



# **THE NEED FOR A SECOND LOOK AT JONESTOWN**

Edited by  
Rebecca Moore & Fielding M. McGehee III

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Remembering Its People**

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## Introduction

**Rebecca Moore**  
**Fielding M. McGehee III**

Most people who were old enough to read a newspaper in 1978 remember the stories — and photographs — which came out of Guyana in November of that year. They can probably still repeat the popular version of what happened in Jonestown on November 18: A handful of gunmen shot and killed a U.S. Congressman and some reporters in the remote jungle of a formerly unknown South American country. Then, some 900 Americans killed their children and took their own lives — some voluntarily, some involuntarily — by drinking a poisonous brew dispensed by nurses and a doctor. The people who died, as well as the assassins, belonged to some crazy religious cult called Peoples Temple. The group was led by a madman named Jim Jones.

Some had heard about Peoples Temple and Jim Jones before that November more than ten years ago. The group and its leader were powerful forces in San Francisco. They made friends in the right places and they supported the right causes. But even before the final, spectacular disaster, the news media in California had reported accounts of intimidation, brutalization, and coercion of Peoples Temple members. Ex-members who had fled the church told tales that aroused the anger, and interest, of the entire San Francisco Bay area.

A few of these people said they weren't surprised by the final holocaust, that it was inevitable, given everything that had gone before. Most, however, including surviving Peoples Temple members and ex-members, experienced shock, horror, and disbelief. No one truly expected the group ever to act on the suicide rhetoric that had been rehearsed for a number of years.

Within a day the entire world knew everything about Peoples



Temple, at least everything that was reported in the media. Sordid stories about sex, drugs, and beatings emerged. A few tried to hold on to what had been good about the Temple: the idealism and hope of its people; the generosity and self-sacrifice of its members. Those who personally had known Temple members were well aware that the news media broadcast only half the truth — the lurid and sensationalistic half — and ignored the half which would have portrayed the Jonestown victims as human beings.

"It never occurred to me that these people had families back in the States," a Guyanese woman confided to us when we visited Jonestown in 1979. She and the other women of her small settlement in the northwest jungles of Guyana had cried for all the children at the time of their deaths. Six months later, she wept for all the families.

In the decade which has elapsed, the initial view about Peoples Temple and Jonestown has changed little. Two dozen books have been published that focus on the bizarre and seamy side of the Temple. Less than a handful have dealt with the group from a serious or scholarly point of view.

Yet in spite of all these books, no one has a clear sense of what the events at Jonestown *mean* for us. Part of this stems from the fact that critics of Peoples Temple have long had the loudest voices on the subject. Those who are sympathetic to the victims have been quieter, almost ashamed or afraid to defend people they knew and loved, baffled by the final day and its repudiation of all they felt the Temple stood for. Part of this comes from conflicting reports of the final hours: was it voluntary or was it forced? how many bodies were really there, how many were missing? how many people really escaped? Unanswered questions continue to haunt those who wonder what really happened that day.

The real problem, however, is that as individuals and as a society we have been unable to integrate Jonestown, and all it means, into our history. The anger still exists, as do hate, fear, and grief. These emotions still bubble beneath the surface because society has not allowed family members to grieve, and to discuss the issues with friends and relatives. When Jonestown happened, the curtain fell on the drama when instead it should have risen.

This is particularly true of San Francisco and what happened in that liberal community. The most tolerant city in the world could not accept what happened in Jonestown. It has not woven the event into the many-colored fabric of its life and culture. The assassinations of San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, occur-

ring just a week after the Jonestown deaths, compounded the confusion and anxiety city residents were experiencing. The combined impact of those events has been compared to the effect of the John F. Kennedy assassination, according to one of the writers in this volume. The difference, of course, is that we can talk about the Kennedy assassination.

This book, then, is an attempt to open dialogue on a forbidden subject. It examines what happened to people *after* the deaths in Jonestown and in San Francisco. No books have covered this subject before. In fact, most books end with the events of November 18, as though that were the end of the story. For many, including the contributors to this volume, it was the beginning.

These writers knew Peoples Temple members, not as statistics, not as a mound of bodies, not as murderers or suicides, but as people. For them, the bodies had names and faces. For them, therefore, the search for meaning was more difficult than for those who could write off the victims as crazy cultists.

Most of the people who contributed to this book are not professional writers. Instead, they write from personal experience and insight. Almost all knew Peoples Temple members and had a personal relationship with several of them. Some are critical, some are questioning, and some are still loyal to the memory of those who died ten years ago. Their voices have been unheard until now.

Three of the writers—Garry Scarff, B. Alethia Orsot, and Kathy Barbour—belonged to Peoples Temple. The rest had intimate contact with the Temple, ranging from working with members on a number of issues, such as Fran Peavey, Carlton Goodlett, and Donnereter and John Lane; to counseling surviving members, as did Lowell Streiker, Chris Hatcher, and Rabbi Malcolm Sparer. Still others, such as Tom MacMillan, Jynona Norwood, Barbara Moore and Robert Moore, write of the profound impact the deaths had upon their families, their communities and upon their everyday lives.

Reading these essays, one might not know the writers were all describing the same people or the same event. This is the book's strength. In 1945 George Orwell wrote that "It is only when there are large numbers of newspapers, expressing all tendencies, that there is some chance of getting at the truth." Our approach to Peoples Temple, with all its complexities and subtleties, its horror stories and its deep sense of community, its multiple layers of leadership, its public and private personae, has been the same. It is only by presenting the broadest

possible range of viewpoints that we can begin to reach the truth — or at least pieces of the truth — about the Temple.

One vision of the truth comes through the artwork of San Francisco artist Joe Sam. We asked the artist to do a series of pieces about Peoples Temple. His work is included throughout, and as a whole makes a unique statement.

The collection has another strength. When we began soliciting the essays more than a year ago, our intent was to show how individuals closely linked to the Temple and Jonestown have handled their grief in the past decade. In that way, we thought, we could help to heal others who hadn't confronted their grief. That has changed. In working with our writers — and, almost as importantly, with the people who turned down our offer for a forum — we have learned that the time is not yet ripe for healing. Our society still isn't ready to hear about Jonestown, or to deal with it. As Donetter and John Lane note, we haven't named the event or found its redemptive value the way the Jews have with the Holocaust. It will take another ten, or twenty, or maybe even fifty years to integrate the experience into our life and thought. By that time, many of the participants will be dead. Beginning with one goal, then, we ended with another: the imperative to present these writers' thoughts at this time, to start that period of integration.

Chris Hatcher notes in his essay that Peoples Temple survivors went through nine stages of emotion and reaction before integrating the experience into their lives. The ninth and final stage is that in which the survivor feels that society has learned nothing from Jonestown. We tend to agree. The exaggerated prophecies of the anti-cult movement have not come to pass: there have been no more Jonestowns. There has been no ground-swelling response in the religious community to address the social concerns Peoples Temple members wanted to attack. And American society itself has seen the gap between rich and poor widen during the decade since Jonestown. These are not the signs of a society that has learned anything.

Although society has not changed, Jonestown did transform an entire group of individuals. Those who have lived closely with the loss over the past ten years have learned two things: the pain never really stops; and love never ends. In a sense, these writers are lucky because they have faced the pain and the grief directly. They have found meaning — at least for themselves — in an otherwise meaningless event.

"For now we see through a glass darkly, but then, face to face."





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## A San Francisco Activist Remembers

Fran Peavey

My generation has known since its adolescence that we must create new ways of thinking to avoid the nuclear bomb which ushered us into the world. As Albert Einstein said, "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking..."

I was an early anti-war protester, something of a hippie. I credit my Idaho background for my patriotic feelings of shame at what my country was doing in the Vietnam War. Yet I never wanted to burn the flag. Rather, I wanted to cleanse it, to love it in a way that allowed it, and the people it represented, to grow up. But in the 1960s and 1970s my limited vision eroded the core of my work against the war, and for change. Like many of my peers, I was looking for answers to profound social questions. In the early 1970s, shortly after Richard Nixon visited China, I too traveled there where I saw communities experimenting with different ideas of social cohesion and change. This excited my imagination, and challenged me to think about new ways in which our own society could change.

There are few institutions in my adopted home, San Francisco, in the entire country for that matter, where one can connect deeply with people of a race different from one's own. So I was interested when newspaper articles about Peoples Temple in the 1970s painted a picture of a social movement aimed at helping the poor and challenging people to live beyond the isolation of race. I had first read about Peoples Temple several years earlier, when the entire church in Indianapolis moved west to Ukiah, California to avoid the radiation fallout from a nuclear war. I thought it strange that these people really believed they could be safe in a nuclear war. I have long been interested in the use of social hysteria to control people. It seemed to me from the article I read that this might be a problem threatening democracy in Peoples Temple.

I distinctly remember the day the Peoples Temple newsletter, *Peoples Forum*, was pushed under my door. I read it with genuine interest. They seemed to be doing great things in health care and education. The idea of black and white, young and old, poor and middle class people working, living, and learning together attracted me the most. I am white, although I prefer to think of myself as pink, and since becoming an adult, I have longed to be able to connect with people who have values and traditions different from my own. It is frustrating that this is so difficult to achieve.

On the basis of what I read in the newsletter, I thought I would check out Peoples Temple. Before I went, I consulted my friend Faye, who I knew had been involved with the Temple. Perhaps she would accompany me, or at least advise me how best to approach the Temple. Faye ran the corner laundrette. One day while doing my laundry, I mentioned to her that I was thinking of visiting the Temple. An ominous look flashed across her black face and she shook her head. "I wouldn't," she said and mumbled something about having left the Temple. She was reluctant to talk further. The naked fear in her eyes was sufficient warning. I never went.

It turned out, however, that as a leader in the International Hotel struggle, I had ample opportunity to work with Jim Jones, the leader of Peoples Temple, and to see other Temple members in many public settings. The International Hotel was an old four-story walk-up in the heart of what used to be Manilatown. About a hundred tenants lived there off and on, including elderly Filipinos and Chinese, seamen and their wives, and other people with minimum incomes. Most tenants had lived in the hotel for years, and a real sense of community had developed. In 1976, the owners of the International Hotel wanted to raze the structure to erect an office building on the site. Jim Jones was a member of the housing commission and participated in a number of decisions and campaigns involving low cost housing, including the International Hotel.

I lived in the hotel and worked for the International Hotel Tenants Association for over a year. During that time Jim Jones made several passionate and compelling speeches as we fought in one of the most intense housing struggles in the history of San Francisco. He spoke of his commitment to the hotel and of the just nature of our cause. Indeed, his commitment seemed real. Jim Jones bussed over Temple members to the rallies we staged; over 2000 people from the church attended one of them. I looked at the faces of these people as they

marched around the hotel with us. There were elderly black men and women who looked like they had known plenty of hard physical work, and young, white, middle-class idealists. It felt deeply satisfying to have so many black faces join the primarily Asian and white faces in the demonstration.

Jim Jones had gained political clout in San Francisco as a result of his being able to deliver a crowd to any meeting or rally. Once, at a Housing Authority hearing devoted to the I-Hotel, over 200 members of Peoples Temple came to fill the audience. I identified them easily because each had the same size brown bag lunch. Still, one thing puzzled me. When I asked several members whether they were from the Temple, each responded as if programmed, "I am just a concerned citizen." Though I continued to question them, I could not get these people to share any information. And we were supposed to be on the same side!

I remember representatives from Jim Jones attending several high-level meetings we held in preparation for rallies or resistance to evictions. We were told that he only sent his most respected leaders to deal with us, his right-hand men. Several things seemed odd to me about these representatives. First, Jim Jones always sent white men. Where were the right-hand women? And where was this great interracial leadership structure? These men told me that there were many female leaders and black leaders, too. But I never saw one. Second, the representatives were always nodding off in the meetings. When I asked them about it, they bragged in macho tones tinged with martyrdom, that they worked all night and regularly got only two to three hours of sleep. Third, they were always passionate and definite about how much they cared about us — about all poor people struggling in the world.

Jim Jones was one of a small group of ministers from liberal churches in the city on record as supporting our cause. There were several periods when the sheriff legally could have evicted us. During one of these periods, this group of ministers — Jim Jones, Glide Church's Cecil Williams, and several others — swooped into the hotel late at night saying they had heard the sheriff was coming and they wanted to be with us. These ministers seemed to think that we did not have sources of information inside the sheriff's office and the police station, that we did not have a whole evaluation system that allowed us to know when the sheriff was, in fact, coming. At the time I guessed they were just conducting a dry run to see how we would react. We told them our information was contrary to theirs, that we did not expect the sheriff



that evening, and did nothing. As Jim Jones left, I remember him pressing each of our hands with both of his big hands saying, "I will be with you." When 400 police officers did come in the middle of the night, August 4, 1977, with horses and fire trucks breaking through 3000 nonviolent supporters, and throwing the 60 elderly tenants out of their homes into the streets, Jim Jones was not with us.

Several weeks after the eviction, at a rally at San Quentin against the death penalty, I met two women I recognized from Peoples Temple. An article had come out in *New West Magazine* about certain "strange practices" in the Temple — physical abuse and punishment, bizarre sexual rules and practices, such as confessions of homosexuality and open marriages, and issues relating to the treatment of children who had been taken from their parents and the State of California. In the *New West* article, and later in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, there were rumors that a sizeable population of Peoples Temple was moving to Guyana, South America. Never one to trust the press completely, I jumped at the chance to ask the women at the San Quentin demonstration what was really happening in the Temple. One woman was black, the other white. I directed my questions to both women with my eyes, but no matter how hard I tried to have a three-way discussion, the black woman deferred to the white woman. I finally asked the black woman directly if she was under instructions not to talk. She said that it was not up to her to answer these questions. I felt suspicious of the racist dynamic in that conversation and, as I looked back at my dealings with white leaders only, I wondered about the rosy picture of the races working together in equality in Peoples Temple.

My experiences with the Temple did not convince me that this organization was truly committed to integrating cultures. But had I been a member of the Temple, I think I might have overlooked many things wrong with the community if I had seen different races and classes trying to work together. I wonder if that were a factor motivating people to overlook some of the insanity of the Temple. Surely they saw American society's inability to acknowledge these inequalities, let alone to change them. As a person who would like to learn to grow beyond the racism and classism I experienced growing up, I long for ways to connect with people of color. I think most progressives do. If I had been a Temple member, I could see myself having said, "Sure the Temple is messed up in a lot of ways, but there are some things that our community is doing better than the entire American society. We have our weak-

nesses, but we are just learning to do something no one has done before us. Cut us some slack."

I continue to wonder how the Temple members could have relinquished so much of their power to a leader like Jim Jones. He espoused socialism and communism under the guise of communal values of early Christianity in an extremely charismatic manner and mixed them with an odd, prurient relationship to sex and physical punishment. I can only conclude that Jim Jones focused the collective attention on the wrongs of American society as a whole so the darkness within the Peoples Temple community remained undiscovered.

