

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF JONESTOWN?

DEDICATED TO DAD
FROM DICK TROPP

> We are America's offspring, many the children and grand-children of a heritage of slavery and forced labor, painful realities quite the opposite of the ideals of freedom, justice, 'concern for the individual,' that American society supposedly fosters,

> Factory workers, wage-slaves, people who toiled in the 'pastures of plenty' for starvation pay and perpetual misery, domestics, migrants, people who rode the rails seeking for jobs, who picked for food scraps among the refuse of your cities, among the wastes of people who never saw us, never cared. White, black, red and brown, haggard children of the unemployed in every city, of subsistence farmers in the Midwest and South, children of the Depression that never really ended, labor organizers, veterans of hunger marches, protests, union struggles, relief lines. We are America's 'niggers.' Old people whose eyes are bright today, but whose visages are permanently scarred with the pain of years of fruitless, thankless toil, service to a machine that had no heart, masked in ideals and promises that we knew only from afar, filtered through a thousand interpretations in a language we only dimly recognized/

> Among us is a woman who birthed dead babies in the Texas cottonfields; another was shot at in the face by her 'boss' because she came to work a few minutes late, trying to scrape something together to desperately feed seven hungry children; we are people who saw their brothers and husbands lynched and castrated, who walked the streets in fear, who worried endlessly about children who never came home/

> We, too, are those children, who searched the endless mean streets of the rotted-out insides of decayed cities, unable to find the American we saw on television, and so we struck out in anger against the walls of our prison, the web of filthy streets that held us in your nether-world/

> Among us are some who had to steal to feed their baby brothers and sisters; ^{our} mothers got sick, and ^{our} the fathers were gone (were they ever there?), running, always running away from the frustration, the hopeless confusion, the responsibility and no way to meet it.
> We are children who played in filth, ate the pawed-on mauled-ver dinky half-spoiled 'food' that was rejected as garbage from gleaming

suburban supermarkets; who were stopped on the streets, searched, roughed-up, brow- and billy-beaten, brutalized and blackjacked, even jailed at the whim of uniformed bullies who felt compelled to prove their manhood by abusing their petty authority, themselves paid-off victims of a system that created their emotional armor, their racism, their disease, and made them blind to it by giving them an opportunity to take out their frustrations in the name of the law on other victims -- us. And we were left to take out ~~our~~ own hurt on ourselves: always at the end of the line, the bottom of the 'pecking order.'

> We are the people who never fit into the slots. From whatever place we came, we had this in common: we sensed something was wrong, terribly wrong. There was a plague raging among us, a cancer eating away at America, and it had gotten into us, making us sick in a hundred ways. ~~And~~ All the appearances of plenty, the supermarkets of consumer junk, the false symbols of affluence, the abundance that was really only one man's way of stealing from a million, ~~an affluence~~ ~~that~~ only imperfectly covered up a terrible wound, a great festering ulcer that dug into the guts of our society, and our lives/

> But it was often a subtle soul-sickness; with it came the dull weight of a feeling that nothing was of any use, that we weren't of any use; > yes, we were trapped in a prison without walls; > even when we had thought we made it out, we discovered that we were still caught, our lives without a center; > even the old institutions of family and church that we took and sought refuge in were crumbling, and brought no relief, often just an intensification, a reminder of the pain, a reminder that we were nowhere, in a waste land of broken promises; the malady was still there. > The endless days at jobs where we were strangers to our work and to each other; the dingy walls, the dumb machinery, the dust and noise and thousand irritations, the slow dwath of knowing that someone could always take your place, that you really didn't matter, that you would be forgotten in a day as if you never existed...> and did we really exist? What did that mean?...the hours, the years...the toil that brought us nothing, nothing often in the guise of something. For in that world anything could be taken away, and we never really had anything, anyway. > The gradual death inside as our lives were usurped by machines, > as we labored ^{blindly} to speed the day of our ^{own} Planned obsolescence, > as we became mute, annoying statistics on someone's desk who we never

saw, as we sought relief in a hundred addictions, as we became a welfare worker's 'case,' a landlords 'tenant,' the boss's 'employee,' an 'applicant,' occupant, client, recipient, target audience, viewer, cipher in the mass of disconnected fragments of alien tribes...while being told in the smiles of the elegant advertising models and the puffy rhetoric of apologizing politicians that this was the best that the world had to offer in the way of a society!

