

**SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
COUNTY OF SULLIVAN**

**JANE DOE, JOAN BRIDGES, AND  
KATHERINE STERN, INDIVIDUALS,**

Plaintiffs,

v.

**SYDA FOUNDATION, A NEW YORK NOT-FOR-  
PROFIT CORPORATION,**

Defendant.

Index # E2023-1840

**COMPLAINT AND DEMAND  
FOR JURY TRIAL**

Through their attorneys, Plaintiffs Jane Doe,<sup>1</sup> Joan Bridges, and Katherine Stern (“Plaintiffs”) allege as follows against Defendant SYDA Foundation, Inc. (“Defendant” or “SYDA”).

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Swami Muktananda (“Muktananda”) was a meditation teacher and self-proclaimed spiritual leader. He used his position as “guru” and leader of SYDA to sexually abuse, assault, and rape numerous women and girls over the course of at least five years.

2. Plaintiffs were sexually abused and raped by Muktananda in New York between 1980 and 1981. This is a revival action brought pursuant to the Adults Survivors Act, New York Civil Practice Laws and Rules (“CPLR”) section 214-j.

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<sup>1</sup> Plaintiff Jane Doe has moved to proceed anonymously by Order to Show Cause pursuant to CPLR § 6301 with the accompanying Affidavit of Jane Doe, sworn to on November 16, 2023 and the exhibits annexed thereto; the Affidavit of Margaret S. Powers, sworn to on November 16, 2023; the Affirmation of John F. O. McAllister, affirmed November 22, 2023; and the Memorandum of Law in support thereof.

**PARTIES, JURISDICTION, AND VENUE**

3. Plaintiff Doe is an adult woman who resides in Middlesex County, Connecticut.
4. Plaintiff Bridges is an adult woman who resides in Clark County, Nevada.
5. Plaintiff Stern is an adult woman who resides in Ulster County, New York.
6. Defendant SYDA is a New York not-for-profit organization incorporated in or around 1974. SYDA is headquartered at the Shree Muktananda Ashram in South Fallsburg, New York (the “South Fallsburg Ashram”).
7. SYDA has another location in New York State at the Siddha Yoga Ashram at 324 West 86th Street, New York, New York (the “Manhattan Ashram”).
8. At all times relevant and material hereto, SYDA owned, operated, maintained, controlled, funded, and/or staffed the South Fallsburg Ashram.
9. On information and belief, SYDA has been managed since its founding by a board of trustees (collectively, the “Trustees”). Muktananda was, at all times relevant and material hereto, the leader of SYDA until his death in 1982. At all times relevant and material hereto, Muktananda was an agent, employee, representative, designee, and/or otherwise affiliated with SYDA.
10. Malti Shetty, later known as Gurumayi Swami Chidvilasananda (“Gurumayi”), assisted Muktananda with the leadership of SYDA until 1982, when she took over as leader. At all times relevant and material hereto, Gurumayi was an agent, employee, representative, designee, and/or otherwise affiliated with SYDA.
11. Personal jurisdiction lies over Defendant as it is present and domiciled in New York.
12. This Court has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to CPLR § 301.
13. Venue is proper in Sullivan County because a substantial part of the events giving rise to the claims occurred in Sullivan County.

## **BACKGROUND AND SEXUAL ASSAULT OF THE PLAINTIFFS**

### **I. SYDA's Founding and Leadership**

14. In or around 1974, Muktananda established SYDA to manage his growing operations, including world tours and a network of meditation centers and residential living quarters ("ashrams") run by his followers.

15. SYDA and/or Muktananda selected certain individuals to travel with him on tours to India, Australia, Europe, and the United States. These individuals lived together or near each other in dwellings that increased in size as attendance at SYDA programs grew. To accommodate Muktananda's growing entourage, SYDA rented or purchased boarding houses and hotels, refurbishing them as hostel-style rooms with multiple beds or bunkbeds.

16. In 1980 and 1981, SYDA owned or controlled residential, dormitory-style properties in several states, including two in New York: Manhattan and South Fallsburg.

