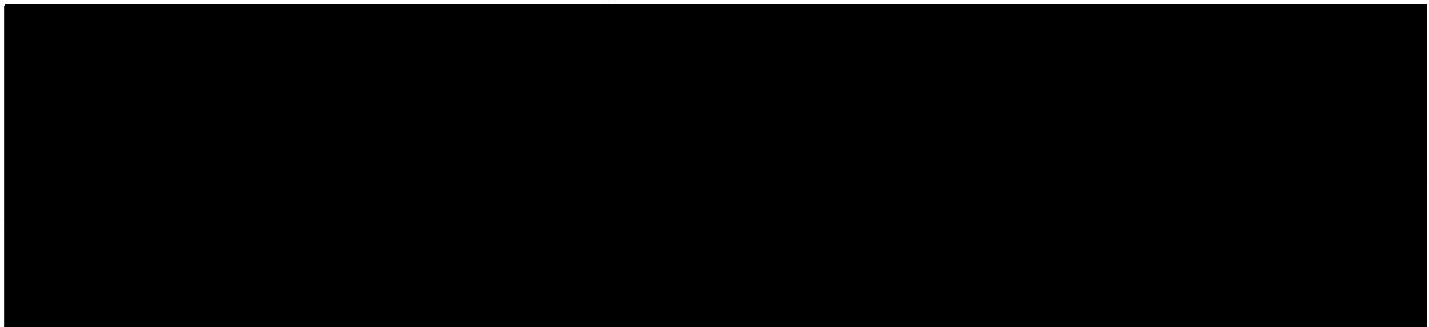


Shanti Volunteers

In releasing the following letter to a wider circle, certain quotes contained in the original letter to the board have been omitted. This was done to insure maximum protection for the individuals who were interviewed. The original and edited versions are not to be published in any manner.

The woman who wrote this letter to the board has consented to allow us to use it in our mailing. But we have decided to withhold the author's name because she is in extremely poor health and pushed herself beyond the limits of her capacity to compile this document. We feel that this is enough for anyone to contribute.

Andrew Pelfini and Randy Chelsey have been contacted and have consented to allow us to use their interviews in this mailing.



November 22, 1988

Shanti Board of Directors
Shanti Project
525 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Board Member,

I am writing this letter in defense of Jim Geary, the former Executive Director of the Shanti Project who has recently been forced to resign from his post.

I received grief counseling from the Shanti Project, before they concentrated their services exclusively on the needs of AIDS patients. Jim was my counselor. He was a great help to me; a true friend.

I had, over the years, seen all my family die. One of the most unhappy aspects of this experience was that, at the time of each loss, there was no one there to comfort me. In order to heal some of the grief I was still experiencing, I needed physical nurturing. To put it simply, I needed a shoulder to cry on. Jim Geary provided that shoulder for me. At my request, he would hold me and cuddle me like a child for hours at a time. In all that time, he never once, in word or action, did anything that could be construed as a sexual overture or as sexual harassment.

The most damaging charge leveled against Mr. Geary is sexual harassment. I know about sexual harassment and I know what it does to the victim. It is an unfortunate comment on our society that most women have experienced sexual harassment directly or have known someone close to them who has been traumatized in this way.

I am very hesitant to refute anyone's claim that they have been sexually harassed. But in this case, I do not see the incidents that the four former staff members are complaining about as grounds for this charge. I feel strongly that it is necessary to call into question the credibility and sense of fair play of people who would level such a serious and damaging a charge on so little grounds.

In one instance, Jim is accused of taking a picture of a women manager as she was getting out of bed in the morning and flashing the picture on the screen at a Shanti Christmas party. The women was wearing a modest nightgown and was partly covered

by blankets. In another instance, Jim is accused of showing the former Director of Public Relations a tattoo he has on his buttocks. In the first instance Jim did not even take that photograph. And even if he had, this strikes me as a totally innocuous bit of horse play. As to the showing of his tattoo, that was a standard joke around the Shanti office. Everyone had seen that tattoo and people who hadn't would request to see it. It was just a bit of irreverent fun. It often served as welcomed comic relief in the face of tragic situations and almost everyone at the office saw it that way. There was one other individual that came forward after the charges were made against Jim Geary and said she was not altogether comfortable with Jim showing his tattoo. After this he stopped joking around in that manner. But the showing of his tattoo was simply that, a joke made with the best of intentions and in good faith. It was appreciated as such by the rest of the staff.

I do not see that either of these incidents constitutes the kind of coercion and viciousness that is involved in sexual harassment. I see them more in the keeping with the kind of practical jokes that staff members in intensive care units and emergency rooms often play on one another. It is a give and take between equals and a way of letting off steam and coping with the stress and heartbreak of their jobs.

I also feel that charging Jim Geary with sexual harassment for showing his tattoo was rather careless on [redacted] part ([redacted] is the name of the woman in question) because several other people were present at the time Jim showed his tattoo and witnessed her reaction. They said she laughed uproariously and that she said it made her day. She never uttered a word of complaint about the incident until two years later--when her friend Bea filed charges of sexual harassment against Jim after she (Bea) had been fired.