> From that slow death of the spirit, that nameless emptiness that penetrated through whatever we might manage to patch together to ward it off, many of us sought in desperation for a refuge.

> We found each other. Our experiences, our backgrounds, were what had kept us apart, but our longing and sickness brought us together, in a realization that we were all victims. And it took one great honest human being who could remind us of that deeply-concealed truth, that ache of the spirit, and through his understanding, compassion and wisdom, his ability to penetrate to that depth and touch us at the heart of our heart's ache, our pent-up longings, deferred dreams, the answers to a thousand unanswered questions, and the endless, impossible contradictions of our lives -- it took JIM JONES to bring us together, to heal the wounds by making us realize that we were hurting in common and hurting each other...and that we needed to do something about it, that we were human, and all the same flesh and blood and mind and spirit, and needed each other, not the cheap props and cosmetics of advertising and politics, the celluloid and televised visions and excuses of what we could never be, not the sham-freedom of a society that was killing us!

> We are the people of Jonestown. Former church ministers, attorneys, nobodies, aimless college students, secretaries, pushers, prostitutes, labor organizers, social workers, Peace Corps veterans; people who searched and found, were lost, got sidetracked, stuck; jailbirds, used car salesman, machinists, designers, card-sharks, professors, ditch-diggers, railroaders, ex-CIA agents, artists, jet pilots, accountants, scientists, domestics, draughtsmen, and actors; High School sports champions, exotic dancers, half-educated,

miseducated, uneducated; health food nuts and junk-food addicts.
→ A California pharmacist and his family; a country music singer from Alabama, a man who made bricks for half a century, and his wife who managed a large ~~car~~ home in Los Angeles; widows, motherless children, 'handicapped' people, a former Marine drill sergeant; a writer for the Black Panther newspaper, commercial artists, a syndicated astrology-columnist, poverty-program co-ordinators, big-city legal secretaries, ~~car~~-pilots, successful salesman from Indiana, a show-repairman from Philadelphia, a juvenile hall counselor;
→ and hundreds who had only a dim identity as ghetto-dwellers, working as domestics, bartenders, laborers, preachers... part of the underclass that looks at 'progress' over a great unbridgable chasm, through wires and glass and iron that won't yield, like a child trying to find the gleaming jet plane in a sky filled with its ~~noise~~ noise.

→ We come from everywhere, from every corner of the nation, from every walk of life. But you won't find among us a single oil executive, diplomat, politician, judge, board chairman, casino-owner, landlord, chain-store magnate, or bank president. Or anybody who 'had it made.' We didn't have it 'made.' Even if we did in the eyes of the world, we knew something was wrong.

→ And now, today, we have shaken the dust and filth of America's cities of despair from our tired feet. We ask what loyalty we owe our foster mother America? We have drunk her bitter drink. We read her history books at her feet; worshipped her gods, obeyed her rules, paid her tax-collectors to help fill her war coffers;
→ we petitioned her for justice in front of locked doors. We earned her pittance, only to have it ripped right back off in a hundred thousand ways, enticed, tricked, gamed, persuaded, tempted, suckered, cheated, and sold on junk and entertainment, fed on ~~the~~ slow-acting, brain-curling fantasies, the shreds of fractured images and promises, the 'something' that only poorly shrouds the nothing, the great empty place of our lives into which all had disappeared.

→ The agony is that we tried to do something about it, but you wouldn't let us. You were determined to crush us with every weapon, and lie. Dozens of willing pawns have crawled all over each other for the chance to cast the first stones. Their target was a man, a

leader of men, who worked right in the rotted-out center of your cities bringing people security, a true family that would be like a shelter, a protective wall, a source of strength ~~■~~ to the people.

➤ And many came to the house of Jones. From every segment of society. College bums, barflies, drifters, people who had careers and were miserable in them, trapped in marriages that were ~~like~~ empty, dead, or cells of malignant cruelty that fed children despair and resentment; ~~people~~ people caught in failure, ~~in~~ in future-shocked institutions, a world coming apart. ➤ And the old came, who were the worst victims, ➤ and the children and teenagers who sensed they were bound for nowhere...all looking for a way out (and many had been looking for a life-time), out of the nigger-yards, the kitchens, the fields, prepared by adversity for the challenge and the task of re-making themselves; ➤ people whose lives were like the ~~animal~~ caged animal who gnaws at himself, then nurses his own wounds, and only half-aware of why, confused by pain. ➤ They came to the house of Jones, casting away old idols and superstitions, bad habits and wrong decisions, prepared to be re-made, in to regenerate human beings, molded into a unified family, our best potentials and capacities for service and responsibility brought out and nurtured in the sunlight of SOCIALIST CO-OPERATION, under a resolute and fearless leader/father/teacher who is devoted to his ideals and cannot ever be bought off, compromised, deterred, or fooled.