17. The Gilbert Hotel in South Fallsburg, purchased by SYDA in 1978, eventually became SYDA headquarters. With numerous properties and buildings added in the 1990s, it grew to a size as large as 550 acres.

18. At all times relevant and material hereto, SYDA Trustees and staff controlled Muktananda's activities in the U.S. by various means, including establishing a public relations department, issuing directives to center leaders, supervising Muktananda's programs, staffing the residential ashrams, producing and/or selling promotional brochures, books, recordings and videos, and in general, seeking to recommend Muktananda and his teachings as beneficial and easily adaptable to everyday life.

19. SYDA encouraged its followers to practice total surrender and service. SYDA programs and publications reinforced Muktananda's demand for total obedience from members of the SYDA community, who were pressured to make financial donations and to provide free labor on a rigorous, sometimes grueling, schedule.

20. SYDA required members of Muktananda's entourage to obtain permission from senior leaders to leave for more than one day.

21. SYDA strictly segregated living accommodations by sex for non-married followers. SYDA expected all residents, including married couples, to maintain celibacy, especially on the ashram premises.

22. Followers who resided in Muktananda's ashrams or went on tour with him were told exactly when and where to sleep, eat, work, and worship, and, above all, what to think. When followers' views diverged from SYDA teachings, they were told to "cut off their negativities" and correct their understandings.

23. Followers were encouraged to refer to Muktananda as "Baba," meaning father.

24. Followers who challenged or disobeyed Muktananda faced ostracism from the SYDA community and punishment from SYDA including public humiliation, shaming, threats, and physical harm.

## II. Muktananda's Pattern of Sexual Abuse

25. On information and belief, between the years 1977 and 1982, Muktananda sexually abused and raped dozens of his female followers, both women and girls.

26. On information and belief, SYDA concealed and denied the abuse. On information and belief, the Trustees allowed Muktananda to continue to assault, abuse and rape girls and young women until his death in 1982.

### A. SYDA Housed Young Girls to Facilitate the Abuse

27. In November 1979 through October 1981, on Muktananda's third world tour, he directed his staff, including Gurumayi, to assign teenage girls and young women to the rooms closest to his living quarters.

28. At the Miami ashram, for example, in 1979-80, Plaintiff Doe was assigned to a room directly adjacent to Muktananda's suite of rooms.

29. On information and belief, SYDA members and senior leaders, including Gurumayi, observed young girls coming and going from Muktananda's living quarters at night.

**B. SYDA's Construction Efforts Facilitated the Abuse**

30. In the winter of 1979-80, SYDA renovated the South Fallsburg Ashram. A long curtain was installed in the lobby of the building that hid the door to Muktananda's chambers (the "Curtain"). In front of the Curtain was a staircase to the upper floor where SYDA housed teenage girls and young women. Peepholes were cut in the Curtain at Muktananda's eye-level. Muktananda would hide behind the Curtain so that he could see the young girls and women through the peepholes as they approached the stairs.

31. Behind the curtain was a chair where Muktananda could seat the girl on his lap and grope her.

32. SYDA designed Muktananda's bedroom with an alcove that contained a high, narrow examining table. A step stool was placed at the foot of the table and a broad, high-intensity lamp was positioned above it.

33. SYDA assigned girls and young women favored by Muktananda to the rooms closest to the staircase and the Curtain.

34. This construction facilitated Muktananda's ability to zero in on the women or girls he chose to abuse (the "Target" or "Targets"). Muktananda would stand behind the Curtain, peer through its peephole cutouts, and observe people passing through the stairs and the lobby. When he would see a Target, he would reveal himself and beckon her to come to him. He would then pull her behind the Curtain and forcefully kiss her, insert his tongue in her mouth, and grope her breasts and groin, before taking her to his bedroom. He often told his Target, "Top secret." Muktananda would then instruct the Target to remove her underclothes, and to get on the examining table.

35. Muktananda would then turn on the high-intensity lamp and step onto the stool so that his penis was level with the Target's vagina. Muktananda would then sexually assault his Target, using his hand to forcefully insert his penis into her vagina.