Simultaneously maintaining a clear perspective of the dark side in both the personal sphere and the larger societal arena is very difficult. For the most part our society is unconscious of the nature of power. In a true democracy everyone's opinions are voiced, recognized, and considered equally in the decision process. Americans understand democracy as a right to vote for people or issues that impact their lives directly. Growing up in American society, we have little direct experience with participatory democracy in our families, our relationships, our school, or our workplace. One of the most common ways to reclaim individual power is to share one's experiences and opinions. This was not encouraged in Peoples Temple, nor was the institution structured to allow this exchange. We are all accustomed to organizations where individualism reigns, the center does not hold, and the group flies off into many factions. But in the case of Peoples Temple, the center held too much power.

I heard little about Peoples Temple after everyone moved to Jonestown, Guyana. Every now and then something would appear in the newspaper about the Concerned Relatives group, which worked in opposition to the Temple, or about the wonderful things happening "down there." I fantasized about going to Guyana: working to build a new community, a new farm, and a new way of living. It was a romantic vision which occasionally played across my mind. I did not act on these fantasies, however, since I had been warned by Faye. I had enough ambivalence from my own experiences with people from the Temple.

Then the catastrophe struck. What horrible days those were for me, for everyone I knew, and for my city. San Francisco that week, and for countless weeks after, was a city with death on its mind. The news didn't come to us in one fully developed blow. Each day's headlines were worse than the previous day's. Like a wave of churning water, the news

would knock me down. First Congressman Leo Ryan was killed, then the mass suicide. That was horrible enough. I would begin adjusting to this information when another wave of "more dead" would hit me the next day and knock me out again. This battering continued for a week, beginning on Sunday, November 19, 1978. I remember that week so well partly because I am a comedian, and I had a show on Saturday night. An important part of my performance is reading the newspaper and finding the absurdities in it. I was at a loss trying to do the newspaper piece that Saturday night, November 25. I made some brief introductory remarks about how hard the week had been and focused on a number of other things I had read in the newspaper, including the "crazy supervisor who resigned and now wants to unresign. We'll be hearing more about this story," I predicted entirely too accurately.

Friends and relatives all around the country whom I rarely heard from called that week hoping I could shed some light on the news about Peoples Temple. They asked if we were all crazy in San Francisco, as they'd always suspected.

My personal world turned upside down that week, and it really has not righted itself to this day some ten years later. I have tried to understand how this human disaster happened and have found all my models of human nature and mass psychology totally unable to address the events in Jonestown. Did these people blindly commit suicide? And if so, how could they have done it? They were not crazy. For the most part they were people much like my friends and family — people willing to work hard for a better life, people with high ideals, risk takers who loved other people and cared very deeply about justice. I could not comprehend the headlines.

One Peoples Temple practice I read about kept invading my thoughts. The members in Jonestown performed ritual suicide drills. It seems that on several occasions people were asked to practice the cyanide suicide drill to prove their loyalty to Jim Jones and his vision. It was a loyalty test, a game having little relationship to the suicidal reality to which they were ultimately exposed. These practice drills served to address individuals' objections and ultimately to exorcise them when the ritual became reality, actually drinking the Kool Aid must have been a small step.

Playing with dangerous phenomena is something that has become commonplace in our age. Sometimes it is called risk-taking, sometimes a challenge. On the international and national scale, we play with nuclear weapons and chemicals which threaten not only our

environment but all life on the planet. Indeed our own government practices launching nuclear weapons, in part to immunize the people whose fingers activate the buttons. These people are conditioned to stop thinking their individual thoughts which might prevent them from performing an inconceivable act. Once individuals begin to think for themselves, they cannot act in accordance with crazy requests. Instead they utter mutinous words which is a step in reclaiming one's individual power.

Temple members had little experience thinking of themselves as individuals. The structure of the community did not allow them to think critically or to disagree with the negative aspects of the program. I understood from talking with Temple members, that they lived in cramped quarters, had little time to be quiet or to think and little sleep in which to dream. How could they have been reflective about their situation when they had so little access to experiences which nurture human thought. I heard on the radio the tape recording that was made in Jonestown as the suicides were happening. One woman spoke out strongly against the suicide act. She had not become the automaton that ritualized rehearsal creates. She was still thinking, reaching for her own power. But even for her it was too late. She was ignored.

As the news bombarded me with the tragedy that had occurred in Guyana, I speculated about the nature of leadership in Peoples Temple. Jim Jones had created a community in which he was the central, and sole, leader, isolated from his people. He was surrounded by sycophants whose power was determined by how close they were to Jones. It must have been difficult for Jim Jones to maintain a realistic sense of himself in that context. Temple members called him Father, a role he played, unchallenged, in the family he had created. Once Jim Jones moved to Guyana, he had no peers whom he could ask for advice, no one from outside his system who could question his decisions. I believe it would have been liberating for Jim Jones if others in Peoples Temple had reclaimed their power and challenged him. He might have fought hard to maintain his position as sole leader, but the challenge would have made the group dynamic healthier.

I went to several political meetings that first week after Jonestown. Cecil Williams, another liberal religious leader in the city and a close acquaintance of Jim Jones, played his cards very close to his chest. No one dared to speak good words about Peoples Temple. It was now in vogue to discredit the Temple no matter what one's relationship had been with the Temple and Jim Jones before the catastrophe. Before

and after these meetings, people huddled together speculating that the U.S. government did it because the Temple was getting ready to move to Russia, or that Jim Jones had been given mind-altering drugs, or had been brainwashed himself. Could there have been an agent provocateur? Many people concluded that radical thought isolated from its social context is dangerous to everyone involved, including the society from which the group comes. But there were so many questions and we were so deeply in shock that it was impossible to reach any conclusions.

I remember stopping at a traffic light downtown one day after the tragedy, watching the crowds of people crossing the street in front of my car. Their faces seemed lost in thought; talking quietly, they shook their heads in disbelief. No one was smiling or talking animatedly. San Francisco had become an oversized funeral parlor. It was the Christmas season, yet people walking on the streets were not carrying packages. Shopkeepers reported a sharp drop in sales. How could you shop when there had been a death in your family?

Politicians who had engaged in mutual political backscratching with Jim Jones had started stepping away from him after the *New West* article. Now they ran for cover. To hear them talk was disgusting. Did these people think we had conveniently forgotten their connections with Jim Jones? Now they pretended they had never supported him, had never seen any merit to him or his work, lest any of the blood from the disaster contaminate their capes of power.

Most of my friends knew someone personally who had had a relationship to Peoples Temple. Most knew someone who was dead. For us it was not just a tragic headline in the paper, a faceless "other" to whom we could ascribe insanity or describe as evil incarnate. No. These were people we had known and in some ways admired. They had put their values on the line. Rather than talking about how they hated poverty and racism, these people had taken on these issues in their own personal battle. They had moved to Guyana with such high hopes that in this new land they could build a more just society than the one from which they had come. There they would be able to farm and live in peace. Now, only five years after the experiment had begun, they were dead — and at their own hands?

The search for a place to bury the bodies took far too long. I was embarrassed that my culture could deny fellow human beings a decent place to lie in death. No one wanted any connection with this catastrophic event, with this group, or with the people who had lived and died

for values in which they believed. Everyone washed his or her hands of the Peoples Temple blood.

Several other events in the aftermath of the catastrophes are an important part of my memories. I was building a home at the time of the suicides and was without a shower for a few months. I made arrangements to bathe at Synanon, another experimental, utopian community which began in San Francisco as a drug treatment program but soon expanded to include all kinds of people. I remember meeting former Peoples Temple members from the San Francisco office who had turned to Synanon for help following the disaster. I met the Temple's former public information officer there, and told him that I had considered sending a sympathy card or something at the time of the suicides, but had not. He said wistfully, "It would have been nice. No one sent anything very kind." The weekend following the suicides, I walked in Synanon's house on Potrero Hill to find everyone gathered in the living room in a state of panic. An anonymous caller had informed them that a thousand drunk, Irish vigilantes were coming to storm Synanon. The wave of hysteria against cults was so strong at the time that the members of Synanon obviously believed the call was real, and were afraid. Nothing actually happened, but I was not surprised when the group left the city within two years.

The experimental communities in the city were not unique in feeling pressure at this time. Members of the city government and other leaders in San Francisco were feeling exposed for their own connections with Jim Jones. He had attained political clout by helping the liberals get elected and by delivering crowds to every cause in the city — all these leaders had been connected with him in one way or another.

The horror of Jonestown plunged all of San Francisco into emotional turmoil. Indeed, the existing system of values and ethics was completely disrupted. One friend, a psychologist, said it was as though the whole city had become "situationally insane." Everything was coming unglued. No one knew what to believe or why. It was a time of confusion, fear, and change which affected the whole city. Other news continued to surface about odd things that had occurred in the Temple — physical punishment, Jim Jones' extramarital affairs, brainwashing, socialism, and homosexual practices. The newspapers also explained how fear of nuclear war and government repression was used to control people inside the Temple. It was a mixed bag — some of the reported experimental ideas seemed outrageous and cruel, but others,

such as open relationships, homosexuality, and socialism — were practiced and accepted by the liberal sectors of the San Francisco community. But other, more traditional populations in San Francisco were intimidated by such behavior and ideas because they conflicted with their own beliefs. Conventional American values no longer seemed prevalent in their city.

San Francisco supervisors at this time were elected by districts. Supervisor Dan White was elected from a working, middle-class neighborhood composed primarily of families in single-family homes. A traditional family structure characterized the community: the father, unquestioned head of the family, stopped at the corner bar for a beer on his way home from work; secrets were carefully guarded by the family code of honor. Dan White was a native son from an Irish Catholic background. He had attended Catholic schools in San Francisco, fought for his country in Vietnam as a paratrooper, and served his city as a policeman and most recently as a fireman. He was a civic-minded man who believed in the old-fashioned American way: its traditions and its conventional values. Homosexuality, socialism, and experimental living were incomprehensible to him and to his constituents.

Prior to the week of daily news batterings about Peoples Temple, Dan White resigned from his position on the Board of Supervisors. He had felt overwhelmed by the financial burden of supporting a family when it became clear that his wife was overtired caring for a new baby and working long hours at their potato stand on Pier 39. White knew his salary as a supervisor would not cover his financial crunch, so he resigned without considering alternatives to or repercussions of his action.

Dan White had little experience in the give and take of political life. The issues he was accustomed to addressing in his law enforcement, military, and firefighting careers were black and white. The gray of compromise, the two-way exchange of backroom decisions in City Hall, were foreign to Dan White. Deep down he felt they were wrong. Indeed, the morals not only of City Hall, but the whole city, seemed to Dan White to have decayed and were attacking his personal values. During this crazy, insane period, I think he felt alienated by his heterosexual, Boy Scout, nuclear family values. In fact, he must have felt surrounded by an orientation he could not comprehend or control: an orientation he felt was epitomized by liberal mayor George Moscone, and gay activist Supervisor Harvey Milk.

White's resignation created havoc among his constituents and



others who supported him: his buddies from the fire department, the police department, and his neighborhood. They had funded his election, worked for him, and now, when their mutual value orientation was under fire, he was deserting them. White was heavily pressured by this social context to reconsider his decision. Eventually, promises were made to help him with his financial problems if he returned to his position. Four days after he resigned, Dan White announced that he wanted his seat back.

Because Dan White often voted against the liberal political agenda, Mayor Moscone was not eager to reappoint him. Moreover, Harvey Milk, an openly homosexual supervisor whose opinion was respected by Moscone, made it clear that he opposed the reappointment. Rather than making an immediate decision, the mayor decided to seek the legal counsel of the district attorney: could Dan White simply recall his resignation? The D.A. said the resignation must stand; however, the mayor could reappoint White to his old seat if he wished. So again, this decision fell on the shoulders of the mayor who promised to think about his decision over the weekend. For most of us, the story of Dan White's resignation, though puzzling, was lost in the the other, more outrageous news about Jonestown.

Dan White received a call from a reporter on Sunday night informing him of the mayor's decision not to reappoint him. To White, the mayor's decision symbolized the final evil caused by a decayed society in which moral values and conventional lifestyles had no place. The next day, just eight days after the initial shock of Jonestown, Dan White put his gun in his pocket and went to City Hall. In an insane city, Dan White acted out that insanity by eliminating those people attacking his way of life. He climbed through an open window in City Hall to avoid the metal detectors, walked into the mayor's office, and shot him.

I do not believe Dan White killed Mayor Moscone simply because he wanted his position back. I believe that in his own mind White had become a crusader for the values he understood and espoused. Continuing down the hall in this warrior pose, White killed Supervisor Milk. In this action, his personal war, Dan White dealt a severe blow to the liberal ideas he saw controlling the city.

I remember that Monday clearly. My work life at that time included designing furniture. That Monday I was working in the furniture store when a friend called with the news that the mayor and Harvey Milk had been shot — by Dan White! I accused him of joking. Surely the world could not be any more insanely chaotic. But no! It was



not a joke. I was stunned. Upstairs in the privacy of my office I put my head on my desk and wept. I cried for the horror of the past week — for the mayor, for Harvey Milk, for Peoples Temple, for my city, for a history of brutality. We closed the shop and went to City Hall. There would have been no business that day anyway.

A crowd stood numbly outside City Hall beside a pile of flowers accumulating on the steps. I needed to see first-hand what was really happening so I entered the building and continued to the hallway outside the mayor's office where several police were stationed. The place was familiar because I had often been there to meet with the mayor. But this time the atmosphere was thick and confused. People with grave faces, including the chief of police, came quickly in and out of the mayor's office. In the press room the reporters I knew were visibly shocked. Some smoked one cigarette after another as they gazed into space. Others just shook their heads, wrote, or talked softly.

Later that evening, together with thousands of other San Franciscans, I held a candle and walked up Market Street to City Hall. The march was quiet, yet occasionally, above the nose-blowing and sniffing, I heard singing. On the steps of City Hall I remember Holly Near singing, "We are a gentle, angry people and we are singing for our lives." And we were. There had been too many deaths and the dying was getting closer to home. It was a sad time for us all; hundreds of our fellow San Franciscans died in Guyana, and now two others had died in City Hall, killed by one of the city's leaders.

The police who arrested and questioned White recognized him as a warrior fighting for "their" America, and for their values which they believed had been overpowered by liberal ideas and strange practices. Recognizing Dan White's mission, they did not subject him to severe questioning. Even the justice system gave White an unreasonably light prison sentence: seven years, eight months for killing two public officials. In a strange coincidence, seven years after the Jonestown suicides, Dan White himself committed suicide after being released from prison.

Liberals in the city, and perhaps throughout the country, have never recovered from this one-two-three punch: Peoples Temple, Moscone, Milk. All dead, all killed incomprehensibly. My city, San Francisco, has become a more conservative city, a more serious city in the intervening ten years. It is still a city of innovative ideas, and a beautiful place to live and breathe. But I know few people who have many friends of a race different from their own, and fewer institutions whose

mission is to create an experimental way of life to replace our isolation from each other and from consumer-driven capitalism. Other utopian living groups such as Synanon and the Gurdjieff group left the city for easier social pastures.