➤ But you tried that. You tried to stop him in every way. Shall we go into your thousand deceits now? The pain of it, the outrage that chokes down the words in our mouths. ➤ We finally find someone -- or did he find us? -- who could give a voice and eloquence to that outrage, who spoke for us whose tongues were broken, ➤ who could pull the weeds from our confusion, and direct our eyes and minds past the uncertain images, the misunderstood motives, the longings, the not-knowing-whys, the deferred dreams, ^{where?} ➤ back to the root of the problem, the root that explained all the branches that entangled our brains, that dulled our senses, creating our pain and the desire to kill it that drove us to a fearful stupidity. ➤ He woke us up out of the sleep of the oppressed. ➤ He showed us where we were, who we were, why we were, what we were. ➤ Behind the wasted and broken days that were like a night, behind the getting and spending, he divined the riddle of our abuse. And he taught it to us.

→ That the oppressor's success was in making us drown out the very consciousness of our oppression in the backwash of affluence, whose scraps we scrambled after as ~~it~~ receded into forbidden zones where we could never go. He put the pieces together, showed us what went wrong, the abuses, the robbery, the rape of the oppressors. He taught us to recognize the oppressor's face, and spoke his name to us. Identified him. And more: he taught us where he lived, and that he was human in form. And more: that he was a tottering, weak, but dangerous old man. And a coward who must ultimately be defeated. And more: That we could do it, and that we must. This was our renewal. Today we walk and build in harmony with the great shaping forces of history. We have travelled the road out of our long night.

→ We have travelled behind our leader, and we enter the morning unashamed, unafraid.

→ He worked for 25 years in the United States, fought racists, faced assassination attempts, struggled against hordes of detractors, organized, talked endlessly, travelled millions of miles and spoke to millions of persons in thousands of places; building, sacrificing all personal comforts, putting his life at the service of others, spending endless nights helping people who ~~would~~ often would abuse and turn against him, taking on the hardest ~~tasks~~ situations, and riding them through, not giving up.

→ Now, having seen the handwriting on the wall, having seen that his work would never really succeed as he wanted it to in an environment that was inhospitable and increasingly hostile, he began this community.

(Tonal Down here for U.S. consumption)

→ To our foster mother America, we say: we are an attempt to rediscover you, the "America" that never lived up to its premises and ideals of liberty and justice for all, and has finally given up. We didn't do this because we wanted to -- it was necessary.

→ Now we have a change. We are even able to build a significant measure of good-will for you. We are not anti-American; we have always been the best friend America ever had, and still are. We are ~~seriously~~ your profoundest critics, but we are not strangers to you. No. We are your ^{own} offspring, your very own children. And under Jim Jones we have tried to develop for

many years solutions to the crises in our land. But we were not about to let our leader and our movement become another in the graveyard of civil rights and progressive groups that have been back-stabbed, sold out, or who have subtly abandoned their aims and vision, lulled and tricked by the shapes, symbols, rhetoric, and empty promises of ~~xxx~~ the real traitors ~~xxxxx~~ against the American people. Or who have been decimated by troublemakers and provocateurs from within or without.

→ So we have come here, the people of Jonestown, and we have come to build. We have our remorse, our bitterness, our scars. They will never go away. But Jim Jones has always believed in lighting candles rather than cursing the darkness. And we are determined here to let our light shine.

→ Mother America, we were your children...but you didn't want us to be born. So we have come here, and will continue to come. We will not curse you, but be an ironic vindication of what you betrayed in the name of the highest human ideals and aspirations.

We will reclaim freedom's birthright. We will discover America in spite of you.

(my thought was to make this into a dramatic reading for 4-5 voices)

also, would like to make a written transcript of the tape made yesterday (Saturday evening) by those who spoke about revolutionary suicide.

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