36. After the assault, Muktananda sometimes led his target to his dresser where he offered her jewelry.

**C. SYDA Hall Monitors and Assistants Facilitated the Abuse**

37. During public programs at the South Fallsburg Ashram, SYDA hall monitors were instructed by Muktananda to direct his favorite young women and girls to sit closest to him. He regularly sat on a dais in a throne-like chair.

38. During certain parts of the programs, attendees offered jewelry to Muktananda by dropping it into baskets at his feet.

39. On information and belief, Gurumayi and her assistants collected the jewelry to keep in the dresser in Muktananda's bedroom.

40. Muktananda gave this jewelry to some of his victims after assaulting them.

**D. SYDA Groomed the Victims for the Abuse**

41. Muktananda and SYDA's leadership followed a pattern for grooming his Targets.

42. Once Muktananda selected a Target, she then became the subject of special attention from Muktananda and his inner circle.

43. The Target would be showered with praise, gifts, or invitations to sit closer to Muktananda during meetings and ceremonies.

44. Alerted to Muktananda's interest in the Target, SYDA leadership, including Gurumayi, would then invite the Target to exclusive gatherings or locations, arranging for her to have preferred treatment.

**E. SYDA Used Violence and Threats to Silence its Critics**

45. On information and belief, in the summer of 1980, Muktananda ordered two SYDA followers, David Lynn, a U.S. Marine veteran, and Joe Don Looney, a former professional NFL football player, to beat up one of his senior leaders, Stan Trout.

46. Trout had become aware of Muktananda's sexual abuses. Muktananda had asked Trout to make harassing and threatening calls to others sympathetic to the victims. When Trout refused, Muktananda ordered that he be beaten up.

47. Muktananda observed the beating from his window at the South Fallsburg Ashram. The beating was also witnessed by several others.

48. In December 1980, two of Muktananda's long-time followers, Michael Dinga and his wife, told Muktananda they were leaving SYDA because they had become aware he was sexually abusing young girls and women.

49. On information and belief, Muktananda directed Lynn and Looney to threaten Dinga and his wife with acid attacks, castration, and imminent death.

**F. SYDA Leadership Made Excuses for the Abuse**

50. On information and belief, SYDA leadership told several victims that they were to blame for their abuse by Muktananda.

51. On information and belief, in or around the fall of 1980, one of Muktananda's abuse victims sought help from SYDA leadership. On information and belief, Gurumayi told her, "I think you should just forget about it."

52. In or around December 1980, leaders at the Manhattan Ashram responded to complaints of abuse by putting up a plaque with the quotation: "The young girls run after him—he teaches them to love holiness."

53. Later, the Manhattan Ashram put up another plaque: "The Siddhas live by the breath of young maidens."

### III. Plaintiff Doe

54. In 1974, 11-year-old Doe and her mother joined SYDA. Beginning in 1975, they traveled as part of the Muktananda's entourage on his world tours.

55. From October 1976 to August 1978, Doe lived at the Ganeshpuri Ashram in India with Muktananda. In August 1977 she was invited to join a group of other young followers to receive private lessons from a member of Muktananda's inner circle. In those lessons, she was taught the importance of obedience, deference, and personal surrender to Muktananda.

56. On the night of December 25, 1977, when Doe was 14 years old, Muktananda called her to him, said "Top Secret," and proceeded to hug and kiss her on the lips.

57. One or two nights later, Muktananda brought Doe into his apartment. He again said, "Top secret" and assaulted her as he had before and also began twisting and groping her breasts tightly. He did this again about two nights later when he also began groping her pubic area and inserting his finger into her vagina.

58. Then a few nights later, Muktananda brought Doe to his apartment and brought her into his bedroom where he digitally penetrated her and pressed his flaccid penis into her vagina with his fingers. He continued to initiate similar assaults once or twice per week.

59. Muktananda forbade Doe to tell anyone about these assaults, and she complied. She had been taught since she was 11 that "Baba" had to be obeyed, so she obeyed.

