

Social Security Recipients in Jonestown, Guyana in November 1978

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On 18 December 1978 – one month after the deaths in Jonestown – the U.S. Embassy in Guyana released a list of 656 uncashed government checks which were recovered from the jungle community site. The Embassy compilation – including the check numbers, their date of issuance, the names and Social Security numbers of their recipients, the check amounts, and their designation as Social Security benefits – was reprinted in *The Assassination of Representative Leo J. Ryan and the Jonestown, Guyana Tragedy*, the May 1979 report of the Staff Investigative Group of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

In a letter of 26 April 1979 to the House committee – also reprinted in the May 1979 report – Social Security Administration Acting Director John P. McHale said his agency had “identified 199 SSA beneficiaries who were in Jonestown, Guyana at the time of the disaster.” Since the letter did not include the names, we compiled an independent tally, which arrived at an approximate number, of 203 SSA beneficiaries. However, we cannot say whether the names on the lists below match those of the SSA.

A few of the 656 uncashed checks dated from as early as spring 1978, but most bore dates from the fall of 1978. In order to get a snapshot of Peoples Temple income from Social Security, we chose the month of September, and listed everyone who received their SSA benefits when those checks were issued on 3 October 1978. (A few September checks were issued on 2 October, although most of those apparently covered Cost Of Living Adjustments [COLA] that were added to benefits for future months.)

The following lists break down our analysis of SSA beneficiaries and other seniors in Jonestown:

- **List 1** is of the 173 individual beneficiaries or wards who received SSA checks in September 1978 (including 16 beneficiaries who received two checks).

- **List 2** is of the 9 Social Security recipients in Jonestown for whom no September check was found, but who were named on checks for other months.

- **List 3** is of the 21 Jonestown residents who do not appear on the Embassy tally, but who, according to records maintained by Peoples Temple, had received Social Security benefits while living in the United States. Why they no longer received benefits – or alternatively, why the checks they may have received were cashed and those of the others were not – is unknown.

The total for these three lists of SSA beneficiaries is 203.

- **List 4** is of the 18 Jonestown residents who were over 65 but for whom we have been unable to locate any record that they ever received Social Security benefits, whether in the U.S. or Guyana. Again, the reason for the apparent lack of benefits to these people is unknown.

There are several reasons for compiling these lists. First, they show how much the Social Security recipients – especially the seniors – contributed to the day-to-day functioning of the Jonestown community of which they were part. The total amount of \$36,548.30 from the 191 checks to the 173 people on List 1 was not the same every month, but it approximates what the Temple leadership knew it could depend upon each month for the agricultural mission at Jonestown. As a corollary, it shows the gravity of the threat the community perceived from Temple antagonists, especially the Concerned Relatives, who had lobbied the Social Security Administration – as well as the Customs Service, the U.S. Postal Service, the Treasury Department’s Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the Internal Revenue Service – to launch investigations of the Temple.

Finally, these lists reveal that, on the surface at least, there was little (if any) fraud regarding the legitimacy of Social Security benefits. Jonestown was apparently complying with its obligations to notify the SSA of deaths in the community, since the only uncashed check for Chotile Butler, who had died of natural causes earlier that year, dated from March. With one notable exception, the identity of everyone else on the Embassy compilation is known. Only the name of Clara Winters is unknown to us, and that may be due to the lack of completion to our research into Peoples Temple dead and surviving members.