It also seems that [redacted] is on shaky ground in her complaints against Jim. She charges Jim with sexual harassment; because her picture was shown at a Shanti staff party.

Platonic intimacy is very commonplace among people here in San Francisco--especially with counter-culture people. [redacted] was sharing a hotel room with Jim Geary and Jess Randall when they were attending an AIDS conference in Los Angeles at the time the picture was taken. By her own actions, [redacted] shows herself to be a very sophisticated woman familiar with the relaxed platonic give-and-take that is commonplace between the sexes in the Bay Area.

She strikes me as hardly the type of lady who would be humiliated by co-workers seeing a picture of her in her nightgown. If she were so modest and shy, why would she choose to share a room with Jim and Jess in the first place?

For almost three months I have been in communication with people connected with the Shanti Project.¹ I have spoken, at length, with three long-term Shanti employees, three former employees, Shanti board members, and volunteers. Every single person to whom I spoke expressed their admiration for and gratitude to Jim Geary. They said he was a person of the highest integrity and that his leadership at Shanti had greatly enriched their lives. These people were grateful for an opportunity to speak up for Jim and expressed frustration and regret that they had not had the opportunity to do so earlier.

The foremost concern on everyone's mind at the time the attacks began was to save the Shanti Project. The Shanti Board of Directors cautioned staff about making any public statements on the issue. Personally, I feel this was an error on the Board's part. I feel they would have better defended the Shanti Project by answering the charges--and in doing so, defended their Executive Director. But the Shanti Project was losing its private funding at an alarming rate and the board felt the first task at hand was to save the project. They did not want to add any fuel to the wild fire of negative publicity. I learned many truths from the people I spoke with over the last three month. I feel the time is long past due; to make these truths known:

1. The charge that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was fired because he did not succumb to an alleged sexual comment or overture by Jim Geary is false.

[REDACTED] was fired by his supervisor. Shanti has a rule against revealing why an employee was fired. So I cannot give specifics as to why he was fired. But I was told that it was for long-standing problems that he had been warned about many times and Jim Geary had nothing to do with the decision.

2. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] story that Jim Geary instructed Shanti staff members to keep lists of attractive volunteers at Shanti volunteer training sessions is also false.

I was told by long-term Shanti staff, who regularly served at those training sessions, that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] attended two or three sessions initially as a trainee. That was the only experience he ever had of Shanti Project volunteer training sessions. He was simply not invited to any other trainings because he had no business being there. He was not assigned the duty of being a member of the staff at the training sessions; it was simply not a part of his job description.

¹ This letter was sent to the board at the end of November. It has been two months since then, so I have changed the text, for the convenience of the present reader, to three months.

So although it does make good magazine copy and wonderful material for fantasy, it would have been indeed difficult for [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to receive any such instruction or witnessed anyone else receiving such instructions from Jim Geary--because [REDACTED] was not there.

I wonder, though, if the fact that these truths are so easily obtainable, might not be sufficient cause to jar Jimmer [REDACTED] and his friend, [REDACTED] [REDACTED], out of their apparent fantasy worlds.

I interviewed Randy Chelsey, Practical Support Program Coordinator, for the Shanti Project.

Q: How long have you worked at the Shanti Project?

"I am the longest term employee on staff at the present time. I have been here 5-1/2 years.

Q: In that 5-1/2 years, did you ever see or hear of any evidence of Jim Geary sexually harassing any staff members or volunteers?

"Never."

Q: What is your opinion of the charges of sexual harassment, and other charges of misconduct that have been brought against Jim Geary?

"I think they are ridiculous."

Q: What is your opinion of the charges that were made by [REDACTED] [REDACTED]?

"I feel that they are entirely untrue."

Q: During your years at the Shanti Project have you ever come into contact with [REDACTED] [REDACTED]?

"Yes, I was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] supervisor when he first started working at Shanti Project 4 years ago."

Q: In the time that you acted as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] supervisor did he ever lodge a complaint with you about any type of sexual harassment?

"No, he did not."

Q: Did he ever hint at any kind of sexual involvement between himself and Jim Geary?

"No."

Q: Did you ever see or hear anything that would indicate any kind of sexual involvement between [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and Jim

Geary?

"No, and we were a very small office at that time. Everybody knew everybody else's business."

Q: Did you know that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] cut Jim Geary's hair on a regular basis?

"Yes I did."

Q: Did you see anything improper or unusual in this arrangement?

"No, I didn't. It was a very intimate office, we were all friends pulling together to survive. That's just how we treated each other."

Q: Would you have been shocked to find out that Jim Geary and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] had exchanged a massage?

"No, that is ridiculous"

Q: Do you believe Jim Geary when he says it was a non-sexual massage?

"Yes."

Next, I interviewed [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Emotional Support Program Coordinator.

Q: How long have you been with the Shanti Project?

"Four years. One year as a volunteer and three years as an employee."

Q: Have you ever experienced any sexual harassment from Jim Geary?

"No."

Q: Have you ever seen Jim Geary sexually harass or mistreat anyone?