60. On information and belief, as early as January 1978, Gurumayi became aware that Muktananda was raping Doe.

61. In 1979 and 1980, Muktananda sexually abused Doe repeatedly at ashrams in Massachusetts, Florida, and New York, when Doe was 16 and 17 years old. As she grew older, he became more forceful and aggressive with her.



**A. Muktananda Rapes 18-Years-Old Doe**

62. In August 1981, Muktananda raped Doe twice in the South Fallsburg Ashram after Doe had turned 18 years old.

63. As Doe walked past the Curtain one evening a few nights after her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, Muktananda revealed himself and called Doe to him, pulling her behind the Curtain. Muktananda kissed her on the lips, inserted his tongue in her mouth, and groped her groin.

64. Muktananda then escorted Doe down the walkway to his bedroom, where he kissed her and inserted his tongue in her mouth, digitally penetrating her. Then, he instructed Doe to remove her clothes and lie down at the end of his bed with her knees up and spread wide enough so that her vulva was exposed.

65. Muktananda stood at the edge of the bed, felt her pubic area, pressed his finger into her vagina, then took his flaccid penis in his hand and forcibly penetrated Doe's vagina, and stood there for several minutes. While standing with his penis inserted in her vagina he leaned over and kneaded her breasts.

66. After instructing her to put her clothes on, Muktananda told Doe to return in a few days.

67. A few nights later, in August 1981, Doe returned, and Muktananda assaulted her again. As before, he pulled her behind the Curtain, groped her breasts and groin and escorted her to his quarters. Muktananda forcibly penetrated Doe's vagina with his penis. After straddling her like this for several minutes, he withdrew his penis, told Doe to dress and walked her back to the Curtain. Doe's body shook uncontrollably during the encounter, as it had during every assault she endured since she was 14.

68. Over the next year, Doe continued to travel with Muktananda. but gradually disconnected from SYDA because of the trauma from the sexual abuse she endured.

#### IV. Plaintiff Bridges

69. In 1974, Bridges joined SYDA at age 21, following her father's sudden death.

70. Bridges travelled with Muktananda on his world tours as part of his entourage.

71. In or around 1980, when Bridges was 28 years old and Muktananda was around 72 years old, Muktananda began paying special attention to her and marked her as a Target.

72. In or around 1980, while at SYDA's ashram in Florida, Muktananda came to Bridges' bedroom unannounced, grabbed Bridges and forcefully kissed her. She was shocked and completely confused by his behavior.

73. Shortly afterwards, Gurumayi invited Bridges on an exclusive trip to SYDA's ashram in Boston. There, Bridges encountered Muktananda repeatedly lurking in the corridors near the girls' dormitories. On at least one occasion, Muktananda grabbed Bridges, put his arms around her, and kissed her. Bridges was again shocked and confused by his behavior.

74. In or around or around 1980, Bridges moved into the South Fallsburg Ashram.

75. Thereafter, Muktananda's predation sharply escalated. In or around the same period, Muktananda grabbed Bridges one evening as she passed by the Curtain and pulled her behind them. Muktananda fondled Bridges' breasts forcefully, twisting them tightly with his hands. Muktananda then reached under Bridges' dress to grope and squeeze her vulva. Bridges was stunned and froze. Afterwards, she left swiftly, in shock.

76. The following evening, Muktananda once again intercepted Bridges from behind the Curtain and brought her into his bedroom. Muktananda ordered Bridges to lie down on a large ottoman; he removed her pants and underwear and inspected her vulva. After his inspection, he announced, "good yoni" and then allowed her to leave.

77. The following evening, Muktananda again caught Bridges as she passed the Curtain and escorted her to his bedroom. Muktananda placed Bridges on his wooden table, pulled back her legs to expose her vulva, and removed his underwear to expose his flaccid

penis. Muktananda took his penis in his hand and forcibly penetrated Bridges' vagina. In immense distress, Bridges remained silent and was afraid to fight back. Muktananda later forbade Bridges from telling anyone what happened because it was "top secret."

78. In or around 1980, Bridges left SYDA.

79. In 1994, Bridges gathered the strength to disclose the sexual abuse perpetrated by Muktananda to a close friend, who shared she had also been raped by Muktananda in the late 1970s. The close friend scolded Bridges for mentioning Muktananda's "top secret."