List 1. Social Security Checks to Jonestown residents for September 1978

<i>Name</i>	<i>SSN</i>	<i>Date of Check</i>	<i>Amount</i>
1. Stephen M. Addison ³	303-46-0172	10/03/78	\$526.20
2. Ida M. Albury	487-01-1159	10/03/78	255.60 ¹
3. Samuel M. Anderson	437-09-2867	10/03/78	181.80
4. Luberta Arnold	435-07-4659	10/03/78	166.70
5. Ruth Atkins	496-10-9508	10/03/78	126.60
6. Geraldine H. Bailey	454-03-4909	10/03/78	100.80
7. Christine E. Bates	464-14-0063	10/03/78	267.40
8. Geneva Beal ³	428-01-8599	10/03/78	187.70 ¹
9. Alfred Bell	430-22-6843	10/03/78	328.10
10. Ethel Belle	062-22-7393	10/03/78	209.00
11. Julia Birkley	184-07-2441	10/02/78	8.20
11a. “		10/03/78	153.40
12. Odell Blackwell	299-10-4079	10/03/78	346.40 ¹
13. Willie L. Bowie	546-32-8316	10/03/78	176.70
14. Debbie Schroeder for Georgiann Brady ³	548-56-3806 ⁹	10/03/78	73.20
15. Maureen Fitch for Michel [Michelle] Brady ³	548-56-3806 ⁹	10/03/78	73.20
16. Michaelleen Brady ³	548-56-3806 ⁹	10/03/78	259.60
17. Miller Bridgewater	462-14-6771	10/03/78	369.30
18. Princeola Bryant	557-20-4404	10/03/78	157.00
19. Zelline O. Bryant [sic: name is O'Bryant]	565-42-7169	10/03/78	150.30
20. Mildred Carroll	155-14-2055	10/02/78	8.20
20a. “		10/03/78	184.80
21. Ruby J. Carroll	462-58-4023 ⁹	10/03/78	224.80
22. Ruby J. Carroll for Robert K. Carroll [Johnson]	462-58-4023 ⁹	10/03/78	116.50
23. Jossie Chambliss	057-18-2089	10/03/78	112.80 ¹
24. Joicy E. Clark	460-16-1906	10/03/78	120.00
25. Leola Clarke	568-20-5356	10/03/78	238.50 ¹
26. Nancy Clay	466-12-3550	10/03/78	319.80
27. Ida M. Clipps ³	450-20-9515	10/03/78	244.00
28. Alma Coachman ³	439-28-5815	10/03/78	188.00
29. Arlander Cole	426-09-8340	10/03/78	342.90
30. Arvella Cole	427-36-5314	10/03/78	194.70
31. Mary Coleman	162-20-6607	10/03/78	121.10
32. Susie L. Collins	439-34-2413	10/03/78	187.30
33. Inez S. Conedy	444-16-3639	10/03/78	379.70
34. Bertha P. Cook	548-28-8879	10/03/78	209.00
35. Edith E. Cordell	303-12-2557	10/03/78	156.10

36.	Mary Cottingham	251-26-9583	10/03/78	152.90 ¹
37.	Millie S. Cunningham	258-48-4173	10/02/78	8.20
37a.	“		10/03/78	123.00
38.	Najuandrienne Darnes ³	462-54-3532	10/03/78	252.80 ^{1a}
38a.	“		10/03/78	126.40 ^{1a}
39.	Hazel F. Dashiell	037-18-9457	10/03/78	352.60
40.	Lexie S. Davis	464-18-8045	10/03/78	315.30
41.	Beatrice J. Dawkins ³	490-20-5807	10/03/78	243.60
42.	Edith F. Delaney	524-03-0457	10/03/78	311.70
43.	Lovie H. De Pina	146-07-0053	10/03/78	131.00
44.	Bessie L. Dickson ³	463-16-7544	10/03/78	205.90
45.	Katherine M. Domineck	460-01-9261	10/03/78	352.60
46.	Farene Douglas	511-07-7428	10/03/78	141.50
47.	Corrie Duncan	464-24-1023	10/03/78	106.90
48.	Irene Eddins	440-18-1621	10/03/78	99.10 ¹
49.	Zipporah Edwards	304-26-4141	10/03/78	233.10
50.	Amanda Fair	553-14-6607	10/03/78	170.50
51.	Sylvester C. Fair	450-26-3373	10/03/78	372.70
52.	Marshall Farris	429-05-3245	10/03/78	381.10
53.	Beulah Foster	426-40-3745	10/03/78	281.50
54.	Attie [sic: name is Mattie] Gibson	410-26-9220	10/03/78	163.40
55.	Irma L. Gill	429-34-4050	10/03/78	130.00 ¹
56.	Raymond O. Godshalk ³	555-07-4198	10/03/78	308.70
57.	Claude Goodspeed	463-16-6315 ⁹	10/03/78	333.50
58.	Lue D. Goodspeed	463-16-6315 ⁹	10/03/78	150.30 ¹
59.	Estella M. Railback for Mae K. Griffith ³	457-26-5033 ⁹	10/03/78	111.10
60.	Mary M. Griffith for Marian L. Griffith ³	437-26-5442	10/03/78	267.20
61.	Mercedese M. Guidry	439-26-5550	10/03/78	117.10
62.	Carl G. Hall	568-18-9611	10/03/78	373.50
63.	Artee Harper	437-09-5543	10/03/78	203.70
64.	Ollie B. Harrington ³	428-70-2459	10/03/78	291.00
65.	Annie M. Harris	437-26-8365	10/03/78	146.90
66.	Josephine Harris	357-07-5154	10/03/78	101.60
67.	Nevada Harris	465-32-6333	10/03/78	188.20
68.	Willie M. Harris ³	253-16-0266	10/03/78	174.80 ^{1b}
68a.	“		10/03/78	174.80
69.	Joseph Helle ³	544-24-9228	10/03/78	149.30
70.	Nena D. Herring	548-03-9351	10/03/78	256.10