"No."

Q: What is your opinion of Jim Geary?

"I know him to be a person of the highest integrity."

Q: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] applied for a job at the Shanti Project nine months ago. Is that correct?

"Yes."

Q: Who is in charge of interviewing and hiring

applicants for that position?

"I was."

Q: What was the position?

"Emotional Support Volunteer Coordinator."

Q: [REDACTED] was in Minnesota at the time that he sent in a written application for the position in question. Is that correct?

"Yes, and I decided not to grant him an interview because I already had several highly qualified applicants in mind for the position, and I did not feel it was appropriate to interview him for this position."

Q: What was [REDACTED] reaction when he found that he was not granted an interview?

"In the meantime he flew out to San Francisco, where he found out he was not granted an interview. He came storming into the Shanti office, he was extremely angry and upset and demanded to know why he had not been granted an interview. I tried to explain the situation to him later by telephone but I felt he would not accept what I said to him."

Q: [REDACTED] has charged Jim Geary with sexual harassment. What is your opinion of these charges?

"I know them to be false."

Q: Did you ever see any evidence that there was sexual activity between Jim and [REDACTED]?

"No."

Q: Has anyone besides me checked with you about any of this information.

"No."

After carefully researching this matter and speaking to the aforementioned Shanti personnel, I feel that it is necessary to ask a most pertinent question. Could it be that these four former employees--each with his or her own ax to grind because they did not get what they had wanted from the Shanti Project--formed a collusion; the purpose of which was to twist the truth (and in some cases to tell out and out lies) in order to gang up on Jim Geary and destroy his reputation and his career? I leave it up to you the reader, after considering the statements made by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], whether [REDACTED] should be considered a reliable source of information in this matter. I also believe at this point I have raised serious doubt as to the

other people who have made charges against Jim Geary.

There is a pattern that emerges here. First, the only people that have accused Jim of sexual harassment are former Shanti staff members. Two of these people, [redacted] and [redacted], were fired from their jobs. [redacted], the other women, accusing Jim, took a leave of absence and never came back and [redacted] was apparently very upset with Shanti because he had not gotten the position he had applied for. The two women [redacted] and [redacted] were friends. [redacted] is a friend of [redacted] and [redacted] is also a friend of [redacted].

Although the alleged incident of harassment took place months ago in [redacted] case; two years ago in [redacted] case; and in [redacted] and [redacted] case, four years ago; not one of these people ever lodged any kind of complaint about these supposed instances (or even mention anything of the sort) until [redacted] was fired nine months ago. Could it be that, at that time, the four of them got together and set out to take vengeance on Jim Geary?

A former Shanti staff member I talked to said that [redacted] was extremely difficult to deal with because she was very easily threatened and would rewrite the truth when it suited her own purpose, especially when she felt the need to protect herself.

You, the Shanti Board of Directors, are very familiar with [redacted], her performance at Shanti and the difficulties Shanti's staff had with her.

You are also familiar with [redacted] and [redacted] and the problems they created at the Shanti Project. Your lawyer has stated that the charges of sexual harassment could not be refuted because they were a matter of one person's word against another. But I think I have shown, in the case of [redacted] complaint about Jim Geary, conclusive evidence--that the charge that he was fired because he did not succumb to supposed sexual harassment--is entirely false. This was done by simply taking the time to make two phone calls.

Also I have shown that [redacted] charge that Jim Geary instructed him [redacted] and other staff to keep lists of attractive volunteers at training sessions is entirely false. Staff members, who were on duty regularly, at those sessions state clearly: (1) Jim Geary never gave any instructions of that kind. (2) [redacted] did not attend those training sessions.

As to [redacted] and [redacted] claims to sexual harassment I have refuted them by simply taking a common sense approach to the matter. People have a sense of fair play--especially here in San Francisco--people are not particularly prudish. If these charges had been addressed calmly before the situation had had a chance to escalate, it could have easily been made clear to the public, that these were just incidents of harmless fun, that were in keeping with the kind of humor, that many office staff engage in. This was a healthy way of bringing some lightness and healing

into what was (and is) often a heart breaking job.

The charge that Jim showing his tattoo was sexual harassment is particularly unfair, considering that Shanti Board members themselves engaged in this humor and encouraged it. Often at the end of training sessions Shanti Board members would ask Jim Geary to show his tattoo to the group. He would do so and receive a round of hearty applause. The Shanti Board members request to Jim Geary was witnessed by many hundreds of people over the years.

So far the Shanti board of directors has side-stepped the issue of Jim Geary's having been accused of sexual harassment. While it is true that refusing to give credence to false accusations and smear campaigns by refusing to respond to them; is a time-honored method that decent people often take in the face of dirty dealings; this tactic has not worked in this case. I feel it is necessary to call for stronger measures. I am well aware of how important it is to remain decent and to refuse to sink to the level of the attackers. I know that the Shanti Board of Directors have been handling the situation with the best of intentions. But because of the viciousness, the careful orchestration, and the continuance of the attack on Jim Geary, I am compelled at this time, to ask you to take a more assertive role in his defense. To ignore a bullying attack is a good first line of defense. But if the attack continues, and becomes more vicious, it necessary to take steps to stop it.