80. Shortly afterwards, Gurumayi's assistant, Panna Hamilton, called Bridges, interrogating her about her claims and requesting a detailed account. Bridges was relieved to speak with a SYDA executive and was hopeful that someone might listen to her. Once she provided a detailed account of the sexual abuse, Hamilton scolded her for speaking out and warned Bridges once again to keep quiet.

81. In 2001, Bridges wrote to Gurumayi with a detailed account of the sexual abuse, asking for help. She received no response. Afterwards, the CEO of SYDA, Lester Strong, sent a representative to Bridges' home. Bridges declined to speak with the representative but was deeply unnerved by the fact that SYDA knew her home address.

82. In January 2003, Bridges shared her story on "Leaving Siddha Yoga," a website dedicated to the stories of victims of trauma at SYDA. She also wrote to Strong, attaching her story as shared online. On February 25, 2003, Strong responded thanking her for the letter.

## **V. Plaintiff Stern**

83. In 1976, at age 14, Stern met Muktananda in South Fallsburg and became a follower of SYDA.

84. For four months, from October 1977 to January 1978, Stern lived at Muktananda's ashram in India.

85. In India, Stern took SYDA's teacher training course. The course's leaders, including Gurumayi, lectured on obedience and surrender to Muktananda.

86. In the fall of 1978, Stern began living in the Manhattan Ashram.

87. In December 1979, when Stern was 18, she cut off communication with her parents and became dependent on SYDA as her only home.

88. In spring 1980, Muktananda began grooming Stern. He sent gifts and SYDA arranged her travel to the Boston ashram.

89. After arriving at the Boston ashram, Stern was summoned by Muktananda to his private apartments at night. He inquired about Stern's parents and she confirmed that she was not in touch with them. Muktananda then put his arm around Stern as if to hug her but instead felt for her bra strap.

90. After this encounter, Stern arrived at the South Fallsburg Ashram for the summer. SYDA gave her numerous privileges, including seating her close to Muktananda's throne for meditating, inviting her to private events with Gurumayi, and inviting her to give a talk at an evening program.

91. At times, Stern was told about violence within SYDA. One staff member pointed out Trout to Stern and told her that Muktananda had ordered him to be beaten up. At an exclusive gathering, Gurumayi made a point of telling Stern that another guest at the party, a member of Muktananda's inner circle, kept guns in his room. The guest immediately confirmed to Stern that he had guns.

**A. Muktananda Rapes 19-Year-Old Stern**

92. In 1980, when Stern was 19, Muktananda sexually abused her for the first time. One night, as Stern was passing by the lobby at the South Fallsburg Ashram, Muktananda opened the Curtain and revealed himself. He beckoned to Stern and pulled her behind the Curtain. He began kissing Stern, inserting his tongue in her mouth.

93. Muktananda pulled Stern down on his lap. He grabbed and squeezed her breasts. He was toothless, his dentures were absent, and while smacking his lips against his bare gums he said, referring to her breasts, "Good fat," Stern froze, horrified. Muktananda then squeezed her stomach flesh and said, "Bad fat," nodding wisely. Next he grabbed Stern between her legs and gripped her pubic bone. He led her back to the parting of the Curtain and told her to "come back next night."

94. Confused and shocked, Stern reread the chapter of Muktananda's autobiography that ends with Muktananda's exhortation to his students to obey the guru's commands in all circumstances. Stern returned the next night as instructed.

95. That next night, after Muktananda pulled Stern behind the Curtain, he opened a door and gestured to Stern that she should walk ahead of him. Stern then walked in the dark across a balcony or catwalk, where she came across two rottweilers guarding the door to Muktananda's quarters. Upon seeing Stern, the rottweilers sprang up and growled at her.

96. Muktananda led Stern to his bedroom. He ordered Stern to take off her underpants, and led her to an alcove with a high, narrow table resembling a doctor's examining table, with a bright light above it. He told her to get on the table, lie back, and move her hips forward. When she did lie back, Stern closed her eyes due to the blinding bright light.