The new mayor, Dianne Feinstein, announced that psychiatric help was available at Langley Porter Hospital for people deeply disturbed by the Peoples Temple catastrophe. Anyone suffering could go there. Still confused and plagued by nightmares after several months, I went for help. I thought if anyone had figured out the consequences of this disaster on our ideas about human nature and social psychology, it would be the therapists at Langley Porter. They would help me answer my questions, questions not only about what happened to those people, but about self-identity and human dignity. The people in Jonestown were similar to me and my friends in so many ways. If they could do this, what would my friends and I be capable of doing? Could we drink cyanide-laced Kool Aid too? What is a human being? Who am I? When I went to the hospital for help, however, the receptionist said they were only able to care for families of the victims. Did they really think the rest of us weren't profoundly affected as well?

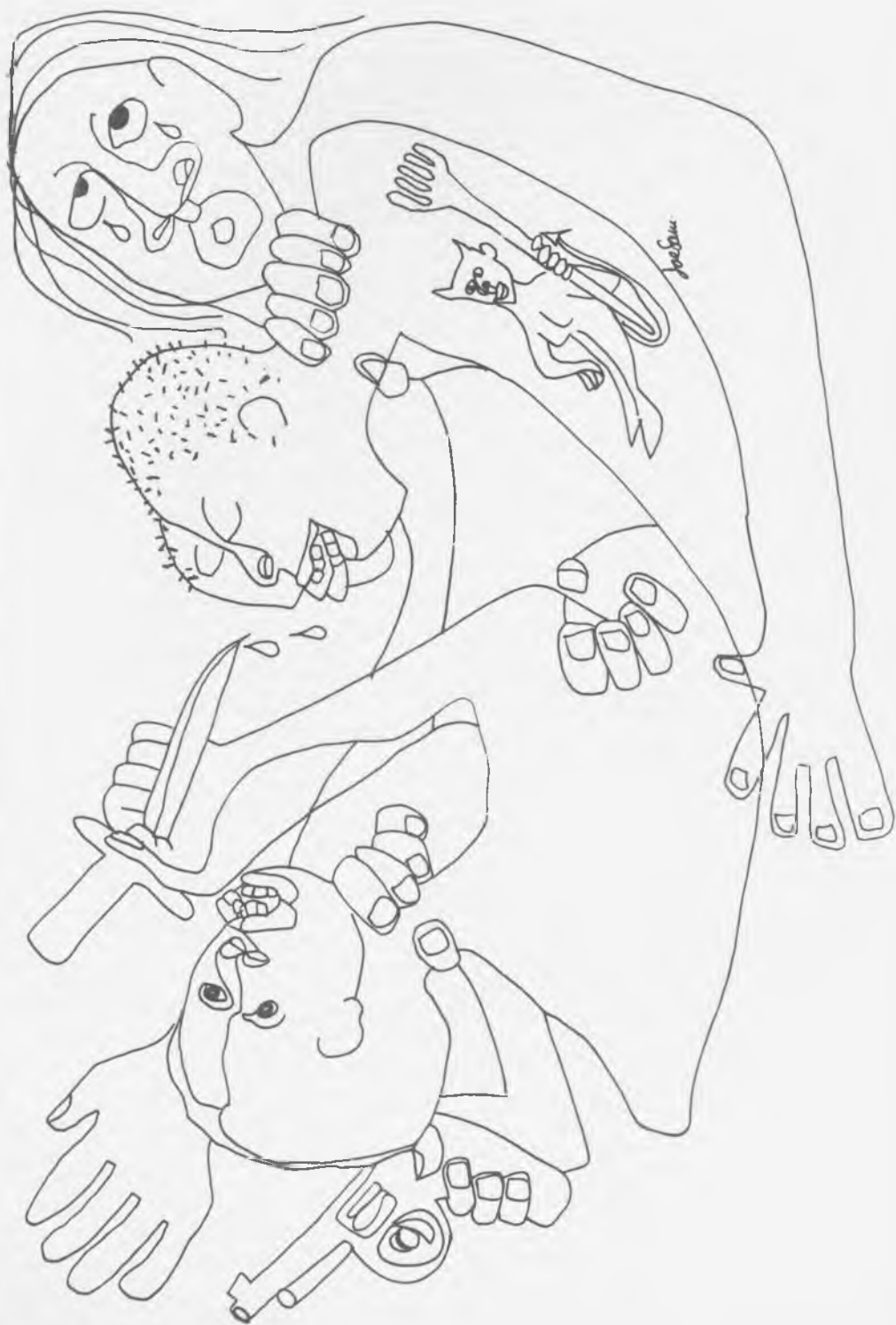
I wish I could have a nickel for each time I have sat in a car with progressive friends when the talk drifts to Peoples Temple. These discussions never come during the day, but late at night after a few beers lower our guard, and we feel safe and close to each other. Quietly, tentatively, the questioning begins. What do you remember? Why did it happen? The ramifications of our unanswered questions on our political ideas are hard to calculate, but I believe they are considerable. Distrust of leadership is very high, which may account for the lack of visible progressive leaders in the city. Now, any group interested in alternative values is suspected of being a cult. Many secrets are still buried in Congress, in Guyana, in the recesses of the survivors' minds. Who killed Jim Jones? Why were so few bodies autopsied? Real fear exists of unearthing these secrets to suggest new answers — fear of opening old wounds, of finding the new answers unpalatable or, of finding no answers at all. The old answers and unanswered questions, however unsatisfying, were so painfully integrated into our lives it seems easier to leave them alone.

Four years after the suicides I was working with a man named Ben. One day, after we had known each other for some time, our conversation turned to the Peoples Temple. When the subject first came up, he said, "Those people were really stupid." I replied that I had known

a number of them and they had not appeared to me to be stupid. They had been idealists who tried to do something important. He got quiet and replied, "Yes, I had a sister and a nephew down there. They weren't stupid. I just don't know what happened." He buried his head in his hands and sobbed. He had loved them so much and had himself almost gone to Guyana because of what his family told him about the Temple. I think he was suffering from a form of survivor guilt. Why had he lived and not his relatives? He said his family just did not talk about it. They could not. It was too painful.

I understand. No one talked about it in my family or friends any more either. Talk stopped soon after. People just seemed to want it to go away. It was as though a giant earthquake had hit, but clearing the rubble and rebuilding the structures had never happened. So we are left with all that rubble in the streets of our lives. Denied access to free and open discussion and inquiry, we have no tools to clean our ideas about humanity, or to reach new, more mature political lives and ideas.





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## Prophet Without Honor: Jim Jones and Peoples Temple in Mendocino County

Thomas F. MacMillan

### How it began in Mendocino County

A number of influences made Mendocino County fertile ground for the arrival of Jim Jones and Peoples Temple in the late 1960s. It was a time of social change and transition, marked in part by a vitalization of interest in communal life, simplicity, and environmental awareness. What was proclaimed in the Haight Ashbury district of San Francisco in words and music was beginning to be lived out on California's North Coast as a lifestyle that was to transform the region in many ways through the mid-1970s.

By 1963, when Ross Case, a Peoples Temple scout from Indianapolis, arrived to begin his teaching career in the Ukiah public schools, a migration back to the land had already begun in Mendocino County. In the first wave of migration came many who espoused the developing causes of civil rights, individual freedom, and tolerance for diverse lifestyles. Many who came were well educated and articulate, capable of advocating strongly for the political and social views that would be translated in the Great Society programs of the Lyndon Johnson administration.

Some, like Ross Case, had been attracted to the area at least in part by the January 1962 article in *Esquire* Magazine that enumerated the safest geographic regions of the world in the event of a nuclear attack. Among those areas was Eureka, a town in Humboldt County, California, about 125 miles north of Ukiah, the county seat of Mendocino county. Convinced of its security, Case engaged an associate to fly him and his family cross-country from Indianapolis in a small plane to the California north coast. Weather and terrain discouraged a landing in Eureka, so the

plane delivered Case and his family to the next available airport south — Ukiah — as pilgrims of the Peoples Temple movement.

At the time of the Cases' arrival, Temple leader Jim Jones and his family were completing a stay in Belo Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he had been trying to establish Peoples Temple as an international bastion of racial justice and peace. For a variety of reasons, including the decline of membership and support in the Indianapolis congregation Jones had left in care of the Rev. Russell Winberg and later in the charge of the Rev. Edward Malmin, Jones and his family returned to Indianapolis in December 1963. Jones reasserted his unequivocal claim of spiritual leadership over the congregation, and began the search for a new location. He contacted Case, now teaching in Ukiah, and made a series of preliminary visits to the area.

At the time, the Church of the Golden Rule, a corporate entity representing an intentional commune of about 200 persons, had acquired several hundred acres of property of the Howard estate 22 miles north of Ukiah. The group was relocating from Bolinas, in Marin County, to Ukiah in order to establish a completely self-sufficient religious community built upon the precept that one should "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you." Recognizing that such a community was not only possible, but indeed established in Mendocino County, with relative ease and toleration, and encouraged by the experience and counsel of Ross Case, Jones proceeded to enter into negotiations to create a base of operations. The announcement was made in Indianapolis, and the pilgrimage to Ukiah became a reality.

#### 1964-1970: The Emergence of Peoples Temple

As it turned out, the Northside Baptist Church, on the corner of Bush and Henry Streets in Ukiah, was available for purchase. The congregation had outgrown the facility and relocated to a new building on South Dora. Ukiah, as the seat of Mendocino County, boasted a number of job opportunities in the public sector, especially for those who brought with them skills and experience. It did not take long for Jones to make the decision to come to an agreement on using the property.

Early in 1965, Case had occasion to re-evaluate his association with, and support for Jim Jones and Peoples Temple. Case's concern over the authoritarian spirit he had observed in Jones during the visits and negotiations to obtain property had led him to question the wisdom of continuing his involvement in the group. At the same time, Jones was conducting his own test of Case's loyalty. Case received correspondence

in February and was later visited by the advance team sent from Peoples Temple to complete the arrangements for the move. During a confrontation in Case's home, several things became clear to Case, and on February 24, 1965, he formally disassociated himself with Jones and Peoples Temple.

In June of that year, Case wrote to Russell and Wilman Winberg about his concerns:

I want to make it clear that I am not a follower of James Jones, but of Jesus Christ. Letters written to me from James' followers give strong evidence that he is displacing Christ in the hearts of at least some people. Love for, and trust in Jesus appears to be fading, while love for and trust in James Jones is growing. I am quite disturbed about this. Friends whom I had known as Christians are not concerned with the question, 'What think ye of Christ?' but rather with the question, 'What think ye of James Jones?' Jesus is no longer the issue to them; James is!

(Case, June 6, 1965, unpublished correspondence)

The following month, as soon as school was out in Indianapolis, Jim Jones and a band of 150 men, women and children from Indianapolis completed the move to the little town of Ukiah, inflating its ranks by about 1% with their presence. Their arrival was heralded by the local newspaper in an article written by Kathy Hunter, wife of the paper's editor, George Hunter. Mrs. Hunter was to remain an admirer and defender of Jones for over a decade, according to most local observers, until the very last days before the Jonestown tragedy.

The Jones family settled in Redwood Valley, ten miles outside of Ukiah, and began the business of holding services in the little white church at Bush and Henry. Almost from the start, the facilities could not contain the congregation, and within a matter of months it became evident that this charismatic young pastor with the multi-racial family and progressive political views would become a power on the local scene. Members of Peoples Temple were able to obtain employment at the Mendocino State Hospital at Talmadge, just south of Ukiah, where Jones' wife Marceline was a social worker. Jim Jones was a substitute teacher and later worked in the Anderson Valley Unified School District, about 20 miles west of Ukiah. Jones also taught classes in the



Ukiah Adult School, where he had considerable freedom to explore some of the contemporary issues of peace, justice, and human rights. Among the students in these evening classes were several who were later attracted to Peoples Temple.

Some of Jones' followers with professional training were able to get employed elsewhere in the public sector: social services, public health, juvenile hall. Later, County Social Services Director Dennis Denny would name eight staff members who voluntarily identified themselves as active in Peoples Temple during their service to the county. That service ranged from one month to nearly eleven years. Denny soon became concerned about the activities of Jim Jones, and went so far as to contact the Indiana authorities concerning previous records of alleged misconduct. But although he remained watchful, he did not initiate action against Jones or Peoples Temple. They were operating within the laws of California.

Denny's primary concern was directed at the number of facilities licensed to Peoples Temple for the provision of board and care to physically and/or emotionally handicapped persons. Some of the residents of these facilities had been brought from Indianapolis along with the original group of followers. It is difficult to estimate how many licensed beds were brought under the control of Peoples Temple in the initial five years of operation, but a conservative estimate is at least 100 beds in up to seven locations.

Overall, acceptance into the life of the community was much easier than one might have expected. Garry Zeek, now an Associate Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Ukiah, recalls that Jones' son Stephan and several others were respected for their athletic ability in track and basketball. He remembers spring afternoons at track and field events when Jim Jones, attired in trench coat and dark glasses and guarded by two associates, would come to view the competition. As might be anticipated, however, there was not a universal welcome for the Peoples Temple families. In Redwood Valley, just 10 miles north of Ukiah where most of the families settled, it was not uncommon for racial slurs to be heard, and incidents to be reported to Jim Jones.

One community member who became aware of Peoples Temple was Brenda Ganatos, an employee of Pacific Telephone, as it was then known, who had the Cobb family as neighbors. One of her co-workers was Phyllis Houston, who appeared driving a Peoples Temple bus on the day she left her job. Another co-worker shared the secret that she desired to leave Peoples Temple, and one day simply disappeared from the

community without even picking up her final paycheck. She was later discovered living in Nevada. Later, as stories of what was taking place in Peoples Temple began to emerge, it would be Brenda Ganatos and a small circle of friends who would lead a quiet, persistent attempt to get something done.

In the religious community, a division grew as Jones began to expand his services beyond the walls of the little church house in the middle of town. Very early on, he began to take advantage of every opportunity of a public forum. He spoke on many occasions at the Church of the Golden Rule at Ridgewood Ranch, having made some early contacts among members of that community. To these gatherings he invited as many as would come, and again expanded his following by exhorting them to the ideals of the communal life exemplified by first century Christians.

In general, the clergy representing the tradition of a strong social gospel, such as the Rev. Dr. Elmer Schmitt, and the Rev. Bob Lewis, favored Jim Jones in principle, even though they disagreed with some of the things he reportedly preached concerning Christ and the Bible. Others, led primarily by the Rev. Richard Taylor, wanted to take some form of action against Jones, or at least bring him into the fold of the Ministerial Association. In fact, Jones was invited to association meetings and he sent a representative from time to time, but did not come himself, stating that he believed his presence would be too divisive. Later, Peoples Temple would run a large ad in which it would claim that "A person connected with the Ukiah Ministerial Association told us once that every time he heard a rumor about Peoples Temple and tracked it down, he discovered that it always had its roots in bigotry." (*Ukiah Daily Journal*, October 3, 1975, p. 13.)