71.	Emma M. Hill ³	454-24-1452	10/03/78	146.20
72.	Hazel Horne ³	200-20-0447	10/03/78	121.80
73.	Beatrice A. Jackson	557-34-9632	10/03/78	195.70
74.	Dave B. Jackson	435-05-5208	10/03/78	307.10
75.	Donald Jackson ³	438-64-3394	10/03/78	494.70 ¹
76.	Rosa L. Jackson ³ for Leticia L. Jackson ³	449-38-8571	10/10/78	274.20
77.	Luvenia Jackson	435-05-5208	10/03/78	138.20
78.	Rosa L. Jackson	449-38-8571	10/10/78	237.00 ¹
79.	Lavana James	467-52-1190	10/03/78	109.50
80.	Margaret James ³	124-16-6941	10/03/78	336.00 ¹
81.	Eartis Jeffery	450-20-4230 ⁹	10/03/78	134.10
82.	Margrette Jeffery	450-20-4230 ⁹	10/03/78	66.00
83.	Berda T. Johnson	564-16-4496	10/03/78	113.60
84.	Earl Johnson	440-12-6910	10/03/78	130.00
85.	Vennie Thompson for Garnett B. Johnson ³	500-18-1647	10/03/78	244.20
86.	Helen Johnson ³	437-38-6670	10/02/78	8.20
86a.	“		10/03/78	133.20
87.	Jessie Johnson	440-26-1483	10/03/78	209.00
88.	Mahaley Johnson	457-38-5678	10/03/78	237.10
89.	Ruby L. Johnson ³	464-50-9154	10/03/78	211.90
90.	Eliza Jones	526-28-8756	10/03/78	121.80
91.	Nancy M. Jones	430-70-3159	10/03/78	90.30
92.	Dessie Jordan	547-28-9725	10/03/78	185.40
93.	Fannie Jordan	433-56-1779	10/02/78	8.20
93a.	“		10/03/78	214.20
94.	Emma Jurado	434-24-0616	10/03/78	225.70
95.	Rosa L. Keaton	563-30-8822	10/03/78	343.90
96.	Tommie S. Keaton Sr. ³	452-07-3010	10/03/78	342.60
97.	Viola B. Kelley ²	492-09-5056	10/03/78	215.40
98.	Elfreida Kendall	453-28-7761	10/03/78	241.30
99.	Charlotte King	568-24-0133	10/03/78	119.40
100.	Pearl Land	461-12-0179	10/03/78	194.40 ¹
101.	Lossie M. Lang	452-16-4351	10/03/78	114.40
102.	Heavenly H. Love	177-28-8480	10/03/78	106.20 ¹
103.	Lovelife Lowe	088-42-5801	10/03/78	208.00 ¹
104.	Lovie Jean Lucas	567-28-7088	10/02/78	8.20
104a.	“		10/03/78	112.40
105.	Lillian E. Malloy	124-14-0111	10/03/78	256.50

106. Irene Mason	421-24-4439	10/03/78	207.80
107. Mary Mayshack	435-05-7625	10/03/78	214.50
108. Allie McClain	430-38-8524	10/03/78	113.60
109. Annie J. McGowan	355-01-1484	10/03/78	204.70
110. Levatus McKinnis	437-20-9204	10/02/78	9.00
110a. “		10/03/78	412.50
111. Henry Mercer	199-03-7717	10/03/78	309.30
112. Lucy Miller	421-42-9554	10/03/78	77.30
113. Callie Mae Mitchell	573-03-9362	10/03/78	101.50
114. Edward Moore ³	435-12-5944	10/03/78	206.20
115. Pearley Morris	428-05-7925	10/02/78	8.20
115a. “		10/03/78	80.10
116. Lugenia Morrison ³	461-26-5632 ⁹	10/03/78	147.00
116a. Lugenia Morrison ³ for children of J. Morrison	461-26-5632 ⁹	10/03/78	147.00
117. Eura L. Moses	549-24-7040	10/03/78	225.30
118. Glen Moton	263-05-7316	10/03/78	287.20
119. Esther Mueller	303-26-4442	10/03/78	171.60
120. Mary Murphy	385-26-7009	10/03/78	107.70 ¹
121. Ida M. Nichols	367-26-9638	10/02/78	8.20 ^{1c}
121a. “		10/03/78	[illegible]
122. Jane Owens ³	510-12-5707	10/02/78	8.20
122a. “		10/03/78	156.40
123. Beatrice Parker	096-03-0411	10/03/78	345.00
124. Lore B. Parris	490-14-8308	10/03/78	219.60
125. Lucille E. Payney	568-12-2637	10/03/78	259.60
126. Lenora Perkins	548-30-8151	10/03/78	162.50
127. Rosey L. Peterson	549-38-5158	10/03/78	177.90
128. Oreen Poplin	466-05-6300	10/03/78	359.80
129. Eva H. Pugh	304-01-7850	10/03/78	479.20
130. Estella M. Railback	457-26-5033 ⁹	10/03/78	209.00
131. Willie B. Reed	423-16-8734	10/02/78	8.20
131a. “		10/03/78	112.10
132. Bertha Reese	449-32-5572	10/03/78	227.60
133. L. Bee Reeves	351-03-3642	10/03/78	269.90
134. Gladys Roberts	564-36-6628	10/03/78	284.40
135. Mary [Flavia] Rodgers	547-30-4649	10/03/78	264.90
136. Edith F. Roller ³	524-05-2230	10/03/78	260.20
137. Elsie Ross	466-12-6011	10/03/78	113.60

