

Leslie Rzeznik, Director  
Romuva North America  
7734 N. Merriman Road, #202  
Westland, MI 48185

Cassi Beebe  
CIA Auditor, Charitable Trust Division  
State of Michigan  
Department of Attorney General  
P.O. Box 30214  
Lansing, MI, 48909

February 22, 2022

Dear Ms. Beebe,

I received your letter on February 18, 2022. In consultation with the Board of Directors of Romuva North America, Inc., (hereafter referred to as Romuva NA) following is our response to the complaint by J. Kimo Arbas against us. Before we respond to individual allegations made by Kimo, we would like to make a couple of points and address a few of his claims.

1. Kimo claims to be the leader of Romuva NA. While he was the spiritual leader of our (unincorporated) organization **at our invitation** beginning in 2012, for various reasons after incorporation in 2020, the board of directors decided not to offer him a seat on the board but offered for him to remain in his position as Vaidila (or priest) of Romuva NA. Kimo insisted that he be made CEO or director and we declined. He proceeded to claim that Romuva NA was a “brand” that he built and threatened legal action against us if we did not give him a seat on the board. Unfortunately, his threats were made over a video conference, so while we have minutes from the conference, we don’t have an email or other written communication from him with these threats. However, we have some evidence regarding his position in our organization here (more is available upon request): <https://romuva.us/evidence/>

2. Kimo included the letter from the “supervisory committee” or “stebetoju taryba” (hereafter referred to as the Taryba) of Romuva in Lithuania (Lietuvos Romuva, hereafter referred to as Romuva LT) outlining their decision of the status of Romuva NA. In that letter, you will note that the Taryba specifically addresses Kimo’s organization as “Romuva North America / Lithuania” and ours as “Romuva North America.” **This alone should disqualify any of his complaints against us.**

But please understand the following points in regard to the Taryba’s determination:

a) We were invited to join the Krivule Ratas (Priests' Circle) after the Taryba initially recognized our organization as the one and only Romuva NA. (See article dated 3/20/2021: <https://alkas.lt/2021/03/21/siaures-amerikos-romuva-pripazinta-jav/> and note that it includes this quote: ' "We are pleased that the community that belongs to Romuva is recognized in the United States. The North American Romuva joined our community in 2016 at the initiative of Kimo Arbas, "says Inija Trinkūnienė, a Lithuanian Romuva Krivė.' ) (Krivė is feminine for high priest, masculine is Krivis.) We are still a member, although we do not have voting rights.

b) From March of 2021 until December of 2021, the Taryba recognized only the Romuva NA incorporated in Michigan. What prompted the review and resulting determination was when we brought to them our concerns about the libelous claims made by Kimo, some of which you can see in the evidence (which only includes a fraction of his claims).

c) The determination by the Taryba is not legally binding. It is not a ruling by a court of law. It is an internal document.

d) The Taryba declined to read any of the evidence we had refuting Kimo's claim to the Romuva North America name, his claim that we were always separate organizations, and other libelous claims he has made against us to the Taryba, individuals around the world, on the Krivule Ratas (Priest's Circle) mailing list and on Facebook.

e) The Taryba did not allow us to review any of the "documents" Kimo claims to have supplied to prove his claims.

f) The determination of the Taryba does not reflect the agreement we made with them during a conference call in order to "keep the peace" between Kimo and us. Additionally, we were not informed that a determination would be made after only one meeting with them. We expected them to review the evidence we had offered them on several occasions. When we received the determination, we were very surprised. We expressed our disappointment and requested that they review our evidence (<https://romuva.us/evidence/>) and consider a redetermination but were denied.

3. We were advised by the Krivė of Romuva LT in Spring of 2021 to ignore Kimo, which we have done (other than infrequently refuting allegations he has made against us). In our conference call with the Taryba in December of 2021, we agreed to continue to ignore Kimo with the understanding that he will ignore us.

However, Kimo's ongoing harassment and libel of Romuva NA and individuals on the board keeps escalating (as evidenced by his complaint to you). He even created a Facebook profile whose name is "Aimo Krbas" seemingly to troll us and accuse us of **Criminal Fraud**. Its only post appears to be the one that libels us, and the only "friend" of that profile is J. Kimo Arbas' primary account:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100071193189077>

(His is a public post and is therefore viewable by anyone on or off Facebook. You do not need to be logged in.)