By 1967, Jones' community standing had increased to the point that he was asked by Judge Robert Winslow, whose candidacy Jones had supported, to serve as foreman of the Mendocino County Grand Jury. Jones thereby gained complete access to the social and political leadership of the county. Predictably, the themes of justice and human welfare dominated Jones' leadership of the grand jury. One member of the panel of 19 grand jurors, Margaret Johnson, recalled that whenever anyone on the jury would challenge him, Jones would simply recess the meeting. "If he was crossed, it confused him," she said. He sometimes became physically ill. (*Ukiah Daily Journal*, October 18, 1983, p. 1.)

Recognizing the need for expanded facilities to accommodate the rapidly increasing numbers in the congregation and their families,

Peoples Temple staff member Archie Ijames and others undertook to provide a separate recreational facility by building a swimming pool on land in front of the residence of the Jones family in Redwood Valley. By this time, Peoples Temple had held rallies and healing services in the Twelfth District Fairgrounds, and was renting facilities for services in grange halls and other locations throughout the area. The decision was made to build a sanctuary in Redwood Valley as the new home of Peoples Temple, and with the swimming pool as the unlikely cornerstone, an entire assembly hall was constructed around it. Later, the pool would be covered during most services to provide additional seating, although it was reportedly used as well for mass baptisms.

In 1968, following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a memorial service in his honor was held at the Ukiah Presbyterian Church. The Rev. Richard Taylor, then President of the Ministerial Association, invited Jim Jones to appear as guest speaker because of his reputation as a civil rights advocate and leader. At the time of the service, a local election was being held for Superior Court Judge. Jones favored the incumbent, Judge Robert Winslow. According to the Rev. Taylor, Jones used the occasion to promote his candidate rather than honor the memory of Dr. King, and from that point on, the division of support within the clergy community was fixed. Judge Winslow was not re-elected, and the following year he and his family moved from Ukiah. It was a political lesson Jones did not forget, and one of the very few times he ever backed a losing candidate for office.

Between 1966 and 1969, membership in Peoples Temple more than tripled, from under 100 to at least 300, and along with its rise came recognition from the Disciples of Christ, which awarded denominational recognition and affiliation in 1968. Peoples Temple and Jim Jones — who exercised the appeals of miracle, mystery and authority over his expanding ministry and influence — were continuing to become a significant presence in Mendocino County (Reiterman, p. 125).

In late 1969 or early 1970, Tim Stoen, an able young attorney who had heard of and admired Jones' accomplishments in Mendocino County, arrived to assume a leadership role. His credentials were impeccable, and Stoen was warmly received in the community on the basis of his dedication, talent and achievements. He was associated with the Legal Services Foundation and the District Attorney's Office; he became a Rotarian, and was in every way the picture of progressive, positive influence to local social and political leaders. If Jim Jones had failed in any measure to convince the community of his good intentions,

surely Tim Stoen would be the young man to overcome any reservations and dispel any doubts.

Then, in March 1970, an incident occurred that marked a turning point in the history of Peoples Temple in the community surrounding it. That event was the death of Maxine Harpe.

#### When the Questions Began: 1970-1976

Maxine Bernice Harpe, 31, was discovered in her home, an apparent suicide by hanging, on March 27, 1970. The Rev. Richard Taylor, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, was contacted and asked to perform the memorial service. As he learned more about the circumstances, he developed concerns that would remain with him until the Jonestown tragedy, when his worst fears would be confirmed.

According to Taylor, the circumstances of the discovery of Harpe's body were suspicious indeed: the dwelling apparently had been ransacked and some personal belongings were missing. Harpe's seven-year-old daughter Debby was the first to discover the body. According to her, the first thing the children were urged to do by an elderly Peoples Temple member living with them was to contact the church. Debby reports that she later heard that at least three members of Peoples Temple came to the home, removed all evidence of association with Peoples Temple, and in fact tampered with the scene of the crime before the Sheriff's deputies arrived. She and her brother and sister were taken into protective custody at the juvenile hall, but were released into the custody of members of Peoples Temple within an hour of their arrival. "For three days they kept us, telling us how evil our father was and promising us great gifts if we stayed with them," Debby told a reporter from the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*. Before the memorial service, the Rev. Taylor received a visit from representatives of Peoples Temple, informing him of their concern, and announcing their intent to establish a trust fund on Debby's behalf. Taylor estimates that over 50 members of Peoples Temple attended the services at Eversole's Mortuary that Saturday morning.

Following the death of Maxine Harpe, a chill of doubt settled in the minds of some community leaders, but for many reasons the chill did not become public. Brenda Ganatos and a close circle of her friends and people who were reporting first-hand accounts of the actual demands of Peoples Temple upon its members, and the consequences for those who did not meet the demands, sought action by the California State Attorney General. A similar plea was raised by the Rev. Taylor, but

the inquiries were returned to Mendocino County for investigation, and no initiative was taken by local officials.

Jim Jones continued his services of prophecy and healing, and developed a public awareness campaign to keep the image of Peoples Temple untarnished. Teachers in schools where Peoples Temple children were enrolled would receive cakes and favors at Christmastime and at the end of the year. Local organizations, including law enforcement agencies, received donations toward the purchase of cadet uniforms or other favors. Scholarships were provided to Peoples Temple students attending nearby Santa Rosa Junior College to become nurses, and later to attend the Community College formed in 1973 in Mendocino County. Five hundred dollars were given to the Ukiah Valley Teen Center in 1974 and another \$500 to the Ukiah Community Center. Always the name and image of Peoples Temple were associated with good works, with progress, and with political clout. County Supervisor Al Barbero, who once represented the district in which Peoples Temple was located, stated unequivocally, "I could show anybody the tallies by precinct and pick out the Jones vote."

By this time the extent of Peoples Temple involvement in the life of the community was so extensive that one spoke with caution either for or against Jim Jones and Peoples Temple. Local insurance agent Ted Myer reports that one day as he was returning to his office from lunch, a complete stranger approached him to warn, "Keep your wife in line. We don't want to hear any more talk against Jim Jones." As it turned out, his wife had been involved in an office conversation where an offhand remark was made against Jones. Someone had immediately taken word back to Peoples Temple. The community became increasingly aware of a network of informers on behalf of Peoples Temple. Jones knew who could be counted on to support, and who to oppose, his ambitions. And he constantly played the strings of those whose secrets he discovered.

Many in Redwood Valley were fearful. Following the King assassination, someone allegedly took a shot at Jones, and so the precincts of Peoples Temple in the small unincorporated community were closely watched by armed Temple guards. Many were fearful in the small unincorporated community. On the other hand, it became a useful thing to curry favor with Jim Jones for political purposes. Marge Boynton, a long time political leader in county Republican circles, was always impressed that Peoples Temple members could stuff more envelopes, cover more precincts, and send more mail than any organization in

town when they were called upon for support. And in Mendocino County a good deal of that support went to Republican candidates.

So there was silence.

In 1972, Mendocino State Hospital closed, and several members of the Temple had to seek new employment. Gone was the "Mendocino Plan" of integrating State Hospital patients into the community through licensed facilities, and gone were the employment opportunities with the state. The Temple began an energetic campaign of licensure for foster care, at least in part to circumvent the scrutiny of the local social services director. Dennis Denny would later tell the *Ukiah Daily Journal* that Mendocino County had a higher per capita care home bed rate than any other county in the state after Jones arrived. Peoples Temple created a cottage industry, literally, which included Happy Acres, a 37-acre facility in Redwood Valley for the developmentally disabled, and a number of other multi-bed facilities as well as licensed care homes. The economics of the endeavor were astounding.

In addition, Peoples Temple continued to acquire property both by direct purchase and by gifts from the members. County records between 1967 and 1976 show transfers of title of over 30 properties from Temple members into control of Peoples Temple. When it was time to liquidate some of these assets in preparation for the move to San Francisco, and later to Guyana, the magnitude of the transactions was astonishing. Over \$900,000 was transferred to the control of Peoples Temple in two years alone. During 1976, 11 properties were sold for a total of \$217,909; in 1977, 14 properties for a total of \$703,000. Meanwhile, Jim Jones was building a political base on the west coast.

Within Peoples Temple there was disillusion, but for the most part, the greater community remained unaware. Some who left the Temple feared for the safety of those who remained behind. Some, like Philip Addison, a developmentally disabled man who had come with his mother from Indianapolis among the original group, lacked the means or the will to do anything about it. But when they told him he could no longer see his mother, he left. He remains today in Ukiah. His mother died before the exodus to Guyana, but his brother never returned from Jonestown.

Before he left Ukiah in July 1972 to assume a new position in his denomination, Dick Taylor made the first locally publicized attempt to confront Jim Jones and Peoples Temple. In his weekly column, "Would You Believe?" Taylor made a thinly veiled reference to Jones when he wrote:

There are those operating right here in California who, donning the mask of respectability, identify with the church, and are far more pernicious and potentially dangerous than a coven of witches... Whatever the motivation of such a person or persons, be it base or exalted, be it selfish or altruistic, the results are the same. There is a perversion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a contradiction of the Scripture, a demonic domination of the souls of others and the spreading of fear and intimidation... Clear-thinking people should not tolerate such in their midst. But people, being people, will not only tolerate such a person in their midst, but will even carry out his every whim.

Taylor was asked by *Ukiah Daily Journal* editor George Hunter whether he was referring to Jim Jones. The column probably would have been suppressed under those circumstances. But Taylor simply answered, "Would I do a thing like that?"

In fact, he would attempt to do more. He would write directly to Evelle Younger, the California State Attorney General, asking that an investigation be conducted into the charges of coercion, brutality and fraud that were beginning to emerge from the testimonies of those who were beginning to leave Peoples Temple. Almost simultaneously, the religion editor of the *San Francisco Examiner*, Rev. Lester Kinsolving, received correspondence from *Indianapolis Star* reporter Carolyn Pickering, notifying him of Jones' presence and operations in northern California and suggesting a good story.

Indeed it was a good story. Through his research in Ukiah, he came upon Brenda Ganatos, who placed him in touch with several ex-members of Peoples Temple who began to tell their side of the story. It became a series beginning September 19, 1972. "His followers say he can raise the dead." "I know that Pastor Jim Jones is God almighty Himself." After the first two articles appeared, Peoples Temple organized demonstrations in front of *Examiner* offices in San Francisco, and the final articles were never published. Kinsolving almost immediately left the *Examiner*, but later published some of his material in the *Washington Weekly*. When Kinsolving's articles appeared, it was the first time many in Ukiah and Redwood Valley ever had a glimpse into the secret life of Peoples Temple. For a season it deeply shocked and affected residents.



For most of the people in the valley, Jim Jones and Peoples Temple had become kind of a benign nuisance. Everyone was aware of the weekend movements to and from Redwood Valley as hundreds of the faithful boarded 10 to 14 Greyhound-sized buses and came and went day and night. Area teachers saw the fatigue in the faces of the kids every Monday morning, and employers recognized the strain of battle fatigue among the faithful. They saw it, but they accepted it all as evidence of the cost of dedication to a grand ideal represented by Peoples Temple. No one dared imagine that the average Temple member was leaving work on Friday evening to attend services in Redwood Valley, boarding buses to San Francisco, and then on to Los Angeles, and back again to Redwood Valley in time to be at work or school on Monday morning. No one imagined the absolute and complete authority of Jim Jones in the lives of every follower, or the extent of control exerted on every thought, word, and deed.

At this time, and beginning in 1973, a greater number were leaving Peoples Temple, while a few new members affiliated in Mendocino County. The real action was shifting to San Francisco, where Jones was having a religious and political impact on a much grander scale than ever in Mendocino County. But Jones was never again to take his attention away from the possibility of a raised voice against him, no matter how small. In August 1973, Ross Case, who was then attending the Assembly of God church pastored by the Rev. Cornish Jones, made a call on one of the members. There he met Birdie Mirable, an occasional follower of Jones during the years of his rise to prominence. Mirable operated a board and care home at 412 Henry Street, directly across from the old Northside Baptist Church where Peoples Temple first held services. Mirable and Case discussed the merits of Peoples Temple, and Case was invited back for another visit. Present when they gathered again were Birdie Mirable, Janey Brown, Truth Hart, and Azury Hood, all older black women who were considering shifting their allegiance from Peoples Temple and joining a more traditional Christian church. Sister Janey told Case of her complicity in a staged "miracle" at the Geary Street Temple, and some of the others began to chime in with stories of their experiences. Case resolved he would meet with this small group and provide them support, Bible study, and prayer. He labelled them the "Truth Squad." Finally, it seemed, there might be a breakthrough into Peoples Temple.

Two weeks later, as Case was preparing his classroom just prior to the opening of school, he received an urgent message that Superinten-



dent William Murphy would be arriving momentarily to discuss an urgent matter with him. Case tells the story this way.

Mr. Murphy told me that four people had just been to see him. They were Leo Wade, Penny Dupont (Kerns), Gene Chaiken, an attorney, and another woman whose name he didn't recall. Leo Wade told Bill Murphy that I was not fit to teach children as he had had a homosexual relationship with me the previous October. Penny Dupont averred that she had seen the whole thing. Gene Chaiken stated that he was there to protect the interests of Leo Wade. Mr. Murphy was not aware of the connection of these people with Peoples Temple. I made him aware of that, and of the obvious reasons for this orchestrated slander. He questioned me closely: 'Ross, have you ever made an appointment to see Leo Wade anywhere in Ukiah?' 'No, Mr. Murphy, I have not.' 'Ross, have you ever been inside a house with Leo Wade here in Ukiah?' 'No, Mr. Murphy, I have not.' 'Ross, did you commit this act which Leo Wade describes to me?' 'Mr. Murphy, I have not committed an act with Leo Wade remotely resembling what he described to you.' 'Ross, I believe you.'

Truth Hart died in July, 1974, and in the wake of her death, Brenda Ganatos tried contacting the state's Deputy Attorney General. She insisted that an investigation be made, but received only assurances and polite referrals back to Mendocino County. Local investigations into Peoples Temple could never succeed because there were too many supporters of Jim Jones in key positions throughout the county. In addition, the Temple ran an ad campaign that attacked former members and critics, calling them dissidents and troublemakers. The fact was, there was no direct evidence to implicate Peoples Temple or any individual member in any criminal act.

Kathy Hunter, wife of the editor of the local newspaper, had been a long-time Temple supporter in the community. In a last effort to substantiate her faith in the group, she traveled to Guyana to get the real story in May 1978. Because her previous contact with Jones had been favorable, she believed she could tell the truth about Jonestown. But instead, she found herself, in weakened condition from recent surgery,

driven by fear and anguish to illness in her Georgetown hotel room. A series of mysterious fires almost took her life, as she struggled to leave the country. Kathy Hunter never recovered physically or emotionally from the experience. Desperately ill even before she made the trip, she lived to see the events of Jonestown in November 1978. Her strength gradually failed, however, and on June 25, 1979, Kathy Hunter died.