97. Muktananda took his penis, which was flaccid, and holding it in his hand he forcibly penetrated her vagina. He rolled his eyes to the ceiling, wagging his penis with one hand. Stern felt both revulsion and dismay. After the assault concluded, Muktananda told her to put her underpants back on. He led her to a dresser that had a pile of jewelry on it. Muktananda gave her a gold ring.

98. In December 1980, Stern chose to leave SYDA and explained to one of the leaders of the Manhattan Ashram that she was leaving because of sexual abuse by

Muktananda. The leader did not express surprise. Instead, this leader encouraged Stern to see the abuse as an opportunity to serve Muktananda.

### **NATURE OF ALLEGED CONDUCT**

99. This action alleges physical, psychological, and emotional injuries suffered as a result of conduct that would constitute a sexual offense as defined in Article 130 of the New York Penal Law, including without limitation, conduct constituting rape (N.Y. Penal Law §§ 130.25 – 130.35); sexual misconduct (N.Y. Penal Law § 130.20); criminal sexual act (N.Y. Penal Law §§ 130.40 – 130.53); sexual abuse (N.Y. Penal Law §§ 130.55 – 130.65); and forcible touching (N.Y. Penal Law § 130.52).

100. The limitation of liability set forth in CPLR Art. 16 is not applicable to the claim of personal injury alleged herein, by reason of one or more of the exemptions provided in CPLR § 1602, including without limitation, that Defendant acted with reckless disregard for the safety of Plaintiffs.

### **CAUSES OF ACTION**

#### **COUNT 1 – NEGLIGENCE**

#### ***All Plaintiffs Against Defendant***

101. Plaintiffs incorporate and reallege each and every allegation set forth in the preceding paragraphs as if set forth here in full.

102. **Duty.** Unless otherwise specified in the factual allegations, at all relevant times, Plaintiffs lived, by invitation of Muktananda and Defendant, at either the South Fallsburg Ashram or the Manhattan Ashram.

103. At all relevant times, Defendant owed a duty of care to Plaintiffs to act reasonably to prevent foreseeable abuse perpetrated by Muktananda.

104. At all relevant times, Defendant owed a duty of care to Plaintiffs, as invitees to and on its property, to keep the property free from foreseeable dangers, including sexual assault.

105. **Foreseeable Danger.** At all relevant times, Muktananda openly and notoriously engaged in the sexual assault and continued abuse of women and girls associated with and/or visiting South Fallsburg Ashram, including Plaintiffs.

106. At all relevant times, Muktananda used the power bestowed upon him by Defendant to prey upon and sexually abuse Plaintiffs on Defendant's premises.

107. At all relevant times, Defendant's employees, agents, managers, and Trustees knew or should have known about Muktananda's propensity to sexually assault and abuse women and girls, and they knew or should have known that he was a danger to women and girls.

108. At all relevant times, Defendant knew or should have known that Muktananda was sexually assaulting multiple women and girls, including Plaintiffs.

109. At all relevant times, Defendant knew or should have known that Muktananda was designing, constructing, and using Defendant's facilities, such as areas, rooms, and furniture on Defendant's property, specifically for the purpose of sexually abusing women and girls.

110. **Breach.** At all relevant times, Defendant provided Muktananda with facilities so that he could gain access to, isolate, sexually abuse, and forcibly compel sexual assault and sexual intercourse with women and girls.

111. At all relevant times, Defendant provided Muktananda with, or arranged Muktananda to be provided with, women and girls, including Plaintiffs, knowing that he would isolate and sexually abuse them.

112. Defendant created an environment in which the sexual assault of women and girls, including Plaintiffs, by its leader Muktananda was permitted, accepted, institutionalized, and encouraged.

113. At all relevant times, Defendant, through its employees, agents, managers, and/or board members, facilitated and covered up Muktananda's serial sexual abuse of women and girls.