He joined our groups using the new profile, as we had already blocked his primary account. This post is identical to posts he has made on his main profile, in the group Baltica, on a new page he started called Contemporary Baltic Religion and perhaps elsewhere. Among other things, he claims that “The finding of the report clarifies the sudden unwarranted attack on my reputation, my community **and my fb page of 10 years "Lietuvos Romuva North America" (now deleted by facebook) by the recently incorporated Michigan church with similar name "Romuva North America"** ” He has even more directly claimed that we are responsible for his Facebook page being deleted in other emails and perhaps posts as well. As you probably know, Facebook will not provide any information unless there is a subpoena or court order, so we have no way of disputing this claim other than our word, nor has he ever provided anything to substantiate this or any of his other false claims.

While we believe that Kimo’s claims have little merit, you have requested us to respond to his allegations, which we do point by point below. We are happy to provide access to any and all original documents by whatever means you determine necessary.

1. **Allegation:** We are using the symbol of Romuva without permission. **Response:** The first Krivis (Jonas Trinkūnas, the current Krivė’s late husband) had given us permission over 20 years ago to use anything that Romuva LT had written or produced without asking for permission. However, when Kimo first accused us of using the logo without permission, we reached out to Krivė Inija Trinkūnienė for clarification. She confirmed our permission with a request that we alter it slightly to reflect our “branch” of Romuva. That change was made within 24 hours. The screenshot of the GoFundMe provided by Kimo is from before this his accusation and our subsequent change (<https://www.gofundme.com/f/9wu34-romuva-north-america>). Inija’s email giving us permission: <https://romuva.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/image-21.png> (English translation: “Regarding the use of the Romuva logo: we'd like you to use it with a slight change, not exactly the same as the original. The example could be the FB of Trakai Romuva: the essence remains, but it is not identical (see the picture)”) was sent at 9:27am on February 27, 2021. At 5:03pm on the same day, the edited logo was sent to Inija for approval. At 6:37am on February 28, 2021, Inija sent her approval of our new logo. These additional emails are available upon request. The logos on our Facebook pages, our website (<https://www.romuva.us>), and our GoFundMe were changed shortly thereafter.
2. **Allegations:** We began solicitations on Kimo’s page without his consent, . **Response:** Kimo and Leslie (Jurate) discussed fundraising to cover the expenses of incorporation in 2019. He was agreeable at that time, but did not start the GoFundMe himself, so we decided to start it ourselves. At the time, both Maryte (Marija) and Leslie (Jurate) were Administrators on his Facebook page and had permission to post as they saw fit. No one complained when he later deleted the fundraiser from his page.

Brief explanation of the difference between a Facebook PAGE and a Facebook GROUP for anyone reading who is unfamiliar: A Facebook page is maintained by an owner and administrators of their choosing. Only these people may post on a page, although anyone can comment or react to those posts. However, any member of a closed/private Facebook group (as ours are) may post and comment. A group allows for greater engagement by the community.

3. **Allegation:** We filed incorporation papers in Michigan without Kimo's knowledge.  
**Response:** This is accurate, however it was done because of the Board of Director's concerns about Kimo not living in the US and because Kimo had not taken the initiative to do so himself. Kimo and Leslie had been talking about incorporation since she first approached him about it in 2014 and he wanted to incorporate in CA. At that time, Kimo was only living part-time in the US and had no permanent address yet insisted on being the registered agent, so after some discussion and serious concerns about his ability to respond to communications **such as yours** in a timely manner (any mail would have to be forwarded to wherever he was in Europe at the time), Leslie declined to follow through with incorporation BUT provided Kimo with all of the information needed for him to incorporate on his own in California (his declared state of residence when he was in the US) in May of 2016 via a spreadsheet she shared with him on Google (email available upon request). He never incorporated. The board of directors for the Michigan incorporation consisted of three people who had been on the unincorporated/informal Board of Directors prior to and after Kimo's appointment as Vaidila of Romuva NA (<https://romuva.us/kaze-kazlauskiene/>) and an additional elder who had been involved in a separate branch of Romuva in the U.S.
4. **Allegation:** We are impersonating the mother organization "Romuva" of Lithuania.  
**Response:** This is patently false and we have no idea where he is getting this idea nor do we see any evidence that he provided, so we have no idea how to respond other than to say we have never impersonated nor claimed to speak for Romuva LT. If he is able to provide something to substantiate this claim, we'll be happy to respond to that specific claim.
5. **Allegation:** We spread misinformation and claimed that we were the sole authorities of Kimo's organization. **Response:** Romuva NA does not belong to any one person. Not to Kimo, not to Leslie, not to Maryte. It has never been set up that way. However, the Board of Directors made the claim that we were the sole authorities of Romuva NA because we were acknowledged as such by Romuva LT (<https://alkas.lt/2021/03/21/siaures-amerikos-romuva-pripazinta-jav/>). Prior to that, we made no such claims as there was no dispute.
6. **Allegation:** We publicly denied that Kimo's and our organizations were two separate entities. **Response:** This is correct. While Kimo had been Vaidila of West Coast US Romuva prior to becoming the Vaidila for Romuva NA in 2012, Romuva NA was always one entity. Kimo's claims that he never knew that there was "another" Romuva NA is specious at best since we had many conversations about Romuva NA. As a matter of fact, upon Romuva NA's official admittance into Romuva LT, he sent us a congratulatory message. (<https://romuva.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/image-12.png>) In addition, the "RomuvaNA"