I feel a responsibility to defend my friend. I have to face my own conscience in this matter. I do not believe that conscience comes from guilt. I believe that true conscience comes from compassion not only for others but for ourselves. In order to take care of myself, my own emotional and most importantly my spiritual well being, I believe it is necessary that I face my responsibility in this matter.

I have been haunted recently by a reading I heard on the radio from a novel, a work in progress, entitled **The Curse**. The author, is writing a book as a way of reconciling himself to the loss of his leg. He lost his leg because he stopped on the freeway to help some people who had had an accident. They were in terrible trouble and the other drivers were driving by and ignoring them. He was hit when he tried to stop, and he lost his leg as a result.

In the book a middle aged man is tending bar, when five thugs gang rape a young women, who comes into the bar to buy a pack of cigarettes. She calls out to the man to help her, but because he is there alone and does not feel he is a match for five young men, he does nothing. Later he is told by everyone including his teen-age son, his boss, his girlfriend, and all the customers that come into the bar, that he was right to do what he did. That he could not have stopped the rape and that he would have been injured or perhaps even killed if he had tried. But all night a different knowledge is gnawing at his heart. Finally he

knows the truth. It comes to him like a force flung through the air. He knows that even if he were lying, broken to pieces in the hospital or dead, as a result of his efforts he should have tried to stop the rape. He was there, she cried out to him, and he did nothing. The following is a paraphrase from the end of the book.....

He saw the five suntanned young men and the girl held down on the floor. He heard her screams for help. Then the screams stopped, and finally he heard the weeping and weeping and weeping. And it came to him as a force flung through the air. He felt he should kneel down to receive it. It was her curse.....

I hope that now my position in this matter is clear. My friend Jim Geary, has been raped. The attack was not physical; the attack was on his psyche. But it was a rape nonetheless, a brutal rape and it will continue unless it is stopped. There have been continued threats and Jim has been informed that a damaging letter has been sent to the Chamber of Commerce of the town to which he is planning to relocate. I can not stand by and watch this and do nothing. I have my own conscience to live with in this matter.

██████████, has expressed similar feelings. When she stated her reasons for speaking up for Jim Geary, she said, "I used to work in a shelter for battered women. I worked with women who had been raped and beaten. I made a decision, at that time, that I was not going to be one of those people who stood by and did nothing while someone was being hurt. I know that I need to do what is right; no matter what the consequences."

The purpose of this letter is to give the Shanti Board of Directors a chance to take effective action to clear Jim Geary's name and reputation. While it is true that John Salazar--the lawyer representing the Shanti Board--issued a statement clearing Mr. Geary of some charges leveled against him during the October 4 press conference, I do not consider that effective action because the statement was largely ignored by the press, received no television coverage what so ever, and the statement did not address the charge of sexual harassment.

Jim's decision to resign was based on an agreement with the Shanti Board of Directors; that it was in the best interest of the Shanti Project that he resign--not because of any wrong doing on his part--but because of the bad publicity that was descending on the Shanti Project which was greatly effecting Shanti's ability to get funding. Because of Jim's deep commitment to the Project, he was willing to be in agreement with the Shanti Board of Directors and was willing to resign. As a part of this carefully negotiated agreement; the Shanti Board and its lawyer assured Mr. Geary and his lawyer that they would issue a statement at the press conference clearing him of many of the charges. But, as I have already pointed out, that statement received little attention and no TV coverage. Also as far as the

damage to Mr. Geary's reputation is concerned--to issue a statement clearing him of many of the charges but refusing to clear him of the charge of sexual harassment was, in the eyes of the public, the same as saying he was guilty of the charge. What the public did not realize is that the Shanti Board of Directors refused to clear Jim Geary of the charge of sexual harassment--not because of any evidence wrong doing on his part--but because they simply refused to deal with the charge.

I realize that addressing the charge of sexual harassment is embarrassing; that is precisely these people were able to use it so effectively against Jim Geary and the Shanti Project. But I feel that the Shanti Board of Directors is under a moral obligation to clear Mr. Geary of all the charges brought against him, including the charge of sexual harassment for the following reasons:

I. The San Francisco Human Rights Commission cleared Mr. Geary of the charge of discrimination against women and minorities.

II. As has already been pointed out in this document--the Shanti Board and its lawyer already made a formal agreement with Mr. Geary and his lawyer that they would call a press conference and issue a positive statement which would clear him of many of these unfounded charges at the time he announced his resignation.

III. Although this directive was ignored by two present Shanti staff members, who joined in the attack on Mr. Geary, in an inaccurate article in San Francisco magazine, the Shanti Board of Directors issued instructions warning the present Shanti Project staff about making any statements to the press concerning Jim Geary's case. In doing so they made it impossible for Mr. Geary to defend himself. How else could a man accused of dishonesty, racism, unfair treatment and sexual harassment by former employees defend himself except with statements of support from the people who knew the truth, i.e.. long term Shanti staff members who were employed at the time the alleged wrong doing took place?