So Mendocino County left Peoples Temple and Jim Jones alone, for the most part, hoping for the day when the entire operation would relocate.

#### The Endgame: 1976-1978

Almost as suddenly as Peoples Temple arrived in Redwood Valley, it seemed to disappear. By the summer of 1976, an exodus had begun. Tim Stoen relocated to San Francisco and took a position with the investigative arm of the District Attorney's Office. Barbara Hoyer and two others, all members of the Social Services Department staff, left their positions with the county over a six-month period beginning in April 1976. A wholesale liquidation of assets began as Peoples Temple shifted to two new fronts: 1859 Geary Boulevard in San Francisco, and the outpost of Jonestown in Guyana.

During this period, vocal opposition among those who had left the Temple but remained in contact with the community increased. People became emboldened by the possibility of support as attention shifted away from the Ukiah area. Opal and Whitey Freeston, Elmer and Deanna Mertle, Birdie Mirable and others began to make sworn statements about their experiences. For their trouble, some were under constant harassment. In September 1975, Birdie Mirable was called to answer a lawsuit of \$50,000 in damages filed in Los Angeles Superior Court by Peoples Temple attorney Eugene Chaiken, charging physical abuse, mental distress and anguish upon himself.

Finally, *New West* magazine published two articles in August 1977 reporting the testimony of "Ten Who Left the Temple." Included among these was Grace Stoen, who had simply packed her things and driven away in July 1976, leaving husband Tim and son John behind. A little over a year later, Tim Stoen would follow, making his way from the jungle of Guyana on the pretext of legal business, but leaving his son in care of the women of Jonestown.

One of these women was Maria Katsaris. Maria, third child of Steve Katsaris, had been both frightened and fascinated when she, her father, brother and sister attended a healing service conducted by Jim

Jones in Ukiah. Before the healing demonstration began, Steve Katsaris, director of a residential treatment facility for emotionally disturbed children in Ukiah, had been called out of the service, so he himself never observed it. But the children were deeply affected, and after a long struggle and repeated contacts with the Temple, Maria became a follower of Jim Jones. Like so many other families, Maria's tried to keep communications open and remain supportive as they watched her become more and more detached from the things that had always meant so much to her.

In July 1977, Steven Katsaris received a call from Maria informing him she would be leaving the country for several weeks to do some work in the Peoples Temple Agricultural Mission in Guyana. She told him about the upcoming *New West* articles and asked that he send a telegram to the publisher in support of the work of Peoples Temple. Katsaris did so, emphasizing the fact that Peoples Temple seemed to be reaching people whom the social system had overlooked or neglected. A few weeks later he received another call from Maria, who spoke in what seemed to him to be an unusual, stylized language. She wanted to stay a few more weeks, she said, "if it is all right with you." In retrospect, Katsaris believes this was as close to a call for help as Maria was able to make.

Katsaris made plans to visit his daughter after conducting some personal business in Washington, D.C. He contacted the San Francisco headquarters of Peoples Temple, knowing that daily shortwave communications were transmitted, and asked it to notify Maria that he would be arriving in Georgetown, Guyana on September 26. He was discouraged from making the trip both directly and indirectly, by Maria and others. But he had contacted Jim Jones directly by telegram, telling him of the impending visit. In Georgetown, there was no word from Maria. Katsaris returned home to Ukiah, discouraged and in despair. He eventually saw Maria alive again only one time. In the meantime he had contacted all of the former Temple members whose names appeared in the *New West* article, including Elmer and Deanna Mertle. The Mertles had changed their names to Al and Jeannie Mills and were living in Berkeley, California where they started the Human Freedom Center to assist persons and families to cope with extricating themselves from cults. Out of this group of ex-members and parents, Concerned Relatives was formed.

From then until November 1978, Concerned Relatives, led by Katsaris, a former Greek Orthodox priest, ran a relentless campaign

against the Temple. Concerned Relatives monitored shortwave transmissions from Guyana, raised question after question with officials of various governmental agencies, and pressed for an investigation into the violations of human rights they believed were occurring in the Guyana jungle. Katsaris finally did succeed in seeing Maria there, in a closely watched and heavily guarded conversation. When he saw Maria, she no longer seemed to be his daughter, but rather a person transformed by what Katsaris describes as an evil pervasive enough to have been palpable. She accused her father of trying to control her life, and of having molested her when she was a child. She urged him to leave her alone and get out of Guyana. Katsaris was shocked and horrified. It seemed hopeless to continue efforts to extricate her from Jonestown. But when Congressman Leo Ryan's group made plans to go to Guyana, Katsaris and his son Anthony were selected to be part of the group.

Anthony was wounded in the gunfire sprayed upon people leaving the Port Kaituma airstrip, six miles outside of Jonestown. He survived because he had the presence of mind to cover his head with his bleeding wrist to conceal the fact that he was still alive. After the airstrip shootings, Steven chartered a small plane to fly back to Jonestown, but his son begged him not to go: "It's not Maria, Dad, and if any of them are still there with guns, they'll kill you on sight." The attending physician notified Steve just how gravely wounded his son actually was, and, brokenhearted for both of his children, Katsaris decided not to return.

#### Aftermath: November, 1978 and Beyond

When news reached Ukiah of the horror of Jonestown on November 18, 1978, the first reaction was disbelief and stunned silence. The day following was a Sunday, and the Rev. Jerry Fox, Co-Pastor of the United Methodist Church of Ukiah with the Rev. Art Gafke, preached a second sermon after the scheduled message had been delivered. The Rev. Fox chose as his texts two passages from Revelations 13, on the theme of "discernment between the Word of God operating in the world, and the word of death." The message was called "The Face of the Beast" when it was published in the *Christian Century*. In that message Fox said:

Total self-giving is precisely what the New Testament church asked of its members, as in Acts 4:32-33. In the case of Peoples Temple, the total self-giving masked the enslavement to death, the 'beasts' mentioned in the Book of Revelation... Peoples Temple pres-

ents a mirror image of the Gospel. The life-giving forces of the Gospel are reflected darkly in the life-taking forces of Peoples Temple. Both demand total, unconditional participation in their kingdom. The problem for people of faith, then, becomes one of discernment.

The week after the Jonestown tragedy, a memorial service was held at the Ukiah United Methodist Church. It was mostly a time of silence and meditation, but the church was open for several hours, and a church parlor was opened where people could talk and receive refreshments. Of the Jonestown death list, only 14 were listed as having Ukiah or Redwood Valley home addresses, but these do not include Temple members who had relocated elsewhere before making the final move into the jungle of Guyana. Between thirty and fifty names on the list were people whose kids had attended the cooperative nursery at the church, or colleagues at the social services, juvenile hall, health department, telephone company, or local businesses. The magnitude of it all was stunning.

One group of pastors, led by the Rev. Gary Smith, set up a telephone hotline to respond to the needs and concerns of relatives, friends, and others whose lives were affected by Jonestown. The "Help Line" was advertised in the local newspaper for two months. An answering service donated the time and agreed to refer all calls to a member of the group of a dozen or so pastors from the Ukiah Ministerial Association. Not one call was ever received, according to Smith.

But the help line wasn't the only community response. Smith also wrote to Senator S. I. Hayakawa demanding a full investigation of all the assets and activities of Peoples Temple, and also demanding that Mark Lane and Charles Garry be disbarred because of their legal representation of Peoples Temple. Smith's letter, like those of Brenda Gantos, Dick Taylor, and others in years previous, received no response beyond a polite acknowledgement.

Steve Katsaris was more direct. He took the fight to Washington, as he had been doing for the two years prior to Jonestown. Amid rumors of hit squads and continuing threats, Katsaris spent six years of his life with a guard dog at his side and a sawed-off shotgun or other weapon within arm's length. When you ask Steve Katsaris the cost of Peoples Temple to him personally, he is able to say that it goes beyond a daughter dead and a son nearly killed. "They took a part of my soul, and it can never be replaced." For years, until the marriage of both his elder

daughter and his son Anthony, Katsaris continued to make congressional appearances and urge further action. But at the insistence of his surviving children, Katsaris gradually stopped the fight.

In the community are some who returned from Peoples Temple, who came home to a supportive family and a community of healing. Others remain because in the end there was no place else to go. Debby Harpe, daughter of Maxine Harpe, is now married and the mother of a four-year-old child. "Ask them if they ever go to church," she challenges anyone who inquires after former Temple members, their families and friends. Then she tells of keeping it all locked up inside for 16 years after her mother's death because there was no one to talk to, no one who could give her answers. Finally she began to deal with it openly in her own life. But she also tells of the morning she took her child to a Sunday School class for the first time — almost her first time in any church since 1970. She says that she intended to drop him off, and then return at the end of the hour. But when they got inside, she turned to go to the door and stopped cold. There at the door, the physical and emotional feelings of her childhood almost overwhelmed her. She turned and asked if she could help out that morning. In her own feelings, all she could think of was the possibility that she might leave her child behind and never see him again.

One of the people reporters contacted in the wake of Jonestown was Brenda Ganatos, whose reaction was predictable: "Where were you before, when we were trying to save the kids? I've always believed 'where there's a will, there's a way,' but no matter how hard we tried, big time or small, we hit stone walls. All we wanted to do was get the kids back, and we failed. For a long time I felt as if I'd been a complete failure." In fact, Ganatos and her small circle of friends had been virtually the only support group for ex-members coming out of Peoples Temple, and indeed one of the few voices calling for action against Jones during any of the years of Peoples Temple operation in Mendocino County.

Early in 1979, *Ukiah Daily Journal* reporter Mark Raymond wrote a retrospective opinion column in which he remembered his own interview with Jones, and asked "How many others are kicking themselves for not asking questions sooner, or digging deeper or taking the initiative to look beyond the facade — even if it meant losing a job to do it... It would have been worth 912 lives." In response, Brenda Ganatos and a dozen friends wrote back: "Had we been heard and helped in our efforts to expose the Temple's madness years ago, the massacre of Guyana never would have occurred." Perhaps so. But she was one who

had done everything humanly possible. Brenda Ganatos did not fail. As Ross Case observed, "Jim Jones was always fond of saying, "The prophet is responsible to see that his prophesies come true."

No one in Mendocino County will ever forget the events of November 1978. They are, in part, each of our stories, for in some way our humanity was on trial, hung precariously in the balance, and then for an instant in the middle of a distant jungle, seemed to slip away. We will never forget the lesson of Jim Jones. Perhaps Dick Taylor sounded the warning for us all in that column of June 1972, when he said: "But people, being people, will not only tolerate such a person in their midst but some will even carry out his every whim."







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## Notes on Peoples Temple

Carlton B. Goodlett

Jim Jones first came to my attention through conversations with former patients who had attended the weekly Peoples Temple meetings in the early 1970s in the Ben Franklin Junior High School auditorium. The junior high had been a girls' high school which was attended by the daughters of the most of the elite in San Francisco. My patients often spoke about the good work that the Peoples Temple was doing, and finally one of them invited me to attend one of the meetings.

I had also been invited to the Peoples Temple enclave in San Francisco to treat several aged patients who suffered from various forms of arthritis and were unable to come to the medical offices. I visited them in the church's living quarters, where a number of them resided. They too praised Peoples Temple, especially the Rev. Jim Jones. I lost track of many of them over the years, and several of the most elderly ones seemed to have disappeared. However, they were rediscovered in Jonestown.

During a weekend in 1972 I was called to Mount Zion Hospital to see a Ms. Jim Jones who suffered from various complaints, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and hypertensive heart disease. She had developed early signs of a hyperinsulinism due to the fact that she had taken her insulin but failed to eat. I discovered after several days that this kindly elderly lady was the mother of the Rev. Jim Jones. As she recovered from this acute episode she talked frequently about her son, and I was able to see him on several occasions at the hospital.

From this time on, our relationship became more intimate and I found myself an arbitrator on some of the problems which arose in the congregation. For example, when the church transferred its operations from Redwood Valley to San Francisco, several of the elders were

concerned that the adolescent children who had to go to high school were not enrolled in public high schools. The church had made arrangements to enter them in a special private school on Broderick and California Streets. The tuition cost between \$12,000 and \$18,000 per student. Without any prodding, the congregation agreed to pay the tuition fee. When the problem came to my attention, however, we interceded with Jim Jones and persuaded him to let the youngsters attend public high schools.

Peoples Temple members and Jim Jones had a great interest in the health and well-being of Temple residents. There were several nurses, RNs, and licensed physiotherapists living at the church compound, and they treated the persons who had arthritis and were not mobile enough to get to the doctor. We obtained a license for the clinic, and using my medical license, we were able to register the physical therapists. With this assistance, many of the elderly persons suffering from arthritis greatly improved and were able to leave their beds and attend social functions at the church.

News reports to the contrary, I was not the personal physician of Rev. Jones. However, I did treat his wife and his mother and other members of his family, especially his adopted sons, for the usual childhood and adolescent problems.

In the fall of 1974, a young male member of the congregation visited me, at Jim Jones' direction, to talk about his great desire to study medicine. I was very impressed by the fact that Jim Jones had saved this young man from alcohol and narcotics. He had stepladder marks on his arms, and he admitted that he had been a drug user. Apparently he found a solution to his problem when he joined the Peoples Temple. Investigation revealed that this young man's reputation was appalling, and he was known for his narcotics use in Texas and other states. He could not get into any of the American medical schools. After about 72 hours, the thought occurred to me that this young man was an excellent candidate for the English medical school in Guadalajara, Mexico. I suggested this to Jones, and the young man attended school there. Ultimately he became the Jonestown doctor.

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In 1975 a number of us—including Peoples Temple representatives—organized a group of persons sympathetic to the role of Cuba and the Central American countries in the struggle for peace. A delegation

went to Cuba to investigate the possibilities of our obtaining exclusive rights to control the distribution of Cuban products in the United States. Jim Jones took his four adopted sons with him, one of whom — a little black boy — bore his name.

About this time I began to learn of Jones' plans to transfer his whole operation to Guyana, in South America, where he had done some missionary work. There was a possibility of establishing a research farm, which would lead to the development of the church's influence in Latin and South America.

Rev. Jones had been in Cuba before, he told me, at the time of the revolution. In fact, he claimed to know some of the young officers of the revolution. He had been doing missionary work in Brazil, just prior to the abdication of the country's president, when he and another missionary were notified that the government would be changed in a few days. It seemed that these two foreign missionaries would be appointed by the leaders of the counter-revolution. This was the beginning of the long night in Brazil, in which the military ruled without contradiction. Rev. Jones believed it would be best that he leave. He had not ever heard again from the other young missionary.

After leaving Brazil, Jones went to Cuba, where he stayed until after the Castro revolution. He then returned to the states and went back to Indianapolis, where he attempted again to establish an interracial church. However, the atmosphere toward him was so hostile he decided to leave and come west.