138.	Lula M. Ruben	464-30-1169	10/03/78	154.20
139.	Flora B. Sanders	567-30-0464	10/03/78	185.40
140.	Pauline Scott ³	214-26-7043	10/03/78	164.30
141.	Rose O. Sharon	185-44-3527	10/03/78	184.40
142.	Rose J. Shelton	548-38-8705	10/03/78	274.90 ¹
143.	Jose Simon	548-22-9700	10/03/78	269.90
144.	Bertha Smith	437-12-4033	10/02/78	8.20
144a.	“		10/03/78	209.20
145.	Vernon Smith ³	457-05-5188	10/03/78	167.80
146.	Eloise Sneed	449-10-6349	10/03/78	257.80
147.	Helen Snell	464-10-8551	10/03/78	213.10
148.	Alfred R. Stahl	310-03-8968 ⁹	10/03/78	318.40
149.	Carol A. Stahl ³	310-03-8968 ⁹	10/03/78	157.80
150.	Carol A. Stahl ³ for Bonnie L. Stahl ³	310-03-8968 ⁹	10/03/78	157.80
151.	Abraham L. Staten	223-24-5162	10/03/78	390.80
152.	Ameal Staten	435-30-8092	10/03/78	205.10
153.	Adeleine M. Strider	568-24-4025	10/03/78	263.60 ¹
154.	Cleave L. Swinney	303-10-4049	10/03/78	280.10
155.	Bernell M. Tardy	570-18-9112	10/03/78	155.60
156.	Lillian M. Taylor	565-12-2482	10/03/78	180.00 ¹
157.	Lucille B. Taylor	564-36-8501	10/03/78	206.70
158.	Virginia V. Taylor	205-12-2261	10/03/78	112.10
159.	Bernice Thomas	494-30-7132	10/03/78	109.90
160.	Ernest Thomas ³	464-18-4492	10/03/78	353.20
161.	Etta Thompson	450-20-5494	10/03/78	218.20 ¹
162.	Vennie Thompson	436-44-0348	10/03/78	100.90
163.	Essie Townes	554-50-7066	10/02/78	8.20
163a.	“		10/03/78	132.10
164.	Alfred W. Tschetter ³	545-48-0030	10/03/78	375.60
165.	Martha Turner	556-34-6783	10/03/78	134.80
166.	Roberta Wade	525-40-9358	10/03/78	89.80 ¹
167.	Mary N. Walker	566-52-7362	10/03/78	117.50
168.	Eddie Washington	548-44-3253	10/03/78	217.20
169.	Bessie M. Wesley ³	573-09-2371	10/03/78	103.30
170.	Louise Williams	463-34-2951	10/02/78	8.20
170a.	“		10/03/78	264.20
171.	Theo Williams ³	459-03-8056	10/03/78	222.40
172.	Erma M. Winfrey	547-30-0322	10/03/78	109.70

173. Leomy Wright ³	428-22-0096 ⁹	10/03/78	34.90
173a. Leomy Wright ³ for children of C. H. Wright	428-22-0096 ⁹	10/03/78	69.80

List 2. Other Checks to Social Security Recipients Recovered from Jonestown (no September check)