I am well aware of the fact that Jim Geary does have supporters on the Shanti Board of Directors. These people have held their positions for many years. And unlike the newer members of the Board; they have known Jim and they are in a better position to handle this situation. These people have been working quietly behind the scenes to get something done on his behalf. I am also aware there are other members of the board--who felt it was unwise to attempt to disprove the charge of sexual harassment because they felt it would simply add to the false accusations and publicity--who are also very supportive of Jim.

Jim also has many supporters in the Bay Area. It is our plan to put out a call for statements of support to other people

in the community who know and love Jim Geary. This list will include Shanti staff, volunteers, and board members. It is not necessary to repeat the lies or rehash the scandal to bring the truth to light. The best way to make the truth known is to tell it.

Jim Geary is a person who can always be depended on for his sincerity, decency, and integrity. There are so many people who know that; people who called his lawyer to express their support for and their anguish at not knowing what to do to help him. Several of us, Jim's friends, are now organizing a truth campaign on his behalf. We plan to put many diverse statements into a full page ad that will be run in Bay Area newspapers. All statements will be totally positive in nature; statements affirming Jim's honesty, his insistence on equal opportunity hiring, the respect with which he treated Shanti employees, clients and volunteers. This add will be a long awaited opportunity for people who know Jim, who have benefited from his friendship and kindness, to stand up for him and tell the truth about him, in their own words.

We invite you to join us.

Please remember to make your statements totally positive in nature. Perhaps it would be useful to think about things Jim has done that showed his honesty, fairness and concern. Let your statements come out of your experience of Jim. If specific examples come to you, you might want to use them. For instance--one friend and co-worker spoke of how impressed he was with the forthright, "up-front", way Jim would address the issue of sexual feelings when he was conducting Shanti volunteer training sessions. This person said Jim was always very honest and careful to explain that sexual feelings do arise between people sometimes; when they are in close nurturing contact with each other. Jim would make it very clear that they must handle themselves with integrity; they must recognize and refrain from acting on those feelings.

This recollection from Jim's friend and employee would make an excellent statement of support.

Former Shanti Client

[REDACTED]
December 19, 1988

To whom it may concern:

This letter is to testify that Jim Geary served as the Executive Director of Shanti Project from the spring of 1982 until October 15, 1988. During that six and a half year period, Mr. Geary guided the organization from a small non-profit corporation providing support services for the terminally ill to a world-renowned organization that pioneered in supporting People With AIDS and their loved ones. In those six and a half years, Mr. Geary received many honors for his vision and dedication, and the Shanti Board of Directors has publicly acknowledged Mr. Geary's many contributions to the AIDS community.

In March of 1988, the San Francisco Human Rights Commission filed a complaint against Shanti Project charging discrimination against women and minorities. What followed provided a field day for the press. A vicious anonymous letter was widely circulated to Shanti staff, volunteers, and the press, charging Mr. Geary with a wide variety of misdeeds. The press responded without checking the veracity of the many allegations; their reports contained many misleading and fallacious statements. The resulting hysteria was largely due to the irresponsibility of the press and the gullibility of the public.

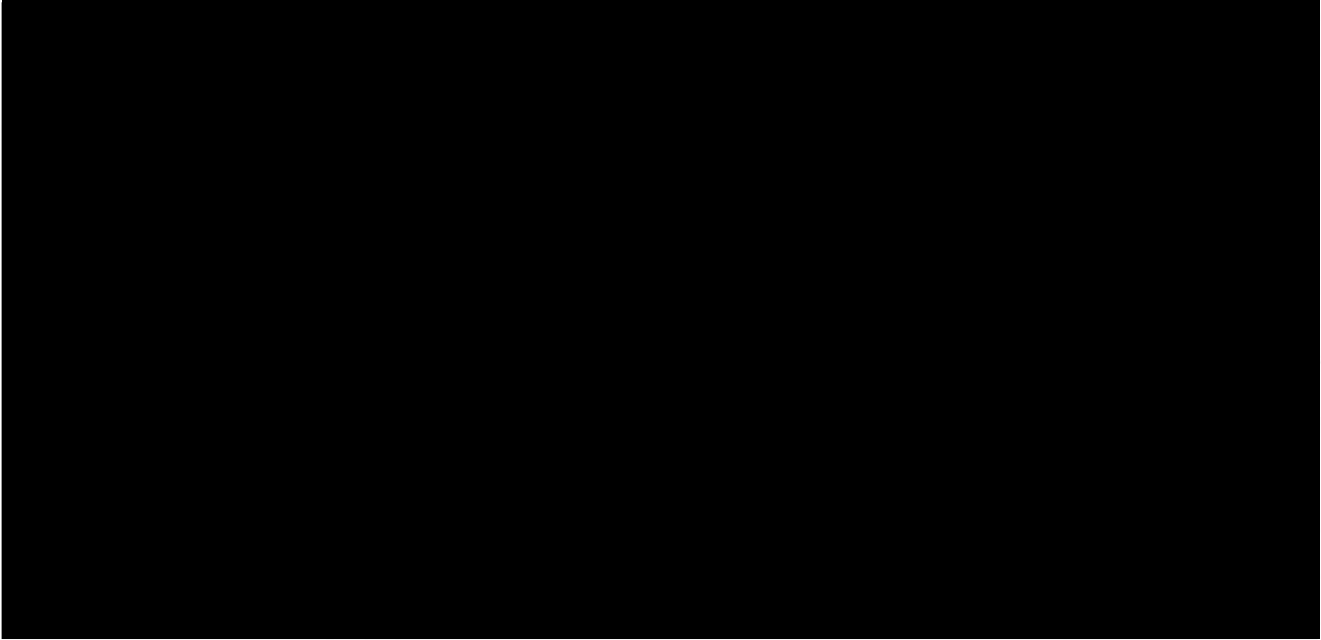
I believe that Mr. Geary was a victim of an organized attack to discredit him and his work. The campaign to smear Mr. Geary was thorough. The force to remove Mr. Geary developed a life of its own within the community. The community became a mob; the mob wanted blood; and nothing but Mr. Geary's removal would satisfy the mob. Finally, Jim Geary resigned from Shanti Project, making it possible for the organization he had nurtured for so long to continue offering much-needed services to People With AIDS and their loved ones.