In the interim between his return from Cuba and his arrival in the west he took the opportunity to go to Philadelphia and meet with Father Divine. He wanted to investigate the techniques of developing a continuing organization which would be able to prosper. Jones was especially interested in how to maintain a group of persons living together with the use of government funds available for that purpose. He asked Father Divine if it were true that he considered himself a disciple of the Christian Faith, and possessed an immortal life. Father Divine's reply was, "So for the people." While not directly answering the question, Father Divine gave Rev. Jones some tremendous insight into the building of a financial institution, being able to house the people and fulfill their needs in every respect. He came away from Father Divine convinced that the first prerequisite for establishing a viable mission was to have all the people live on the same premises in dormitories.

Although I had become very involved in the medical aspects of the Peoples Temple, we discussed a range of social issues, including socialism. Rev. Jones indicated with remorse that he was never able to visit socialist countries such as the Soviet Union or China. He allowed himself to be persuaded that he could be a very good Chief Dairyman. He wondered about living in the Soviet Union, and was told he would probably be the chief dairyman.

It was clear that Peoples Temple and its leadership were committed to social change, and several things impressed me about their work. One was the church-sponsored tour of the nation each year by a caravan of seven or eight buses. The buses, loaded with Temple members, would leave San Francisco and return five or six weeks later. An increasing number of members looked forward to this annual event as an opportunity to become real American citizens, to see and know their country.

I was also surprised that a church in northern California, San Francisco, and Los Angeles would become interested in the question of a First Amendment case in Fresno, California. In that case a reporter claimed that his First Amendment rights protected him against revealing his contacts. This position was contrary to that of the judge. Many newspapers in the state wrote editorials condemning the judge, and commending Jim Jones and members of his congregation for going to Fresno to actively protest the jailing of this reporter and supporting his right to silence.

Jim Jones also won the National Newspaper Publishers Association Man of the Year Award, which was given by the Black Press of America. The award cited the church for its efforts to help the beleaguered newspaper man in Fresno. Except for the black press, most publications considered this an unusual activity for the interracial church.

The group's commitment to freedom of the press, and to alternative media, could be seen in the publication of *Peoples Forum*. At that time, in the mid-1970s, we were expanding operations at the *Sun-Reporter* and Metro-Reporter Group, and had just acquired the *California Voice*, the oldest black newspaper published west of the Rocky Mountains. We had the facilities and the personnel, so we began printing the *Peoples Forum* for Peoples Temple. It was a very profitable venture for the *Sun-Reporter*, because we were able to add our publishing needs to their billing. We were able to buy carloads of newsprint at \$120 per ton and saved at least \$80 a ton on newsprint costs.

We entered another publishing venture with Peoples Temple in 1975 or thereabouts. The *Journal and Guide* Newspaper in Norfolk, Virginia, had difficulty in paying its obligations and maintaining its financial stability. I talked it over with several officers of the Peoples Temple. When we contributed \$35,000, Rev. Jones said the Peoples Temple would match the amount, and the *Journal and Guide* received \$70,000 to pay its obligations. As a result, they were able to continue their publications, although this was merely the first of three financial crises that that paper had during the past fifteen years. One of the Temple attorneys worked closely with us in reorganizing the *Journal and Guide*.

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Few in San Francisco were aware of the tremendous power Peoples Temple had. It became evident on the occasion of the visit of Romesh Chandra of the presidium of the World Peace Council, who came to this country with a delegation. For the first time he was given permission to go beyond the 35-mile limit of the United Nations and New York City and see the rest of the country. When he came to San Francisco, we were able to arrange royal entertainment sponsored by the Peoples Temple and Glide Memorial Church, under the leadership of the Rev. Cecil Williams. We also held a rally for disarmament in the church, and for the first time progressives in San Francisco, friend and foe, became aware of the incredible power of the Peoples Temple forces. The church was packed to overflowing with members of the Temple, neatly dressed with bright kerchiefs over their heads. They had come in four or five buses.

With the election of George Moscone as Mayor of San Francisco in 1976, Jim Jones and the Temple were pushed more and more toward partisan politics. There was no question about Jim Jones being subversive while the politicians flocked to the Temple. However, the natural fallout of the Temple's increasing partisanship was to make new political enemies, and Republicans and others became vocal critics.

The church was also increasingly active in community affairs. From time to time we ran into delegations from the church attending various civic meetings. In fact one of the first serious community controversies we learned of was the fact that some of the middle-class black Negroes who were members of the NAACP in the leadership cadre recognized that the Peoples Temple was active in civic affairs. There

were indications that eventually these members would be controlling the organization, due to their numbers. On some occasions, more than half the people at the meeting were members of the Peoples Temple Church. This was the first instance I know of when some of the black leadership cadre criticized the Temple for its leadership role.

More often than not, however, I found that all of my friends were as enthusiastic as I was about Peoples Temple. During the last five years of its existence in San Francisco, Peoples Temple had grown in influence and acceptability in the community. On many occasions the church was visited by prominent politicians: Governor Jerry Brown, Lt. Governor Mervyn Dymally, Assemblyman Willie Brown, John and Phil Burton, Supervisor Dianne Feinstein, Mayor George Moscone. With the election of Moscone as Mayor of San Francisco, the group entered a new phase in the life of the community. Rev. Jones was appointed to the Housing Authority. He also was able to place the chief counsel of the church in the district attorney's office of San Francisco.

It was about this time that I learned that Jones had obtained positions for himself and members of the church in various political appointments, back when the congregation had its headquarters in Redwood Valley.

Even as he seemed to consolidate his power in San Francisco, though, the Rev. Jones was organizing the mass migration of Peoples Temple members to the agricultural mission established in Guyana. He wanted to use the settlement as a vanguard for black Americans and others who would appreciate socialist living. This also was a refuge where Jones could go to escape prosecution for evading a California court order when he took a youngster, John Victor Stoen, to Guyana. Rev. Jones claimed to have fathered the child. It was not until about eight or nine months later that I learned of the rift in the leadership of Peoples Temple, centered on the question of the child born to Tim and Grace Stoen.

I remember that Jim Jones offered the Peoples Temple for the Good Friday observance during the Easter Week celebration of the black churches in the community. After this celebration Jones was out of the country frequently working on Jonestown in Guyana. This was in 1977.

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On a number of occasions prior to Jim Jones' leaving for Guyana permanently, we discussed the relocation of the Temple headquarters to



South America, to which I objected. However, I did not know all the circumstances when Jones finally left for Guyana, nor that it was to be his last time in America. He believed he was being hounded by the City Attorney's office and other local officials. He left abruptly.

He called me several times from Guyana. One night he called to ask what he should do in the John Stoen case, because he said that the Supreme Court of Guyana had requested his appearance in Georgetown. He was very concerned over the possibility of being taken into custody and returned to the United States against his will. As usual, I told him to quiet down and look at the problem objectively. "You are in Guyana as a guest of the government," I told him, "which has given you a right to occupy the land there. I think that the government is going through legal processes and I don't think it will be necessary for you to barricade the approaches to the community." I advised him to go to Georgetown for the hearing. The justice who had ordered him to come was honoring the law of the land. I said it was unlikely that he would be extradited, especially without a serious discussion with the President of Guyana, who had allowed him to come in the first place. After a long discussion, Jones seemed to quiet down and take my advice.

When discussing this with some of the reporters after the massacre I learned that my response was considered as effective as any at preventing a confrontation between Jones and the Guyanese authorities. Some reporters, including Drew Pearson's son, told me that Jim Jones had seen some records indicating that the proper solution to the controversy was due to my discussion with Jones, and to the calmness with which I viewed the matter.

There were some nights when I would be awakened by Jones between two and four a.m. We would talk via the shortwave phone connection with the Temple in San Francisco. Jones would be unable to sleep and would want to discuss some subject that was of crucial importance to himself. I always told him that if a problem had lived with him that long, it would wait a few more hours until daylight.

These nocturnal calls usually involved some fear that he had about impending moves, and things that were happening to the Temple. At one point I felt that the man must be suffering from manic depressive tendencies. I dismissed this thought without much serious debate in my own mind because anyone who challenged the status quo had to be a little paranoid to survive.

During the spring of 1978 I was invited to visit Guyana that summer. It was a casual invitation which I didn't take very seriously.



I was not a lover of a country that had dangerous reptiles like the “green mama,” and that type of thing. But as summer wore on, Temple members came to my office to say that Jim Jones was suffering from an illness, and he wanted me to come. In fact, Marceline Jones came to say that he was very ill. She was worried that he might have TB or cancer, and urged me to come. Although I said I was very tired, Mrs. Jones replied that her husband would really appreciate it if I came for a visit.

It so happened that I was spending some vacation time that August with a schoolmate and dear friend Dr. Robert Morton, Jr. and his wife. I got word from Jim that he was ill, and that I must see him. He even offered a special plane. I hesitated, but when it was put in the context of someone being ill, I decided to go. I caught the Jamaica Air from Antigua to Georgetown.

When I arrived in Guyana, evening was approaching. Marceline Jones met me at the airport and we spent the night in the house the Temple owned in Georgetown. The next morning it was raining. Marceline asked if I could go to Jonestown that day. I met a few Guyanese officials before the weather cleared and we were able to fly to Jonestown. It was a small plane and I was apprehensive about flying over piranha-infested waters! We would fly in and out of the clouds, but when it was time to land, you couldn't see anything. I wondered how the pilot could land, but he was right on target and we arrived at the Port Kaituma airstrip, where Congressman Leo Ryan was shot three months later.

We met a delegation from Jonestown, and rode in heavy trucks back to the community. Along the way we stopped to pick up a young child and his father. The child had some kind of pea in his nostrils. They wanted the Jonestown doctor to remove it.

It was raining when I got to Jonestown. They had just planted 2000 banana tress in the compound, up near the entrance. When we turned to the right, there was a chicken-house where Charles Garry and Mark Lane were later taken by a man who threatened to kill them. We were greeted by a number of old friends and patients whom I hadn't seen for a number of years, including Fairy Norwood, a young woman I had treated for diabetes. After lunch, I took a tour and marveled at the tremendous amount of construction. The guide told us that they had enough technical skills to build at least one cottage a day from the clay that they made there. They were very pleased that the people of Guyana had accepted the community.

I visited the nursery, where youngsters were taken care of. I also saw a place where some elderly members had developed the skills to fix and make wooden toys for the kids.

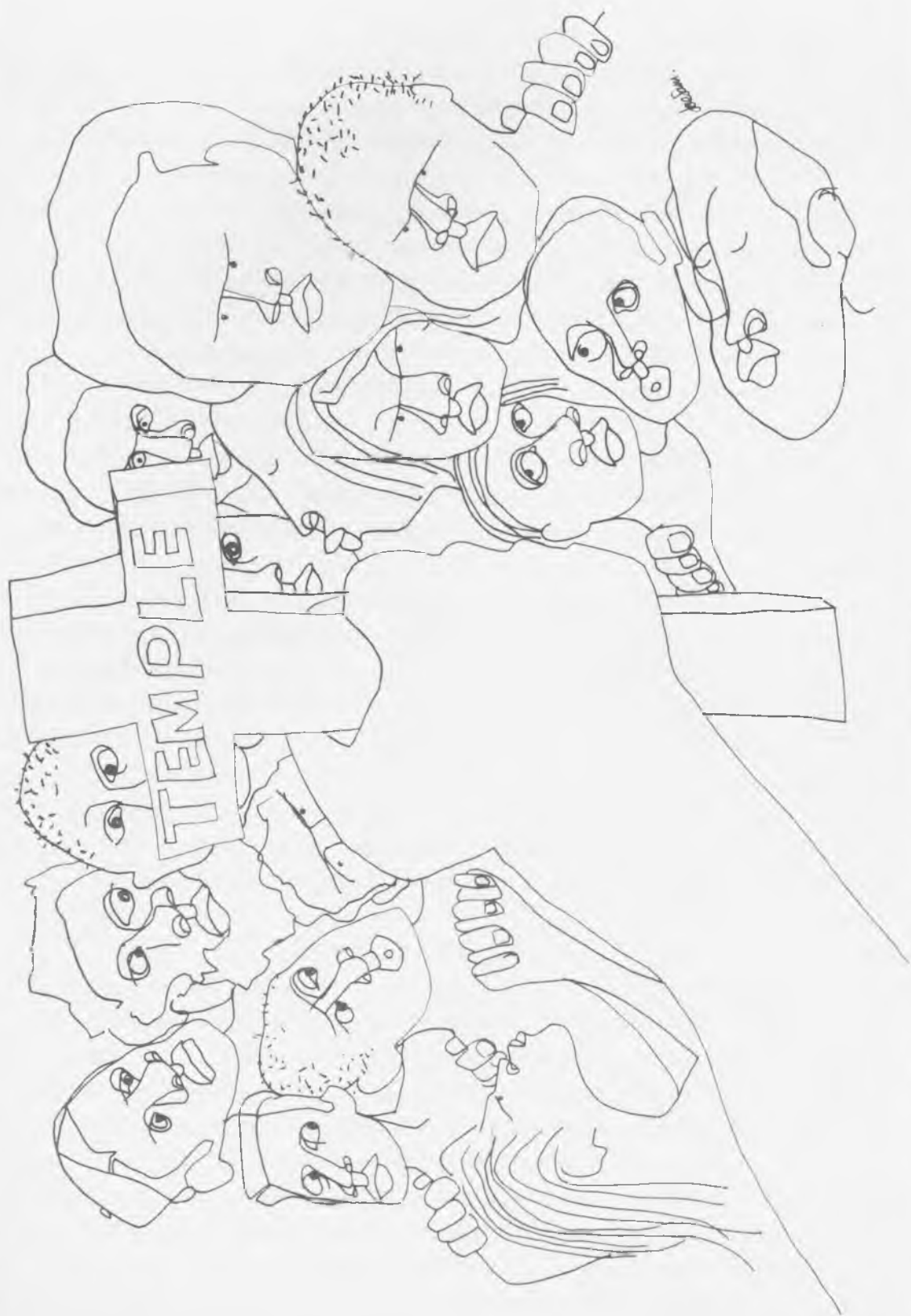
Then we went to the clinic where I saw Jim Jones, who looked rather fatigued, pallid, and pale. I toured the clinic and met some of the nurses whom I'd known in San Francisco—I hadn't realized they were part of Peoples Temple. We went into the doctor's office and examined Jim Jones. He had a spiking temperature which fluctuated between 96 and 102.8 degrees. He also had a deep, nonproductive cough. Physical findings did not indicate any notable pathology. X-rays were normal, without any objective signs of pneumonia, TB, or cancer.

We tried to reassure Jones that he did not suffer from any disease. I did indicate, however, that he might be suffering from a fungus infection of the lung. During the nine months prior to my going to Guyana, I saw nine cases of San Joaquin Valley Fever. One patient had pneumonia, which was fungal in origin. She later developed a fungus infection in her bloodstream. The second patient, a man, developed the disease, and we found that he had a large calcified mass in his right chest. This probably isolated the disease somewhat from his nervous system.

