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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: *The Black Jew Dialogues*

I am the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Education & Enforcement in the Office of the Attorney General for the State of Maine. One of the most important aspects of my job is that of Director of the Civil Rights Team Project (CRTP). The CRTP is a student-led effort in schools throughout the State of Maine designed to reduce bias-motivated behaviors and to ensure that all students receive an education in an environment where they feel safe, valued, welcome and respected. The CRTP currently has civil rights teams in over 220 elementary, middle and high schools in all portions of Maine.

As part of my work, I am always looking for different ways to engage students and adults in confronting and combating racism and stereotypes. In October 2008, I was invited by a civil rights team from Old Town High School to see a performance called *The Black Jew Dialogues*. Both the student members and the faculty advisors for that civil rights team had seen this show before and promised me that it would be worth my while to drive two hours on a Thursday night to see it. I was not disappointed.

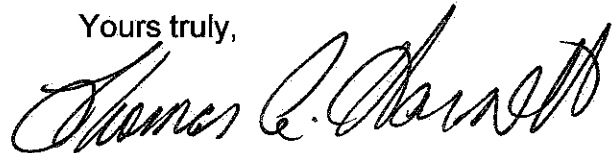
Prior to the show, I had the chance to talk with the two performers that make up *The Black Jew Dialogues*, Larry Jay Tish and Ron Jones. I spoke with them about the work of the CRTP and they spoke to me about what they hoped to accomplish with their show. From the initial meeting, I knew that I would be collaborating with them in some way in the future. The performance that I saw tackled very serious issues but did so with humor. Larry & Ron are gifted actors and writers but more importantly they are expert in engaging their audience and discussing the ugliness of racism, stereotypes and just plain meanness. The discussion after the performance was thought provoking and lasted almost as long as the show itself.

After seeing this performance, I had to find a way to make this important work available to a much larger audience. Therefore, I worked with Larry & Ron, as the State of Maine was going through some difficult budgetary times, to see if they could perform at our Statewide Civil Rights Team Conference in Augusta, Maine. I am happy to say that we were able to do so and *The Black Jew Dialogues* was put on as two workshops at a conference attended by over 1,000 students from civil rights team from around the state on May 18, 2009. Because of the subject matter and the way it is presented, only students from the 8th grade up were able to attend *The Black Jew Dialogues*. Many students took advantage of that opportunity and both performances were full. The feedback that we received from the students, faculty advisors and community members that attended *The Black Jew Dialogues* workshops were enthusiastic and positive. More than a few faculty advisors asked me how they could contact Ron & Larry to see if they could bring their show to their school or community.

Obviously my initial instinct that this was an important show and needed to be seen by students in Maine and elsewhere was on the mark. I am happy to recommend Ron & Larry and *The Black Jew Dialogues*. It is an important and worthwhile play to bring into schools and communities and can help start a discussion that could lead to greater safety for and understanding of all students, faculty and community members.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (207) 626-8897.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas A. Harnett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "H".

Thomas A. Harnett
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Education & Enforcement &
Director of the Civil Rights Team Project