It is my belief that Jim Geary always acted in the best interests of Shanti Project. I never witnessed any example of sexual harassment or discrimination coming from Mr. Geary, nor did I ever hear a complaint of such from a member of the staff. To the contrary, Mr. Geary was especially dedicated to the principles of equal employment in our hiring policies and in racial and gender parity in all levels of the Project, including staff, volunteers, clients, and the Board of Directors.

I have written this letter as a personal statement. I have been associated with Shanti Project since July of 1982. I have held a position on the Board of Directors since December of 1982. I am now the Chair of the Board of Directors and have held that position for five years. I have until very recently served as Chair

of the Board's Personnel Committee and in that capacity have helped to evaluate Mr. Geary's performance for the past five years.

It seems that the attack against Mr. Geary continues, even though he is no longer the executive director. I hope this letter will clarify any stories that may have come to your attention. Several Board members have added their signatures in support of the fore-going statements. Please contact me if you have further questions.



More On Shanti

Since I was voted off Jim Geary's board of directors at the Shanti Project last May, many unfortunate things have happened to this once fine agency. But the one thing that never seems to happen at Shanti is a clean up of Geary's old board of directors. Yes, there is a turn over of board members. [redacted] and [redacted] are leaving but they are probably being replaced by handpicked clones who are no more likely to raise questions about the way business is done at Shanti than their predecessors were.

What's wrong with business as it is done at Shanti? Nothing if you agree with the \$73,000 pay off of Jim Geary that this board ok'd. And in case anyone has forgotten, this board allowed Jim Geary to hire his lover (Jess Randall) as Shanti's finance director, and his other housemate ([redacted]) as Shanti's counseling coordinator.

This board approved thousands of dollars to soundproof Geary's office and when the Human Rights Commission began its investigation this board agreed to a \$3,000 de-bugging operation at the agency. And it was this board that voted Geary his 40 percent pay raise last January.

When a casual look at Shanti's budget apparently shows that 60 cents of every dollar coming into Shanti goes to employee salaries and that too doesn't raise the hackles of this board then it is no wonder that the community doesn't contribute to Shanti to the same extent that it once did. Of course, given all of this it also is no wonder that Shanti isn't able to house more than 40 PWA's with its \$3-million annual budget.

Shanti is a soul-less agency, more concerned with the salaries and perks of its employees than it ever has been about PWA's. Its city contract should be given to a more cost-effective agency like the AIDS Emergency Fund or C.U.R.A.S. (Community United Response Against AIDS) a Latino organization that is fighting for all people infected with AIDS in the Hispanic community. Barring that, the city should insist on independent members from all sectors of the community, gay, lesbian, non-gay, women and minority, being appointed to the Shanti board.

But apparently the city isn't interested in looking into the Shanti scam.

Dr. Shelley Fernandez
San Francisco



[REDACTED]

SOME COMMENTS ON SHANTI

I am writing this article as a long overdue rebuttal to [REDACTED]' latest attack on Jim Geary and the Shanti Project that was recently published in the Bay Area Reporter. I have been a Shanti volunteer for the last six years in the capacity of an Emotional Support Volunteer and also in the capacity of a Practical Support Volunteer. Jim Geary is an extremely unselfish, honest person and I will always be grateful to Jim and to Shanti for being there for me and my clients.

Jim Geary and Shanti were providing a range of services and support long before concern for the plight of persons with AIDS had become fashionable. In fact, as everyone is well aware, the initial response to the AIDS epidemic on the part of the community was often apathetic or openly hostile.

When I heard about the charges that were being levelled against Jim Geary, I was appalled at the injustice and viciousness of these cowardly attacks. I have talked to many people in the community who felt as I did, but they seemed to be at a loss to know what effective course of action to take without simply adding fuel to the already sensationalized media attention focused on the Shanti Project.

