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8 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
9 **DISTRICT OF ARIZONA**

10 The Church of the Eagle and the Condor, et
11 al,

12 Plaintiffs,

13 v.

14 Merrick Garland, Attorney General of the
United States, et al,

15 Defendants.
16 _____ /

Case No.: CV-22-01004-PHX-SRB

**Declaration of Kewal Wright in Support
of Plaintiffs' Opposition to Defendants'
Motion to Dismiss**

Judge: Honorable Susan R. Bolton

17 I, Kewal Wright, do hereby declare:

18 The following facts are based upon my personal knowledge, and if called as a witness, I could
19 and would competently testify under oath as to the facts set forth herein.

20 1. My name is Kewal Wright. I am part of the Church of the Eagle and the Condor in
21 Phoenix, Arizona. I have a master's degree in Women and Gender Studies, a bachelor's
22 degree in Liberal Studies with a minor in Family Studies, and have had formal training in
23 counseling, midwifery, yoga, and meditation. My professional background has included
24 midwifery, writing and research, owning and managing yoga centers, and teaching yoga and
25 meditation. I was raised Baptist and practiced Sikhism from 1996-2013.

26 2. I initially became interested in Ayahuasca by being exposed to research that showed it
27 as beneficial for reducing depression. I have always had interest and appreciation for medicinal

1 plants, but as I read more about Ayahuasca, I became very interested in the spiritual aspects
2 of that practice. I first experienced the sacrament Ayahuasca in ceremony in 2018, and
3 immediately found it to be one of the most meaningful and spiritually significant experiences
4 of my life. I eventually found the religion and practice of the Church of the Eagle and the
5 Condor, which aligned with my beliefs and spiritual needs. Since then, Ayahuasca and the
6 Church have been a central part of my religious and spiritual life. I have continued to work
7 with Ayahuasca as a sacrament that I feel deep respect for and consider to be a profound way
8 to connect with the Divine.

9 3. I became connected to the Church of the Eagle and the Condor by meeting people who
10 were already a part of the community, including some of the board members and community
11 members, at educational events related to Ayahuasca, as well as classes that shared Native
12 American teachings. I began to meet people who shared those interests or who – in the case
13 of Dr. Joe Tafur and Belinda Eriacho – taught about those topics. As I became more aware of
14 the Church of the Eagle and the Condor, I began to participate in events and ceremonies. I am
15 currently involved in events and ceremonies as a participant, and sometimes help
16 administratively with church-related activities.

17 4. I have appreciated that the Church holds a foundational intention to unify, and include,
18 people of varied backgrounds, ancestry, and lineages. As the name (and prophecy that it is
19 based on) suggest, this community creates an important bridging of Indigenous and non-
20 Indigenous community members. There is a core desire to connect with Spirit, but there is
21 respect for the varied names that community members may have for Spirit. The beliefs of the
22 church are practices that support well-being, including developing compassion, love, and
23 interconnectedness with Spirit and nature. Other beliefs include gratitude and reciprocity,
24 being thankful for what life has given us, and giving back in our own ways.

25 5. The sacrament Ayahuasca – the CEC’s and my only sacrament - is a key component of
26 developing these qualities. Through Ayahuasca ceremonies, it is common for me to feel more
27 compassion for myself and others, to experience love personally and spiritually, and to feel and

1 understand how interconnected all people are more deeply. The feeling and expression of
2 gratitude is expanded through the sacrament of Ayahuasca. It is through these ceremonies I,
3 like other participants, learn more about these qualities, connect to Spirit, and grow in our
4 capacities to give back. Ayahuasca is a vital aspect for our community's connection with Spirit
5 and development of the qualities that support well-being and compassionate living. It is a very
6 direct way to open oneself to the experience of Divine love and to live with more humility and
7 gratitude.

8 6. Spiritual practice has always been a part of my life. From my very first Ayahuasca
9 experience and every ceremony since, I have been clear that Ayahuasca is one of the most
10 devotional and spiritually potent practices I have encountered. I have grown tremendously
11 through my utilization of this sacrament. It is, for me, both humbling and awe-inspiring. It
12 shows me where I still have a lot to learn, but it also makes me feel connection, acceptance,
13 and belonging. It opens my heart and reminds me of all that I am grateful for. Ayahuasca
14 ceremonies are one of the ways that I feel most connected in prayer. In many religions, there
15 are practices of connecting to Spirit and deeply listening from a place of stillness and humility
16 through prayer, meditation, or silence. This happens in Ayahuasca ceremony as well. We sit
17 together and take the sacrament, open our hearts to spiritual connection, listen deeply, and
18 pray.

19 7. Ayahuasca is a holy and devotional spiritual practice. It is not widely understood in
20 American culture, but it has a long history of respect and understanding in other cultures. I am
21 grateful for the traditions that have been willing to share it. Without its sacrament the CEC
22 cannot perform essential services and we, the members, are deprived of our essential
23 sacrament. I am grateful that the Church of the Eagle and the Condor has so sincerely created
24 community, spiritual practice, and opportunities for me and our community to help each other
25 grow, learn, and live well.

26 8. I am aware that my participation in the CEC's use of ayahuasca may not currently be
27 explicitly legally protected. As a mother and a professional, I fear legal reprisal for my use of

1 ayahuasca and my participation in CEC. I have two children, age 13 and 19, for whom I am
2 the primary caretaker. I fear how a prosecution could impact custody of my younger child, my
3 ability to provide for both, and my reputation in a way that would impact my professional
4 opportunities in the future.

5 9. I am aware of the history of past seizures, prosecutions, and enforcements related to
6 ayahuasca, as well as the federal government's collaboration with State and local law
7 enforcement authorities, including a recent prosecution in my region of a member or members
8 of another church. This history increases my fear of a raid, arrest, prosecution, seizure, or
9 forfeiture of property that could affect my life, family, and profession. The seizure that
10 specifically targeted the CEC increased my concerns due to its proximity to me and our
11 community. I relate to Ayahuasca as a conscious being, and I think it is ignorant and
12 disrespectful to destroy the medicine - in line with if something that is sacred to any other
13 religious community were being destroyed. So, the destruction of ayahuasca has a negative
14 impact on me personally, as well as being wasteful. Despite the threat of civil and/or criminal
15 sanctions, I continue to follow my spiritual practice and to utilize the sacrament of ayahuasca
16 rather than be coerced to act contrary to my beliefs.

17

18 I declare under the penalty of perjury pursuant to the laws of the United States, that the
19 statements made in this declaration are true and correct to the best of my recollection.
Executed this day of December 11, 2022 at Phoenix, Arizona.

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Kewal Wright

Kewal Wright

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