



The Collaborative Response Team

June 2, 2020

Sat Nam Dear Members of our 3HO, Sikh Dharma, and KRI Community,

An Olive Branch is working hard to complete its investigation of alleged misconduct by Yogi Bhajan and to present a report to the Siri Singh Sahib Corporation (SSSC) by the end of June or, more likely, in July. It has been contacted by close to 300 people who have shared information about the allegations, performed nearly 100 interviews with people both supporting and refuting the allegations, and evaluated available facts and viewpoints regarding motive and consistency of statements made. In this difficult time for our community, we will continue to provide you with clear and accurate information about the investigation and address concerns that have been raised about the process.

We would like to share with you some information important to the current dialogue occurring within our community:

Addressing the allegations of misconduct by Yogi Bhajan openly and honestly is critical. As a spiritual community that teaches and connects with thousands of people all over the world, we are committed to truth and righteous action, and secrecy and covering up serious issues raised about the history of our leadership is not in alignment with our principles. It is our duty to maintain the trust that people have in our organizations and the teachings that have been built up over decades. Therefore, we are dealing with these allegations by having them investigated independently. By adopting such an approach, without bias or limitation, and releasing a complete report of the findings, all those whose lives have been enriched by the teachings can learn about all the reported information surrounding the issues and can consider for themselves the conclusions reached by a neutral fact-finder.

All efforts are being made to ensure that Yogi Bhajan is defended in the investigation directly by his students who knew him well. Concerns have been expressed that Yogi Bhajan has not been adequately represented because he is deceased and therefore cannot defend himself. All efforts have been made through the investigative process to ensure that his voice is heard through his students and family. At least 120 people have reported to An Olive Branch on Yogi Bhajan's behalf. To date, An Olive Branch has conducted more than 50 interviews specifically to explore his defense. In addition, An Olive Branch has received and reviewed numerous written statements in support of Yogi Bhajan, and those statements have been studied and made part of the record. Information about the motivations and factual consistency of the allegations has been provided to and assessed by the investigators through questioning, fact-finding and analysis.

The Collaborative Response Team (CRT) provided An Olive Branch with the names of over 100 individuals to be interviewed over the course of the investigation. These were people who spent

extensive time in close proximity with Yogi Bhanan and were therefore likely to have information about the circumstances surrounding the allegations. This list includes anyone named in any allegation as well as those in his family, household, staff and personal environment. To our knowledge, anyone from this list who agreed to participate has been questioned about the veracity of claims made and circumstances described. The investigators want to get to the truth of what happened and are doing everything possible to accomplish that goal.

All reporters of harm are required to identify themselves to An Olive Branch, and their identities have been confirmed through various methods. Anonymous allegations are not being accepted in this investigation. However, to make people feel safe in coming forward and to protect those who are reporting harm from direct public attack, the identity of reporters, while known to An Olive Branch, will not be released to the public. Should a reporter choose to make their identity public, now or in the future, that is their choice alone.

As stated in a previous letter and in our FAQ, the reporters of alleged harm by Yogi Bhanan are *“members of his staff, secretaries and other women who were close to him”* at some time over a period spanning more than 30 years. Several reporters have made their statements publicly, which are available for anyone to review. Anyone who had comments on the motives or credibility of this group of reporters have been encouraged, over the past 60 days, to provide this information to An Olive Branch for consideration, and many have done so.

As previously stated, the path taken by the CRT is: acknowledge the allegations, investigate, act promptly, communicate often, and ensure safety of all parties. Responding to whistleblower reports and reports of harm occurs frequently within all different types of institutions today. Following this approach enables an organization to build trust and discover facts that can be shared and assessed by their constituents. For more details about why we chose this path, [please visit our website](#).

It must be understood that the practices for a criminal investigation are not applicable to our circumstances as this is not a criminal or a civil legal investigation. Testimony cannot be compelled or received under oath and documents cannot be demanded under subpoena. The purpose of this inquiry is to get at as much relevant information as possible and to communicate that information to all constituents so that they can learn what is being reported about our history and let that guide future action.

The CRT has had very little direct contact with An Olive Branch, ensuring the investigators operate independently. After the initial communication to establish the investigation, the CRT has had little communication with An Olive Branch. Interactions have been limited to receiving statistical information regarding the number of contacts received by An Olive Branch and to providing An Olive Branch with names and contact information of potential witnesses.

An Olive Branch has had comprehensive access to social media posts about the allegations. Since the beginning of the investigations, the CRT has reviewed a daily collection of public social media postings relevant to the matters under investigation. An Olive Branch has also been provided with social media postings that are relevant to the allegations or defenses to them. They have read and assessed them all. However, An Olive Branch is unrestricted in their approach to the inquiry and is free to follow any information trail it sees fit. No effort has been made to use deceptive tactics to obtain private social media posts, which would be considered unethical.

Based on reports received and all that we have learned, CRT has full faith in the qualifications of An Olive Branch and the quality of its work. Investigators are not mind readers and must work hard to hear and reach out to witnesses from all sides of the allegations. That work is necessary in order to find as many relevant facts as possible and assess those facts critically and analytically. An Olive Branch is doing just that in this large investigation encompassing nearly 300 reports and 100 interviews, many lengthy

and extensive.

Because of its experience dealing with spiritual communities facing situations like ours, An Olive Branch comes well qualified to serve the needs of this inquiry. The three investigators from An Olive Branch who are working on this project are all founding members, co-directors and certified mediators. Together, they have advised and counseled 25 organizations experiencing allegations of ethical misconduct *by a spiritual leader*. An Olive Branch has performed five projects for Buddhist organizations (this is relevant because those organizations have many similarities to our own). Of these five projects, two were independent investigations (similar to this one), which included interviewing students who reported harm and receiving testimony from supporters of their teacher and rebuttal witnesses. An Olive Branch is following a similar process in our investigation. Its prior work gives An Olive Branch valuable experience in investigating the difficult issues associated with sexual misconduct *in a spiritual community*, which has unique aspects that the corporate world does not. An Olive Branch is skilled at critical listening and probing interview tactics, while being sensitive to both those who are reporting harm and to those defending the accused.

To all people of our communities, we affirm our strong bond of shared values and caring for each other. We understand how difficult this process is for everyone and respectfully consider every point of view and criticism being expressed. Above all, we retain confidence in our collective ability to face this challenge. Please visit the CRT website often for accurate and timely information as we seek truth and move together towards understanding and unity.

Collaborative Response Team

ssscresponseteam.org

To opt in to receive CRT updates emailed to you directly, send your request to crt@ssscorp.org.