Now that the hysteria caused by the attacks on Mr. Geary and the Shanti Project has died down, I feel the time is long past due to speak out.

I would like to address some of the points [REDACTED] attempted to make in her letter.

1) [REDACTED]'s assertion that Shanti, which has an annual budget of three million dollars, is only able to house 40 PWAs, would perhaps be valid if the Residential Program with its 47 beds was the only service Shanti provides to the community. The truth is that the Residential Program - which has been recognized as a model of low cost and cost effective housing for PWAs and actually serves approximately 100 PWAs per year - is one of several ongoing programs at the Shanti Project. [REDACTED], who was on the Shanti Board of Directors, is well aware of the services Shanti provides. These include:

- A) The Emotional Support Program which is responsible for the training and supervision of 300 volunteers who work as emotional support counsellors for PWAs and loved ones.
- B) There are also 20 support groups that are run or supervised by Shanti staff for the loved ones of PWAs and PWAs.
- C) The Practical Support Program which trains and supervises 200 volunteers who go to the homes of PWAs and help with the daily tasks of cooking, shopping, and housekeeping, etc.
- D) The San Francisco General Counselling Program which consists of 10 paid counsellors who work seven days a week, twelve hours a day, with PWAs at San Francisco General Hospital.
- E) There are two paid van drivers who work full time providing transportation for Shanti clients.
- F) The PWAs Recreational Program provides much needed outings and entertainment to Shanti clients.
- G) Shanti handles extensive information and referral calls on a daily basis.
- H) The Shanti Project has a Public Education Department that does outreach to the community.

2) [REDACTED] criticizes the Shanti Project because she asserts that 60 cents of every dollar goes to employees' salaries. I don't know if [REDACTED]' figures are correct and from the way she words her allegation, I suspect she may not know either. But considering that the Shanti Project's primary function is the training and supervision of volunteers who work with PWAs, it seems to me that paying 60% of its budget to employees who carry out that training and supervision not only appropriate; it is rather sensible.

3) [REDACTED] refers to the 73,000 settlement Jim Geary received when he resigned from the Shanti Project as a payoff. Considering that Jim Geary worked as a staff of one for a year without pay; sleeping on the Shanti Project Office floor and living on unemployment benefits in order to get the programs that ministered to the needs of PWAs started; considering his years of dedication and inspired leadership to the Shanti Project and considering the public humiliation he was subjected to in his last months at Shanti; the settlement, which was a little less than one years salary, was certainly the least that could have been done on his behalf under the circumstances.

4) [REDACTED] brings up the Human Rights Commission investigation of the Shanti Project but fails to include the fact that the Human Rights Commission cleared Jim Geary and the Shanti Project of all charges of discrimination against women and minorities (which were by the way, the only charges they were addressing in their investigation).

5) [REDACTED] attacks the Shanti Board of Directors for allowing Jim Geary to hire his lover Jess Randall as the Project's Finance Director and his other housemate [REDACTED] as Shanti's counselling coordinator. Jess was a Shanti volunteer at the time he was hired as the Finance Director of the Project. When the position of Finance Director opened; the information was made available to all the Shanti volunteers. Jess Randall had five years previous experience as the Finance Director at another nonprofit agency. He decided to apply for the position that had opened at Shanti because he felt he would be of service to Shanti in this position.

Jim Geary felt that because Jess had submitted an application it would be better if someone else handled the hiring for that position. So he turned the task over to [REDACTED]. Sam hired Jess because Jess was, by far, the most qualified applicant. Sam has been extremely pleased with Jess's performance as Finance Director. He told me Jess had "gotten them out of the dark ages" and on to an efficient computer system.

At the time Jess was hired Shanti had grown from a staff of one, to a staff of three. This was long before the cause of AIDS had become fashionable. The general public was often apathetic or openly hostile. Violence against Gays had accelerated and people

with AIDS were literally being thrown out on the streets by hysterical landlords and roommates. Jess started out at a salary of \$5.00 an hour and worked with the same untiring dedication he had as a volunteer. These are hardly actions of a man trying to cash in on a cushy job.

██████ had been an employee at the Shanti Project for two years when she became roommates with Jim and Jess. ██████ had a small son and Jim and Jess loved children and wanted to help ██████ raise her son. All the staff at the Shanti Project were very close; that was what enabled them to survive the heartbreak of the AIDS epidemic. It was also this loving atmosphere that made Shanti so effective in ministering to the needs of its clients.

6) ██████ starts out her letter by making some disparaging remarks about the Shanti Board of Directors. She mentions that the Chair and the President of the Board are leaving (which is true, because their terms of office have expired). Both the President and the Chair of the Board have given many years of service to the Shanti Project. But while ██████ blithely comments, "Yes, there is a turn over of board members," as she then launches her attack; she fails to acknowledge that part of this "turn over" is due to the loss of ██████ and ██████. Both ██████ and ██████ were long time Shanti Board Members who died this last December 1988 of AIDS.