Facebook group that Maryte set up pre-dates Kimo's "RomuvaNA" Facebook page by 4 years (<https://romuva.us/romuva-north-america-name/>) and our "Romuva-Šiaurės Amerika" ("Šiaurės Amerika" = North America) group pre-dates Kimo's page by 2 months. Note that Kimo stated that he intended his "RomuvaNA" Facebook page to "be something complimentary (sic) to the yahoo group only with the fb side" (<https://romuva.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/image-7.png>) From 1998 until Yahoo discontinued their Groups function in 2019, Maryte and Leslie managed the Romuva Yahoo group, which was the primary form of communication and discussion for our religious community. Kimo was a member of that group from about 1999 until 2012 and he was witness to many uses of the name that Maryte and Leslie first used in 2003 (during a presentation at a conference in Michigan) to denote the joint organization of Romuva USA and Romuva Canada as "Romuva North America." The original download of the 140,000 messages from the Yahoo group is available upon request. At one point in time, Kimo, Leslie (Jurate) were all Administrators / Moderators of each other's Facebook page/groups. Just a reminder that the determination by the Taryba is not legally binding and no one other than Kimo has expressed any concern with anything about our organization.

7. **Allegation:** We "knowingly conflate our 2 separate organizations." **Response:** We have announced in all of our Facebook groups that we are no longer associated with J. Kimo Arbas. We long ago removed links to Kimo's Facebook page (which is no longer operational as of at least late August of 2021 and which he has publicly and without evidence accused us of shutting it down). We don't know what more we can do to make it clear that we have no association with him. See item 15 below.
8. **Allegation:** We continue to solicit donations under the false claim (he's not clear on the "false claim, so am making an assumption) that we are one and the same organization. **Response:** See item 7 above. We have made it abundantly clear that we have no association with Kimo. Do we still continue to fundraise? Yes. We have ongoing expenses (but fairly minimal) and continue to fundraise for Romuva North America, Inc., a legal ecclesiastical organization in Michigan.
9. **Allegation:** We are asking for and receiving money under false pretenses. **Response:** Kimo has publicly accused the organization and in particular Leslie Rzeznik of "criminal fraud" on Facebook and other venues. He has accused us of "cheating" our donors and other very serious accusations (these accusations are what spurred us asking for assistance from the Taryba). When he first accused us of wrongly soliciting funds on his page, we reached out to the four donors who had donated by that time. Of those four, only one had "liked" his page. The other three had donated from the posts we made in our Facebook groups. The board decided that if anyone indicated that they intended to donate to Kimo specifically, we would gladly forward those funds to him. However, not one person came forward and said they felt misled or wanted their donations to go to Kimo. At this time, the GoFundMe had raised \$290. The one person who was both his page follower and a member of our groups replied: "Jūratė, as I recall, your original message speaks of incorporation, only, and that is what you did, apparently."