Jones' condition may have deteriorated in the three months after I saw him. If the reports of an increasing dependence on drugs are true, it may have contributed to a severely weakened state by the time Congressman Ryan arrived. The drug may also have left him with a feeling of helplessness, a condition which could only have been exacerbated by the presence of what the Jonestown residents considered an outside threat. To that degree, then, Jones' physical health during the last few months of his life may have contributed as much as anything else to the terrible decision to destroy everything he had built.

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Once when the Rev. Jones asked my advice I told him I was opposed to his politicizing everything he did, because of the fact that the church was accused of being more a political institution than a religious one. I believed that his enemies would destroy him, at least by minimizing his influence, or that of the church. But while he sought my advice on many subjects, I was not unaware that he took my advice very seldom. While my opinions were well received, they did not lead to much action on his part. Up through his decision to lead his congregation in mass suicide, Jim Jones remained very much his own man, his actions and decisions spurred by his own definitions of justice, power and leadership.



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## **Race, Religion, and Belief in San Francisco**

**Donneter E. Lane and John H. Lane**

The 1960s brought us to a fresh encounter with ugly truth. For some of the new adults, it was their first exposure. Most people admit the 1960s was a time of great change with civil rights, Vietnam, and all the other moral and political issues of the day. It was a time when no one could pick up a newspaper or magazine without seeing recognizable evidence or employable manifestations of the revolution. The 1970s were a fragmented continuation wherein many sunshine patriots lost their glitter. It was into this latter period of stalemate or vacuum that Peoples Temple came.

Jim Jones, the leader of Peoples Temple, applied for membership in the San Francisco Council of Churches in 1976. Some members of the Council had doubts at the time and questioned the validity of his application for membership, which claimed denominational discipline and affiliation with the Disciples of Christ. The Disciples of Christ representatives on the Council's Board of Directors checked to find out whether or not Peoples Temple was recognized by the Disciples, and whether or not Jones was a member in good standing. The Council received a letter to this effect.

The Council tried to understand the Jones model for real ministry in the city of San Francisco, and indeed, California. What was it that attracted large numbers of people to his multi-ethnic, multi-cultural congregation and church? This was the first we had seen of such a movement since the Dr. Howard Thurman days, the blooming at Fellowship Church of All People. Those had been rich and exciting days. Dr. Thurman brought the community together in an atmosphere of theological, sociological, and economical responsibility and accounta-

bility. We thought that a resurgence had taken place with Jones, a kind of revival of what Dr. Thurman had so gracefully introduced in our community, the bringing of all races together, to worship God together, and to work on behalf of the oppressed together.

We were sufficiently impressed by Jones' ability to mobilize large numbers of people, particularly in the black community in San Francisco. It was interesting to note that some of those rallying to his call had come out of historical black denomination churches. They had joined Peoples Temple and were very active. We wondered what was causing that to happen, what was bringing it on? So we questioned Jones about his model and asked him to share with us its dynamic, since it appeared other churches in the community were in decline; the young people were not in the pews. We had a real concern about the mainline churches. We wondered what was happening, and where they — both the church and the people — were going.

But when we asked Jones to tell us what the workings behind his model were, he wouldn't tell us anything.

Later on, when we saw some of Jones' programs, we asked point blank if he had attended the Ecumenical Institute in Chicago, Illinois, where the two of us attended many rewarding seminars in ecumenism in the 1970s. His school in the nursery, the music, and many activities were so much like those of the Ecumenical Institute, that we asked him about it. He denied any connection. But there always seemed to be many similarities to us, people together in commune-style, dedicated to rebuild community and rebuild the earth.

One of the things that irritated the members of the Council Board was Jones' attendance at meetings with a bodyguard. The question was, why? Why would a religious man need of bodyguard at a meeting of religious community representatives? Why? Another sore spot was Jones' style of parading instant political popularity in San Francisco. As a result, it seemed that everything was happening around what Jones said, and the fact that "Jim Jones would be there." He was appointed to the San Francisco Housing Authority. Through Jones, we were witnessing a dynamic taking place in the religious community that hadn't been seen for some time. He could rally people together by the busloads. We wondered, what were the forces causing that to be?

In many ways it is evident we never understood the forces we wondered about during Jones' lifetime. He would send representatives to the Council Board meetings, impressive, young people. Somehow Jones had the magnetism that simply pulled them in with him. So

Peoples Temple worked with many Council committees: anything we needed, we could get. When you work in the community among the oppressed people, and you get that kind of back-up system going, it's quite a relief. But the relief never removed the underlining doubts in the minds of many.

It is interesting to note that since Jones left San Francisco, nobody in the city, and indeed in California, has been able to mobilize folk in such great numbers for either religious or political action. At one time some thought the Rev. Cecil Williams of Glide United Methodist Church would be the one to keep the acceptable and positive elements of the movement growing in the black churches and the wider community in general. Such remains to be seen.

Jones was not a product of San Francisco. He came to the city from Indiana, via Ukiah, California. He organized his church in the Macedonia Baptist Church building, located in the Western Addition of San Francisco on Sutter Street. He later moved from that setting to hold services in the auditorium of the Benjamin Franklin Junior High School on Geary Street, two blocks from Macedonia Baptist Church. Soon after this move, we learned of other localities of his movement, one in Ukiah, and one in Los Angeles.

Jones moved at a rapid pace, as did his movement. The use of a public school facility for religious worship was unheard of in San Francisco before he initiated it. For this man to move and mobilize people and resources for service as he did caused us to feel there was more than exciting charisma involved: there was a system. That was why we kept raising the question: we wanted to employ the system for the betterment of the whole community through denominational cooperation within the church.

Nevertheless, doubts were ever-growing in the black community about Jones' real motives. One thing was his political strength, for in the black church traditionally there was a definite separation between politics and religion. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was not a pastor of a local church at the height of his involvement in the politics of civil rights. There is a difference when the pastor of a large congregation is so involved in politics.

Outside the black religious community, though, Jones was respected as much as anyone. There is a certain irony there. There were many attempts during those days to put down or trivialize the strength of the Christian or ecumenical community. However, Jones was able to rally large numbers of people for religious and political events. The

people seemed to obey him. He could say, "I want you here because we're going to Ukiah. The buses will be here, and you must be in your seat." And the people came. They were in their seats. Other preachers could, for example, say, "Let's fill the church tonight," but the people didn't necessarily feel obliged to respond. The preacher could not demand their attendance.

Jones had a power over his people. He could move them into action on many levels. He could move them to do things we, as the black community, had not been able to move them to do. We'd had little experience in San Francisco where black people would turn over their insurance, pensions, homes, cars, and everything to the church; for Jones they did. He was able to capitalize on that untapped wealth in the black community. Other pastors just never asked folk to do that, at that time.

He definitely helped the poor of the community, especially the blacks. He helped those that others would not want to be caught dead with, as the saying goes. He brought them in. He was saying, "I will protect you, as I protect myself. I need protection." No one jumped on him, because to jump on him when he was protecting those no one else would protect, was to be against the underdog, the under-class. In America at the time, who was the under-class? Black people. Therefore, even the black church wouldn't jump on him because he was helping some people that the black church had not reached.

And, in fact, our major concern — both of the black churches and of Peoples Temple — was displaced poor folks. The poverty program as we knew it was being phased out. There was a void in the midst of our social fabric. Jones was able to mobilize those disenfranchised and those with the dreams. Model City was never built in San Francisco; the needs of the oppressed went unmet; Peoples Temple was the vehicle that kept disappointed hopes alive for many.

For that reason, the Council of Churches Board was interested in the positive image of Peoples Temple, for we saw it as a way of bringing together poor people, black people, and other unwanted people that white folks didn't want to deal with. You see, Peoples Temple was claiming all kinds of folk, from all walks of life. The congregation included ex-convicts, former drug users, ex-Muslims, family rejects, and other so-called misfits of the community. Their families would not take them to their churches. But Jones did. He took them in and engaged them in disciplined training.

His movement snowballed into success. A number of parents

would said, "Boy, if he can handle that son of mine, wow! that's good. I feel good about it, he helps me too." By accepting many rejected by the black churches, Jones expanded his congregation and won new converts — the parents. This seems the basis of the guilt feeling sometimes found in some of the black churches in San Francisco. The black church was not helping any of those who were comforted by Jones.

For some reason, whether superficial or other, Jones could speak hope to those who had lost hope and some hope was restored. We now question whether the hope was in God, or in the man Jones. But be that as it may, we saw people who were ill — to our knowledge very ill — become functional and alive again. He was a force that revitalized many. He knew exactly what he had to do, and he did it. He always had an exhibit, that is, a person who had, according to their own testimony, come alive. He would use such a person as a messenger to tell family and others. And those others would come, saying, "Well, if he can help you, maybe there's some hope for me."

Kids from the poverty programs, Job Corps, and the California Youth Authority went to Jones thinking he had something of value and hoping that some of what he possessed would somehow be passed on to them. These kids identified with what appeared to be power. Their quest for some of that power caused us to lose some of our most talented young people at Jonestown.

But as Peoples Temple grew in membership and influence in the community, so did an air of distrust and suspicion grow around questionable activities conducted in services at Peoples Temple. There were always questions, questions, serious questions about the movement that never left our minds. What kind of experiment was this really? Is this really a new church, a new model for the church that would truly address the needs of the poor and the oppressed? What's the plan?

Then we learned about the experiment, whatever else it was, that was being recorded by the Temple leadership. Tapes were being made and stored. Something was going on.

When we saw the stacks of tapes and film reels, we asked Jim what they were for. Was he recording for the church, the Christian community, or was it part of the movement's political experiment? He didn't give us an answer, and shortly afterwards, he had taken the Temple to Guyana.

A year later, in 1978, the San Francisco Council of Churches celebrated its 75th anniversary. The keynote speaker, Rev. Dr. William Sloan Coffin, addressed the issue of nuclear warfare. It was a very



frightening speech. He left us with the question, what will you plan next? We said to him afterwards, if we don't get off it soon we might not be around to do any planning at all.

The Council was still paying bills and sending thank-you notes concerning the anniversary celebration when the news of the Jonestown massacre broke. The first news of events were met with disbelief.

Overwhelmed with a shock that would not go away, a stand-offish attitude was developed towards any conversation or proposed actions related to handling or disposal of the bodies of the Jonestown victims. One didn't know whether or how one could be helpful under the circumstances. We had to ask ourselves many questions. One was, how far should we go in these matters concerning the bodies? Another, if we bury the dead, would that mean the Council was really involved? With questions being raised about everything related to Jonestown and the bodies of the victims, it was decided that we had to minister to the living, that the living ought to be able to mourn their dead.

The only way to recover from grief is to grieve. Many have put the Jonestown grief on a cold back burner. It is still there, waiting to be exposed to the heat and stress of mourning. Some have not let it come forth because they don't want to be identified with the Jonestown experience. There are people in bondage still to that horrible Jonestown massacre.

In discussing the project with others at the time, they would say point blank, "I don't want to talk about it; I don't want to discuss it at all." There was also the rumor of a hit-list. They were so afraid. We had a friend whose daughter dated a young man whose family went to Jonestown. The young man's whole family was lost, wiped out. Our friend was angry, our friend was glad, all at the same time. She was glad she sent her daughter away to school, and away from the young man and his family. She might have been in that number who died. She was also angry at the thought that her daughter might have lost her life in Jonestown. She does not want to talk about it any further.

The fact is, we need to talk about Jonestown. We need to turn Jonestown into a something that will free people of "that" guilt and shame they harbor. We need to see it as "a" community. This is what happened to the Jews out of Germany. They took the experience and named it. They named it "Holocaust." Instead of running from it, hiding from it, they searched it to see if there be any prophecy therein, or whether there be any redemptive quality thereby. They talk about it.

The opposite is true about Jonestown. It is hush-hush. Bring it

up, somebody gets angry. Somebody chooses a clean side. People don't talk about Jonestown because they really don't know how their friends and neighbors feel about Jonestown. They all sometimes appear glad and angry all at the same time. Bring it up, lose a job.

Somehow Jonestown has to be lifted to conversation level. It happened, no question about that; it happened. But if something good can be learned from it, we won't have to hang our heads in shame every time Jonestown is mentioned. We can't change it, but we can learn from it.

It has been ten years since that horrible massacre. We must have learned something. "Be thou faithful unto death..." has a deeper meaning now. We know man indeed has capacity to do just that, on this earth, and in these times. Every time we think of Jonestown, the hymn "Only Believe" comes to mind. That is what they did: they believed to the utter end. Whatever was their belief system, it was sufficient to contain them unto death.

A people was called to go to Guyana. This people was convinced that the solution to their problems could not be found in that society, in that country. There was an opportunity to build something new in Guyana. The vision was there, and they had faith their movement would grow. After all, Jim Jones was with them.

Then something happened to Jim Jones, the man. Jones reigned with absolute authority in his newly established protectorate. In such newness, whether by greed, by misunderstanding simple admiration, or whether by sheer weight of power, the man changed. Once a person of balance and precision, the man fell out of balance. Thus, surrounded by fear, suspicion, distrust of contrary opinions, the seed of its own destruction was sown in the Jones protectorate. The rest is history.

If we who remain to discuss Jim Jones, the man, and the Jonestown experiment have anything to share, it ought to be that there always ought to be watchmen on the walls of social behavior and social change. We ought to rally people around their strengths, rather than the weight of their fears, and the doom stories that destroy hope for the future.

Maybe up out of these frail ashes, we may see a beautiful blossom. That blossom is our future. For God's sake, this surely ought to be our hope, our star in the sky.



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## **Coercion, Control, and Mass Suicide**

**Chris Hatcher, Ph.D.**

Common knowledge holds that the Jonestown and the Masada mass suicides were events unique in human history. However, the phenomenon is now known to have occurred at multiple points in history, with involvement by diverse cultural groups. In contrast to other mass suicides, members of Peoples Temple survived to tell the public and private events that led to the deaths of 900 people. This chapter will examine and place Jonestown in the historical context of other mass and sequential suicides, and identify the factors within the Temple that provided the momentum to suicide.

### **Mass and Sequential Suicides in History**

Mass suicide is defined as an event in which death by suicide occurs within a one- to two-day period, and involves fatalities of more than a single family unit. Sequential suicide is defined as a series of events in which death by suicide appears linked by a religious, social, or health-related theme, occurs sequentially, and employs lethal methods similar to prior suicides.

Episodes of mass suicide and sequential suicide alternate in history with cluster suicides appearing first in Rome and Greece. In 600 B.C., conquered soldiers forced to work in the sewers of Rome resorted to suicide. This was stopped by publicly crucifying the suicides. In 500 B.C., Plutarch noted a series of deaths of young female virgins in Liletus, Greece, by hanging, ostensibly to avoid forced sex. This was ended when a practice was instituted of carrying the nude body of the suicide victim through the town. These Roman and Greek approaches to suicide prevention may have brought a high level of shame to suicide to those considering it.