114. Even though Defendant knew or should have known that Muktananda was using their facilities and employees to gain access to, groom, sexually assault, and cover up the sexual assault of Plaintiffs, Defendant did nothing to address, prevent, or discourage Muktananda's sexual assault of women and girls. Defendant's failure to act implicitly and/or explicitly permitted, approved, encouraged, and ratified such sexual assaults.

115. Even though Defendant knew or should have known that Muktananda was using the authority or apparent authority bestowed upon him by Defendant to gain access to and sexually assault women and girls, Defendant did nothing to address, prevent, or discourage Muktananda's sexual assault of women and girls.

116. Defendant's failure to act implicitly and/or explicitly permitted, approved, encouraged, and ratified such sexual assaults.

117. Even though Defendant knew or should have known about Muktananda's propensity toward, history of, and ongoing serial sexual assault of women and girls, Defendant did nothing to address, prevent, or discourage Muktananda's sexual assault of women and girls. Defendant's failure to act implicitly and/or explicitly permitted, approved, encouraged, and ratified such sexual assaults.

118. **Causation.** At all relevant times, Defendant and/or its agents, servants, and/or employees caused, created, or, despite actual or constructive notice, permitted the existence of a dangerous condition to exist within their premises.



119. At all relevant times, Defendant breached the above-stated duties in a negligent, reckless, willful, and wanton manner, and caused Plaintiffs to be sexually assaulted, sexually abused, and raped.

120. **Damages.** As a result of Defendant's negligence, Plaintiffs suffered serious personal injuries, emotional distress, pain and suffering, mental anguish and/or physical manifestations thereof, and other losses, all of which have not yet been ascertained.

121. By reason of the foregoing, Plaintiffs are entitled to compensatory damages from Defendant in such sums as a jury would find fair, just, and adequate.

122. By reason of the foregoing, Plaintiffs are entitled to punitive damages from Defendant in such sums as a jury would find fair, just, and adequate.

123. The amount of damages sought exceeds the jurisdiction of all lower courts, which would otherwise have jurisdiction.

## **COUNT 2 – NEGLIGENT RETENTION AND SUPERVISION**

### *All Plaintiffs Against Defendant*

124. Plaintiffs incorporate and reallege each and every allegation set forth in the preceding paragraphs as if set forth here in full.

125. Defendant negligently supervised and retained Muktananda.

126. At all material times, Muktananda was the leader of SYDA.

127. At all material times, Muktananda was acting in his capacity as an agent and/or employee of Defendant within the course and scope of his agency duties for Defendant as leader. Muktananda committed his tortious acts in direct connection with his employee and/or agency duties for Defendant, and within the time and space limits of his employee and/or agency duties for SYDA.

128. Muktananda had a history of sexually abusing his Targets on Defendant's premises, and Defendant helped cultivate a culture of normalizing sexual abuse within its

premises. Defendant could have reasonably anticipated Muktananda's behavior towards Plaintiffs.

129. Muktananda's sexual abuse of Plaintiffs directly arose from the relationship he cultivated with them through his position as leader of SYDA.

130. At all material times, Muktananda held actual and/or apparent authority to bind Defendant.

131. At all relevant times, Defendant owed a duty of care to Plaintiffs to properly supervise its employees, agents, and servants, as well as supervise the facility of the South Fallsburg Ashram, such that individuals living at, visiting, or attending the South Fallsburg Ashram were safe from foreseeable dangers, including sexual abuse.

132. At all relevant times, Defendant owed a duty of care to Plaintiffs to supervise its employees, agents, and servants, and to ensure that its employees were not using the authority bestowed on them by Defendant to sexually assault or facilitate the sexual assault of women.

133. At all relevant times, Defendant owed a duty of care to Plaintiffs to use reasonable care in the retention of Muktananda as employee and/or agents, particularly given that he had access to young and vulnerable people living on its premises.

134. At all relevant times, Defendant's employees, agents, managers, and Trustees knew or should have known about Muktananda's propensity to sexually assault and abuse women and girls. Defendant knew or should have known that Muktananda was a danger to women and girls.

