

Dear Mrs. Knowles,

I am currently a Graduate Student from California College of the Arts residing in Marfa, Texas. While researching the city I stumbled upon your photograph at the Prada store that resides on the outskirts of the city. I was wondering what exactly brought you to Marfa? I know you grew up in Texas, and have a connection with the city to that extent—but as a cultural icon I wonder why you would choose to spend time in a city that currently revolves around the legacy of the Minimalist artist Donald Judd.

The photograph of you jumping in front of the Prada store made me question what the role of celebrity is within a small city. The postulate you have positioned in front of me is one that revolves around how a celebrity can create social change just by being present. By taking that image and posting it online for the entire world to see you have actually marketed both Prada and Marfa. You are not necessarily required to justify your leisure time—although it would be nice to know how you spent your time here and the interactions that you had.

People may be confused as to why there is a Prada store in the middle of the desert—why this store is actually identified as art and not just commerce. I myself have asked this question and come to the conclusion that it is a tourist trap. It draws people to a city that would not survive without the aid of the stranger—Judd started this when he decided to escape New York City to reside in Marfa. By bringing his success to the city, he immediately had an impact on its economy. Within his action of uprooting his practice and placing it in the middle of the desert he started a cultural sphere that would continue to grow and develop around his celebrity status.

I am writing you because I would like to ask you to return to Marfa, but not as a tourist. Instead I offer up to you the opportunity to help the economy of Marfa by playing a free concert at the high school auditorium. There would be a small charge for admission—but the money would not go to you—instead the money would be used to help the Blackwell School. The Blackwell School was a segregated Hispanic school within Marfa that is now in the process of becoming a museum. The museum needs funds both for the renovation and preservation of its space. Its goal—as I understand—is to continue to educate people on the history of segregation within the United States.

The reason I have chosen to ask for your help is because you carry a fan following that has the capability to actually fund this project for an extended period of time. I am not interested in creating a Band-Aid, but rather a sustained funding for this cause. Could you imagine what would happen if you came and played a free concert here? My belief is that this would bring in thousands of people from the surrounding cities of El Paso, Alpine, Dallas, Houston, Waco, Austin, and many other places just to see you. I'm sure you have seen this impact before as you have had a long and illustrious career—but as an artist myself I believe that our role is to give back to the spaces that we have chosen to interact with.

I hope that you will consider my offer to use your celebrity status as a way to impact a community that you have had an affect on already just by taking a photograph. Please feel free to write me back with any questions you have within this project—I would love to have a dialogue with you surrounding these ideas and look forward to possibly working with you. Thank you for your time, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Josh Stulen