A Petition to Release Mac OS 8.1 and 8.5.1

To: Apple Computer, Inc.

In the same spirit that prompted Apple to release the complete Mac OS 7.5.3 operating system as a free download several years ago, we also believe that Apple should also make the complete Mac OS 8.1 and 8.5.1 operating systems available for free public download.

Apple has had several fundamental "key incarnations" of the Macintosh operating system. For example, System 6 was the first to support the new breed of color Macintosh systems and introduced MultiFinder to the masses. System 7 brought the Macintosh into "prime time" without leaving the legacy machines too far behind. And while Mac OS 7.5.3 was the last incarnation to support "32-bit dirty" machines (II, IIx, IIcx, and SE/30), MacOS 7.6.1 (which is little more than an update to 7.5.3, both freely available from Apple) was the last incarnation to support 68030 and earlier processors.

Similarly, Mac OS 8.1 and 8.5.1 mark two key turning points in Mac OS history. Version 8.1 was a much more stable release than 8.0 and introduced such features as the now-ubiquitous HFS+ disk format, but more importantly it was the last version of Mac OS to support 68040 and 68LC040-based computers. Version 8.5.1 (and its update to 8.6) contains a significant amount of new PowerPC-native code when compared to 8.1 and is widely considered to be the preferred operating system for older PowerPC-based systems including the original 61/71/8100 series of machines.

Now we are living in an era of gigahertz Macintosh systems and a Unix-based OS. Apple is encouraging users to move on to modern hardware by requiring a certain level of hardware compatibility with the new OS X. Yet advocates, hobbyists and owners of "legacy" Macintosh systems still enjoy tinkering with those older platforms -- and as is almost always the case, these same people also have a much more modern system on hand to do the "real" work with using modern tools and modern operating systems.

We are not asking Apple to give up their Crown Jewels, just to make the "obsolete" versions of them more accessible to the people who are interested in them. Making Mac OS 9.x available as a complete download does not make sense for Apple at this point since we are still in a transition period between 9.x and 10.x, and Apple is still using core technologies in Mac OS 9 in order to maintain classic compatibility with OS X. In short, OS 9 is still an "active" and "alive" operating system.

But the primary users of 8.1 and 8.5.1 would be the people who CANNOT run Apple's latest and greatest operating systems on their legacy platforms, yet would still like to maintain a certain amount of usefulness from those systems. Many Macintosh enthusiasts find themselves with at least one older machine at home, often simply due to nostalgia but more practically due to Apple's high build quality and inherent longer lifespan than a typical PC. These older machines are often performing some simple duty such as providing email to a parent or a means of entertainment to a child. The only currently shipping version of "classic" Mac OS, 9.2.x, will run only on machines which are also certified to run OS X. This leaves millions of older legacy machines caught in a lurch; they cannot use the newest operating system and they often cannot download anything newer than what they already have, but they often want to run newer software which their hardware is perfectly capable of running yet requires a newer version of Mac OS than they already have. The ability to have and run Mac OS 8.1 and 8.5.1 would make those systems significantly more useful without detracting from Apple's mission for the present or the future.

This is why we, the undersigned, are requesting that Apple Computer make available a complete installer package for Mac OS 8.1, and a complete installer package for Mac OS 8.5.1. Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned
at **http://www.PetitionOnline.com/macos8x/petition.html**

To register your support of this petition, please "sign" it at http://www.PetitionOnline.com/macos8x/petition.html