10. **Allegation:** Kimo's organization has been an officially registered part of Romuva since 2011. **Response:** Kimo brought Romuva NA into Romuva LT in 2016 (email from Inija Trinkūnienė confirming this available upon request). Prior to that, Romuva NA was "unofficially" part of Romuva LT. Kimo has never provided any evidence that Romuva NA was officially registered prior to 2016, as evidenced in this article provided earlier: <https://alkas.lt/2021/03/21/siaures-amerikos-romuva-pripazinta-jav/>
11. **Allegation:** Vaidila is exclusively a term within the Romuva organization of Lithuania. **Response:** "Vaidila" is a historical term used to demote a "priest" in our ancient faith. There is nothing to prevent Romuva NA from anointing their own Vaidilai and we have always reserved that option.
- 12 **Allegation:** We had not registered using "Romuva North America" nor informed or complained to Kimo when he was publicly operating under the name "Lietuvos Romuva North America" and we are conflating the name with "Romuva USA." **Response:** Until we incorporated in 2020, we had no legal registration of the name, so that part is correct. However, we had publicly used Romuva North America since we established our Facebook group in May of 2007. The URL even uses RomuvaNA (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/romuvana>). And our other Facebook group uses the Lithuanian words for Romuva North America – Romuva Šiaurės Amerika, established two months prior to Kimo's page Lietuvos Romuva North America. **As we understand it, common law trademark / servicemark would give precedence to our use of Romuva North America over Kimo's claim.** As to us never complaining that he was using Lietuvos Romuva North America – it was never an issue as we were one and the same. As to conflating the name with Romuva USA – Romuva USA was incorporated in Wisconsin in 1992 (though you won't find it in their state database as it was registered on the county level, which apparently was something that was done back then), but we have never conflated Romuva USA and Romuva North America and never represented it as such to the Taryba.
- 13 **Allegation:** The use of the .us TLD for our website somehow signifies that we are Romuva USA and not Romuva North America. **Response:** As you may know, competition for domain names is often fierce. Romuva.com was owned by our previous elder. After she died, the domain was snatched up by a squatter before we could buy it. So we chose the .us TLD rather than pay the thousands of dollars they were asking for the .com domain name.
- 14 **Allegation:** We wanted to harvest money from the "approximately 2000 followers" of (Kimo's) facebook (sic) page, which was suddenly taken down by facebook (sic) for policy violations". **Response:** This is the type of libel Kimo has been promoting. The only reason we posted the link to the GoFundMe on his page is because we were one and the same organization. At that time, Kimo's page had 1,600 "Likes" but little engagement. Our intent was always to include Kimo in leadership, but his failure to show leadership since 2012 and particularly from the time we posted the GoFundMe at the beginning of 2020 until the end of the year led us to withhold a seat on the board. Kimo has posted in at least three different

places on Facebook that we were responsible for his Facebook page being shut down. He has not provided any evidence that his Facebook page was shut down by Facebook, and we have reason to doubt this claim, especially knowing how difficult it is to get even the most egregious Facebook pages taken down. I have consulted with all of the leadership of Romuva NA, and no one complained to Facebook that his page was “impersonating another organization.”

15. **Allegation:** “Romuva.us still wrongly claims that they are part of Romuva (“Lietuvos Romuva” i.e. (sic) Romuva of Lithuania)” **Response:** The page he screenshot was added after the announcement in the spring by Romuva LT that recognized Romuva NA as the same organization Kimo brought into Romuva LT (going so far as to mention the board members by name) (<https://alkas.lt/2021/03/21/siaures-amerikos-romuva-pripazinta-jav/>) and prior to the December ruling by the Taryba. This was an oversight on our part and the parenthetical text has been removed (<https://romuva.us/uncategorized/krive-krivis-vaidilai-and-seniunai-the-hierarchical-structure-of-romuva/>). To clarify, we are still unofficially a part of Lietuvos Romuva, just as we had been since 1992, prior to Kimo bringing us officially into Romuva LT in 2016. We still have access to the Krivule Ratas (Priest’s Circle) mailing list but do not have voting rights. We have the option to apply as a separate organization given the Taryba’s ruling, but have opted not to apply at this time.

16. **Allegation:** We “imply that (Kimo) was (our) Vaidila . . . and that they fired me when they incorporated in Michigan.” **Response:** We do not mention Kimo anywhere on our site.

I hope that I have addressed all of the allegations made against us. I apologize if I have missed any of them, as they are mixed in with screenshots and the like and not very organized. We would be happy to address any additional concerns.

The complaint that Kimo makes is baseless. He has no evidence for the majority of his claims. Kimo’s “summary” of the Taryba’s declaration is suspect (I encourage you to read the original, but please understand that there may be errors in the Google translation). It is terribly unfortunate and disappointing that the Taryba refused to review our documentation - if they had, we are confident they would have come to a far different conclusion. Kimo’s complaint here is tame compared to how he has libeled us continuously, and especially since the declaration of the Taryba, which emboldened him. If you require anything further, please do not hesitate to reach out..

Sincerely,

Leslie (Jūratė) Rzeznik  
Director, Romuva North America

Agreed to and approved by additional Board Members:

Marija Kuncaitis

Laura Juozunas

Bernie Abromaitis