It seems to me that to fail to acknowledge their deaths is insensitive and inappropriate for someone who then goes on to attack the Shanti Project for its supposed lack of concern for persons with AIDS.

██████ asserts that "Shanti is a soul-less agency, more concerned with the salaries and perks of its employess than it has ever been about PWAs." She says the Shanti city contract should be given to antoher agency and calls the Shanti Project a scam.

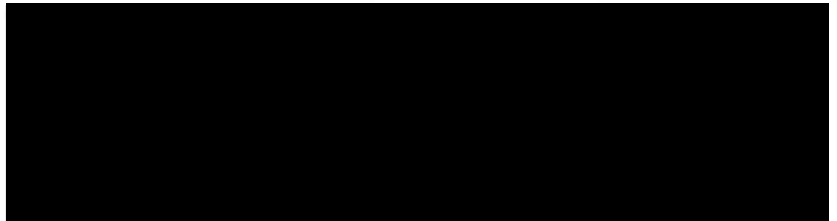
The recurring theme that has run through all the conversations I have had with the people connected with Shanti (including my conversations with Jim Geary) has been a concern for and protectiveness towards the persons with AIDS that Shanti serves. I think about the 1200 clients that are currently depending on Shanti for emotional support, for meals and housekeeping, for transportation, for social gatherings where they are welcomed and respected. For some of these clients, the volunteers from the Shanti Project are the only real support and contact that they have in the world. These continued attacks and demands that Shanti be denied its city contract must be stressful for the people who depend on and have grown to love the volunteers who care for them. What if Shanti did lose its city contract? Would there be services available for these people? Even if there were enough services, the resultant upheaval would be disruptive and heartbreaking for the clients who depend on Shanti support groups and for whom Shanti volunteers have become an integral part of their lives (and in some cases the only real family they have).

These continued attacks on the Shanti Project, are also attacks against Shanti clients, the people who wait, right now, for the sound of welcome steps on the stairs. I wonder how much longer the community will allow these assaults to go unchallenged.

The Shanti Project was Jim Geary's labor of love; it was almost a child to him. He resigned from his post as Executive Director rather than allow the Project to be harmed. I am reminded of the Biblical story of King Solomon who was presented with the problem of discerning the truth when two women both claimed to be the mother of the same child. One woman had taken her baby to bed with her and carelessly rolled on it and killed it in the night. She refused to take responsibility for her own actions that had caused her child's death and blindly and vengefully tried to steal her neighbor's child. King Solomon decreed that the living child be cut in half and a half given to each woman. The false mother agreed to the solution; it would at least appease her jealousy. The true mother begged King Solomon to give the child to the other woman in order to save its life. She was willing to sacrifice anything, her own happiness, her own pride, to protect the child from harm.

By her own actions, each participant in the ancient drama helped to bring the truth to light.

Perhaps there is a lesson in this little story for Ms. Fernandez.



NOTE: I AM SUBMITTING THIS
TO THE PRESS ON MARCH 18TH
COULD YOU PLEASE WATCH FOR
IT AND RESPOND WITH LETTER
TO THE EDITOR?

THANKS

Z

Dear Jim,

It is so healing to be up here at this time. There are so many loving spirits and memories at this place.

I just came inside from sitting alone (except for those spirits) by the pool, where I looked at the empty deck chairs sitting in the spot where you & I exchanged crystals years ago. And I saw you in my mind as you were with that rainbow crystal last Friday.

My heart is both broken and full.

I try to remain focussed on the archetype of the Wounded Healer and pray that you, I, and Shanti will discover a greater, more powerful life through this deep injury.

But I often feel inadequate. What might I have done differently? If I had not been so weakened these past months by AIDS and insufficient adrenalin, might I have acted my part differently?

And I rage. I rage at human stupidity and vindictiveness. So much is beyond our control.

Actually, a lot of what you said last Friday in terms of how the Board might publicly address these issues - a lot of that was what I did say when I chose (against general advice) to allow Tim Kingston to interview me for Coming Up! last spring. But he only included the parts about dental dams and Allen Pugh. That experience greatly dismayed me. Grrrrrrr....

When things calm down I hope to get a detailed account of my perspective published. I am not ignoring the responsibilities each of us bears in this whole mess. But whatever, it is shameful and disgraceful what you have had to endure in the media.

Jim, I realized a couple of weeks ago that you have more to do with who I am today than anyone else in my life.

There are no words to express my love and gratitude.

That heart space will always remain connected to you.

Wherever we go from here, let us remain as friends.

My heart sunk when you mentioned an option of leaving S.F. Selfishly, my first thought was to wonder if you would return to participate in my memorial service/celebration. (A while away, I hope.) Then I realized I'd included you in my ^{written} plans but not yet asked you. I will.

I'm concerned about you and want to be there in any way you need. (I have the energy now with my adrenalin problem corrected.) It does feel awkward because of the varying "hats" I wear and because during this time your relationship with the Project remains unsettled.

Do know my love and respect for you remain in my heart while I live and will continue afterwards in this spot, atop the Wildwood mountain, within the starry sky.