135. At all relevant times, Defendant owed a duty to Plaintiffs because it placed Muktananda in a position to cause foreseeable harm that would most probably have been spared had Defendant taken reasonable care in making decisions with respect to the hiring and retention of Muktananda.

136. At all relevant times, Defendant knew or should have known that Muktananda was sexually assaulting multiple women and girls, including Plaintiffs.

137. At all relevant times, Defendant knew or should have known that Muktananda was using its facilities to prey upon and sexually abuse women and girls, including designing and constructing facilities, such as areas, rooms and furniture on Defendant's property, specifically for the purpose of sexually abusing women and girls.

138. Even though Defendant knew or should have known that Muktananda was using their facilities and employees to gain access to, groom, sexually assault, and cover up the sexual assault of Plaintiffs, Defendant and/or their agents failed to have, enact, and/or enforce rules, regulations, policies or procedures regarding sexual abuse, assault, and/or harassment at their facilities, including the South Fallsburg Ashram.

139. The burden on Defendant to take steps to warn or otherwise reduce the risk of Muktananda's sexual abuse was small, while the harm from his sexual abuse was great and resulted in extensive physical and mental injury to Plaintiffs.

140. But for Defendant's negligent supervision, Muktananda would not have been enabled to sexually assault, sexually abuse, and rape Plaintiffs.

141. But for Defendant's negligence, Muktananda would not have been retained and would not have caused Plaintiffs to be sexually assaulted, sexually abused, and raped.

142. As a result of Defendant's negligent supervision and/or retention, Plaintiffs suffered serious personal injuries, emotional distress, pain and suffering, mental anguish and/or physical manifestations thereof, and other losses, all of which have not yet been ascertained.

143. By reason of the foregoing, Plaintiffs are entitled to compensatory damages from Defendant in such sums as a jury would find fair, just, and adequate.

144. By reason of the foregoing, Plaintiffs are entitled to punitive damages from Defendant in such sums as a jury would find fair, just, and adequate.

145. The amount of damages sought exceeds the jurisdiction of all lower courts, which would otherwise have jurisdiction.

#### PLAINTIFFS' DAMAGES

146. In addition to the damages mentioned above, as a direct and proximate result of Defendant's conduct, Plaintiffs suffered, continue to suffer, and will suffer in the future, serious personal injuries, emotional distress, mental pain and suffering, mental anguish, loss of enjoyment of life, and/or physical manifestations thereof, and other losses, all of which have not yet been ascertained. These include, but are not limited to, flashbacks, low self-esteem, self-hatred, loss of faith, anxiety, panic attacks, post-traumatic stress disorder, stress, anorexia and other eating disorders, traumatic reaction to tasks requiring meditative concentration, traumatic reaction to medical examining tables and OBGYN care, nightmares, insomnia, depression, distrust of authority, shame, disassociation, intimacy issues, fear, anxiety, trust issues, challenges in building and sustaining friendships, challenges in building and sustaining romantic relationships, sexual aversion disorders, and physical injuries associated with at least some of these psychological injuries. All these injuries caused and will cause Plaintiffs noneconomic damages. Plaintiffs also suffered and continue to suffer economic damages in the form of loss of past and future income and costs of medical and mental health treatment.

147. By reason of the foregoing, Plaintiffs are entitled to compensatory damages from Defendant in such sums as a jury would find fair, just, and adequate.

148. Defendant acted with an outrageous indifference to a highly unreasonable risk of harm and with a conscious indifference to the health, safety, and welfare of others, including

Plaintiffs. Therefore, Plaintiffs are entitled to punitive damages against Defendant, in such sums as a jury would find fair, just, and adequate.

**DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

149. Plaintiffs demand a trial by jury of all issues so triable.

**PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

**WHEREFORE**, by reason of the foregoing, Plaintiffs demand judgment against Defendant on all of their Causes of Action in an amount exceeding the jurisdictional limits of all lower Courts, together with compensatory damages, punitive damages, general damages, loss of earnings and earning capacity, Plaintiffs' attorneys' fees and the costs and disbursements of this action, interest as provided by law, as well as any other relief the Court deems just and proper.

\* \* \*

Dated: November 22, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

BY:



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