1. Chotile Butler⁵ Died earlier in 1978, only check dated March 1978
2. Leroy Jackson⁴ One Social Security check, for October; same SSN as Rosa L. Jackson
3. Amondo Griffith One Social Security check, for August; same SSN as Mary M. Griffith
4. Bossie Jones Two Social Security checks, for June and July. Appears on death list, but other information is scant; perhaps died in Jonestown before 11/18/78?
5. Jessie B. McNeal One Social Security check, for October
6. Virginia Middleton³ One Social Security check, for October
7. Richard Wade⁴ One Social Security check, for July; same SSN as Roberta Wade
8. Annie Washington Two Social Security checks, for July and August, each \$122.60
9. Clara (?) Winters⁴ Two Social Security checks, for July and August, each \$141.40

List 3. Other Jonestown Residents Who Had Received SSA Benefits While Living in the United States

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Birth</i>
1. Orelia Anderson	6/8/1910
2. Vivian Anderson ⁵	1/1/1909
3. Lena Mae Camp Benton	11/24/1909
4. Madeleine Josephine Brooks ⁶	12/15/1904
5. Isabel Davis	12/14/1906
6. Miguel De Pina ⁶	9/29/1894
7. Eugenia Gernandt	3/12/1923
8. Juanita Green ³	9/5/1916
9. Heloise Janice Hall ⁶	12/7/1911
10. Dorothy Lasheene Harris ^{3, 6}	1/17/1961
11. Mabel Ellen Walker Hines ⁶	12/29/1912
12. Phyllis Houston ³	3/26/1944
13. Robert Johnson	12/8/1903
14. Emma Addie Kennedy	10/28/1911
15. Gertrude Nailor	3/21/1910
16. Plickards Norris ⁵	10/31/1905
17. Odenia Adams Roberson	3/10/1905
18. Novella Novice Sneed	6/18/1907
19. Vera Talley	2/3/1903
20. Hyacinth Thrash ⁶	4/25/1902
21. Mary Pearl Willis ³	12/21/1940

List 4. Jonestown Seniors for whom No SSA Benefits Are Listed, either in U.S. or Guyana

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Birth</i>
1. Lillian Boyd Alexander	2/17/1906
2. Mary Francis Canada	1/20/1901
3. Grover Davis Cleveland	1/22/1899
4. Florine Dyson ⁷	12/6/1890
5. Ever Rejoicing, aka Amanda Poindexter	10/9/1881
6. Helen Ford, aka Helen Love	11/6/1900
7. Herman W. Gee	3/27/1897
8. Emmett Alexander Griffith, Jr. ⁵	4/13/1911
9. Osialee Hilton	1/4/1894
10. Lynetta Jones ⁵	unknown
11. Lula Elizabeth Jordan	11/25/1907

12. Love M. Joy	12/18/1891
13. Georgia Lee Lacy	2/9/1910
14. Alluvine McGowan	3/13/1888
15. Earl McKnight	2/18/1895
16. Lela Murphy ⁸	7/17/1897
17. Syola Williams Turner	6/27/1912
18. Carolyn Young	9/1/1900

Notes:

¹ When a SSA recipient received two checks in one month, the lesser amount appears to be a COLA payment for September (since the lesser amount is then included in the October check). The exceptions to this are:

^{1a} Najuandrienne Darnes, who received two checks for the same amount each month.

^{1b} Willie M. Harris, who received two checks for the same amount each month

^{1c} Ida M. Nichols, whose primary September check is illegible, but whose August and October checks are the same amount (\$121.80)

² Viola Kelley is listed as receiving only one SSA check, for September.

³ While most Social Security recipients were men and women over 65, there were 43 recipients of Social Security checks who were younger. Another three had received SSA checks in the U.S., but not in Guyana

⁴ These three listed recipients were not on any death or survivor lists of Peoples Temple members in Guyana in November 1978. Two recipients (Leroy Jackson and Richard Wade) had the same Social Security numbers as their spouses (Rosa L. Jackson and Roberta Wade, respectively), and these spouses received subsequent checks in their own name. The third, Clara Winters (whose first name is a guess, since the telegram had been photocopied into illegibility at several points) is unknown.

⁵ Six people are known to have died in Jonestown of natural causes before the events of 18 November 1978.

⁶ Six of the 15 people who received SSA benefits in the U.S. – but who have no listing in the Embassy telegram of 18 December 1978 – had immediate family relatives who did receive benefits in Guyana. Madeleine Brooks, Dorothy Harris, and Hyacinth Thrash had sisters; Miguel De Pina, Heloise Hall and Mabel Hines were married to recipients.

⁷ While Florine Dyson received no SSA benefits, she did receive VA benefits, at least while living in the U.S. The VA benefit seemingly did not transfer to Guyana.

⁸ Lela Murphy was born in Canada, which may explain why she didn't receive SSA benefits.

⁹ Many family members had the same Social Social Security number, shared with child, ward, or spouse. This is no longer the practice.