In 400 B.C., a temple to Apollo in Leucadia, Greece, was the site of a series of suicides in which people jumped from a cliff. Some researchers have associated these Greek sequential suicides with Pan, God of fertility and lust, and with the English derivative word for "panic." The reasoning is that themes of lust/companionship, its loss, and a subsequent panic appear frequently in sequential suicides. In any event, ritualized suicide characterized by themes of life's suffering was often supported as an acceptable option by Greek and Roman historical figures.

The Vikings believed that death in battle would lead them to mythical Valhalla, the Home of the Warriors. For those who didn't die in battle, jumping from cliffs onto the rocks below was considered an acceptable alternative. Two of these jumping-off places, or Allestenar (family rocks), can be found in West Gotland, Sweden.

The first mass suicide occurred in 63 B.C., as Jerusalem was being conquered by Pompeii. Residents burned their homes and jumped to their deaths. This was the beginning of a series of mass suicides the Hebrews enacted in response to Roman persecution or the threat of impending military defeat. In 20 B.C., the Gadarens were overwhelmed by Herod, and committed mass suicide by swords, jumping from cliffs, and by drowning.

In the most widely noted incident other than Jonestown, 960 men, women, and children at Masada held out in a lengthy siege against 15,000 Roman soldiers in 73 A.D. Hebrew leader Eleazar Ban-Yair exhorted the defenders to kill themselves together. He argued that the effect of this upon the Romans would be to "at once cause their astonishment at our death, and their admiration of our hardiness within."

Shortly thereafter, in 67 A.D., the Roman historian Josephus recorded the mass suicide of 39 city leaders at Jotapata when the city was taken by the Roman army of Vespasian. Josephus declined to give his life in that incident, and went on to write of Roman defeat of Jewish forces at Gamala. As the army stormed the city's last defenses, men, women, and children threw themselves off the walls to the cliffs below. It was reported that the Romans killed four thousand citizens, while an additional 5,000 died by suicide.

In the second century A.D., the early Christian martyrs committed what is in effect sequential suicide. This search for martyrdom occurred later on, when a sect called the Circumcellions in North Africa sought death during the fourth century A.D. The Circumcellions

asked non-followers to kill them. In addition, a non-religious sequential suicide was noted in Rome in 410 A.D. when a number of young female virgins committed suicide in order to avoid rape by the conquering Visigoth army.

From the seventh to the fifteenth centuries A.D., cluster suicides became common along with widespread medical epidemics in western Europe.

Over a thousand years after Masada and Gamala, the mass suicide of Jews occurred again in York, France in 1190 A.D. While contained in a castle by anti-Semitic rioters, 600 Jewish residents committed suicide over a two-day period. Subsequently, in 1320 A.D., 500 Jewish residents killed themselves during a similar castle siege in Verdun, France.

Little is known of mass suicide in the Americas prior to the arrival of the Europeans. However, Indian slave conditions did contribute to some such incidents. In leading his enslaved Yucatan tribe of 95 to their deaths by poison, one chief said, "My worthy companions and friends, why desire we to live a day longer so cruel a servitude? Let us now go unto the perpetual seat of our ancestors, for we shall then have rest from these intolerable cares and grievances ... go before; I will presently follow."

From the 17th to the 19th century several Russian religious sects participated in a series of group suicides. The Old Believers have received the most attention, with suicides estimated to total 20,000. In 1868, the Morestchiki (self-sacrificers) killed 47 of their members with swords. From 1855-1875, the Soshigatelli (self-burners) burned themselves to death in groups. Seventeen hundred members reportedly died in 1867 near Tumen, Russia.

In the early 1900s, a German female evangelist took her group of approximately 100 followers to settle in the Amazon interior of Brazil. Pressured by deep feelings of persecution and harassment by the provincial government, all committed suicide under circumstances somewhat similar to the deaths at Jonestown in 1978.

As U.S. forces invaded the island of Saipan at the close of World War II in 1944, whole Japanese families joined hands and jumped from the island cliffs, even as American sailors and soldiers pleaded with them to stop. An estimated one thousand Japanese died, preferring death to the torture and dishonor that they believed would follow the invasion.

From 1960 to 1970, the Vietnam war protests brought a resur-

gence of suicide as a political statement. Although these suicides were sequential, rather than mass, they served to remind the public that suicide was a valid minority statement against a dominant political order. Twenty-three Buddhists, 19 Americans, one Korean, and one Soviet citizen burned themselves to death during the Vietnam war period. In a second series of suicides by fire in France, the stated motives related to the famine in Biafra, while a third series of suicides by fire in England related to the censorship in India of an east Asian religious sect—Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT).

The most visible mass suicide in modern times, of course, occurred at Jonestown in 1978, with 913 people dying in Guyana, South America.

Jim Jones and Peoples Temple members knew little of the history of mass suicide. Lectures and discussions frequently referred to the concept of revolutionary suicide, which was promoted by black activist groups in the 1960s. In addition, group members knew of Masada, although Jim Jones' awareness of mass suicide in religious and social movements through history was minimal. Instead, Temple members knew of mass suicide only as an extreme end-point on a line extending between selfishness and unselfishness.

Jim Jones used his members' desire to be unselfish to control them. But neither mass suicide nor sequential individual suicide for political or social reasons played a part in the Temple's theology prior to Jonestown. Rather, suicide was rehearsed symbolically in short plays, which members watched over and over again. Nevertheless, suicide and attempted suicide did co-exist within the community as an alternative to intrapsychic pain or intolerable life circumstances. Indeed, Jim Jones' only biological son, Stephan, made several suicide attempts during his adolescence. These attempts were related to self-identity issues, however, not to social or political rhetoric.

The phenomenon of mass suicide did not end with Jonestown. In 1981 approximately 30 Ugandan tribal refugees in Kenya killed themselves, convinced that they could never return to their homeland. In 1983, the leader of an obscure Islamic sect gathered together his followers in Memphis, Tennessee for the end of the world. When the end did not occur on schedule, the members lured a police officer to his death at their house. The majority of the members then left the house, while seven others remained behind to die in a fiery shootout with police. Similarly, two members of the Christian religious sect, Father of Us (FOU), led by Henry Mayer Lamb, hijacked a bus in central Arkansas,



eventually released their hostages, announced a detailed suicide/resurrection plan, and engaged in a suicidal assault on the police. In 1986, some 30 members of a South Korean cult group committed mass suicide as government authorities began to close in on suspected criminal activities of the female leader.

In the above post-Jonestown cases, one could infer that immense publicity accompanying the death of Peoples Temple may have encouraged or promoted the concept of mass suicide under certain circumstances. However, mass suicide also occurs outside of a historically determined context. The ATA tribe in Mindanao, Philippines, lived in extremely primitive conditions in an isolated jungle area. Led by Mangayanon Butaos, their female leader, 69 tribal members died after she told them that they would see God after their deaths. Butaos died as well from a self-inflicted stab wound.

It can be seen that suicide involving numerous individuals, whether occurring at the same time or sequentially, has taken place throughout history, in civilized and in primitive societies alike, as well as in diverse cultural traditions. With the exception of sect groups like the Circumcellions, almost all sequentially committed suicides imitate the first incident in the series. The most commonly imitated means are self-immolation, shooting, or leaping from cliffs. Motives may include identifying with the first victim's socio-political position, with his or her intrapsychic pain or intolerable external circumstances, or with the victim's inability to take action in a highly conflicted situation.

Mass suicides are also imitative, since absolutely simultaneous death by all is difficult to coordinate. Further, intense identification with the motives of others involved is crucial. Mass suicides, however, also require organizational leadership that can articulate the nature of the group members' identification with each other; a philosophical or religious basis for choosing mass suicide; and a situation that signals the impending doom of the group due to outside forces. The next section will examine the characteristics of leadership, membership, philosophy, and imminent doom as they affected Peoples Temple's march toward mass suicide.

### **Peoples Temple: Leadership, Membership, and Organizational Structure**

From childhood Jim Jones was fascinated by his ability to get others to do what he wished. This ability to get his own way with one or



two individuals contrasted with his inability to feel accepted by his peers. In an effort to resolve this discrepancy, he grew to view himself as dispossessed and unrecognized, destined for recognition at a later time. Jones found the Christian Church, rather than Christianity per se, to be an attractive vehicle for his goals. For an individual with high energy and superior verbal skills, the Church offered acceptance and relatively quick recognition. By observing evangelical ministers, Jones understood that if such individuals could express the mood and feelings of less articulate church members, substantial degrees of power and control were attainable. Jones was particularly impressed with the difference between Christian values and the less than successful application of those values by individuals in the real world. Guilt over this gap could then be a significant force in obtaining increased personal and monetary commitment to the church.

His early identification with deprived blacks was based partly upon their status as dispossessed and unrecognized by the larger society; and partly upon the willingness of some disadvantaged blacks and others to believe in the promise of reversing the existing social order in the future. Jones thus saw the church as a vehicle for attaining the personal recognition he was convinced that he deserved. He also viewed it as a natural rallying point for lower income, disaffected blacks, and as an institution with a theology of values that he could use to extract increasingly higher commitments from its members. Jones was not the only young, rising, evangelical minister to figure this out. However, he possessed high levels of personal and sexual energy, and was capable of focusing on multiple relationships with both men and women. He was also an insomniac, and this provided him with extra time for his activities.

Jones tested his control abilities by seeing if he could manage others through one or more intermediaries. He found that this would work if four conditions were met: (1) an effective intelligence system had to be established; (2) he had to maintain a leadership presence in the daily lives of members; (3) a dependable source of income had to be created; and (4) members' activities should be stratified.

First, a comprehensive, well-maintained intelligence system was essential. In contrast to the recruiting efforts of other groups such as the Unification Church, Peoples Temple utilized a highly personalized system aimed at identifying the psychological or social vulnerability of the recruit. The intensity of the intelligence process would vary proportionately with the potential value of the recruit. As the intelli-

gence gathering was covert, potential recruits would often be quite impressed with Jones' perceptiveness, not only of the targeted recruit, but of other members as well. Later in his church membership, the recruit would learn of the existence and extent of the intelligence system. It was so widespread throughout the Temple that the effect was more intimidating than repulsive.

Second, Jones' presence and the presence of his intermediaries needed to be constantly reinforced in the lives of Temple members. Jones believed that members could be bound to him by intensifying their personal, social, and vocational activities within the Temple. This was not merely a process of binding members together through marriage or activity, but a constant reshuffling of personal relationships and church tasks that heightened the emotional stimulus of Temple life. For individuals without satisfaction or meaning to their everyday life, this proved to be a powerful narcotic. Indeed, for many of the better educated, more economically secure Temple members, the emotional stimulation of Temple life, however orchestrated it might be, was frequently cited as a major attraction.

While Jones had little formal education in psychology, he clearly understood the principles of infrequent reward and punishment, including the inhibitory effect of punishment for minor, as well as major, infractions. The intelligence system created an array of members' big and little faults and weaknesses. Jones would publicly expose these weaknesses, alternately punishing or forgiving. The result was substantial control by Jones over the major behaviors of members and an acceptance by members of the inevitability of punishment or exposure for minor transgressions. There remained avenues for hope of success and recognition within the Temple. Jones was careful to see that members rose, as well as fell, in the system. He also created a shadow system within the Temple, where members might be given a covert assignment from Jones or one of his intermediaries. The existence of this shadow system was well known, and it provided a source of hope and the potential for self-esteem for a number of rank and file members.

The third primary requirement for success was a source of dependable income. Jones' initial thoughts on this took the form of a coarse, undefined socialism where the pooling of members' resources would provide for all. This type of socialism could only exist in a world supported by the broader capitalist system. The Temple never planned to take over the world, only to operate within the world as it wanted. This position excluded interference from an outside government, capitalist or

socialist, but included the progressive liquidation of members' capitalist-gained assets. While sermons and lectures referred to the self-sufficiency of the operations in northern California and in Guyana, the Temple's socialist goals were driven by constant infusions of cash from the sale of new members' homes and assets. Like any Ponzi or pyramid fraud scheme, initial member participants were well taken care of. This system succeeded until 1977, when the failure of Jonestown to become self-sufficient became evident. Peoples Temple then employed socialism as a means of communal economic viability, always subsidized heavily by capitalist gained assets. The socialism of Marx and Lenin was not to be found in the Temple.

The fourth primary condition required the stratification of members' activities within the Temple organization. Jim Jones and four or five very powerful associates stood at the top of this system. To one side of this leadership stood a second group of about twenty members, including Jones' wife Marceline, his biological and adopted sons, and others, who had influential access to the leadership, enjoyed special privileges, and used inside information in dealing with other members. A third group, called the Planning Commission, ranked directly below Jones and the top leadership, and served to implement or enforce directives, rather than to plan new initiatives. Commission membership included Jones, top associates, and specially chosen others, whose leadership or usefulness was being tested. An administrative structure existed to insure the day-to-day functioning of Temple activities, but it was a parallel, shadow political structure that kept the intelligence and information system going. A member could find or be assigned a place and value in the administrative structure, and could insulate himself or herself from some of the more coercive activities of the Temple. Others, without administrative skills or interests, could find a place or be assigned a role within the shadow political structure. Individuals with a dual identity, or purpose, were common. One identity carried out overtly assigned tasks for the Temple, while the other identity accomplished covert tasks. This dual identity was held by so many Temple members that it became an open secret. The only mystery left was what the particular covert task might be.

Jones and his leaders were especially skillful at assessing the talents and vulnerabilities of individual members, and matching them to particular assignments within the Temple. Although not labeled as such, the military "need to know" concept was fully employed. Members, including leadership, always knew that significant developments were

taking place within the Temple without their knowledge. A large number of rank and file members were isolated from the more coercive activities. As time went on, many of these members consciously turned their attention away from such activities. This limitation of knowledge created for each member a somewhat unique experience influenced both by subgroup membership and by the existence of a dual identity. This uniqueness of member experience was to become a major factor in the adjustment of those who would survive Jonestown.

There are familiar group dynamics in this description of Peoples Temple. The Temple is distinguished, however, by its intent to maintain a totalitarian unit with a socialist veneer broadly supported by a capitalist state; the individualized psychological sophistication of its intelligence system; and the energy with which the experience of individual members was stratified and managed.

### **Selflessness: Philosophy and Practical Control**

As noted previously, Jim Jones understood from his early religious experiences the potential power of guilt arising from the discrepancy between ideal religious goals and individual behavior. He also understood that traditional churches rarely called their members to task about this discrepancy. His early success in attracting a congregation was due substantially to simultaneously calling the traditional churches and individual members to task over the issue of racism. Although he would later refine his guilt induction skills considerably, Jones would consistently continue to work the individual's guilt over his own behavior as well as his collective guilt over the wider culture's behavior. Members were promised a sanctuary from these discrepancies in real life, rather than in heaven after death, as promised by traditional theology.

Socialism legitimated the structure for Jones' emerging use of guilt for the attraction and control of members. Selflessness, whether in interpersonal or governmental relations, became the cornerstone of Jones' teachings. This is certainly not a new issue in religious teachings. Yet it was Jones' aggressive pursuit of this issue on a one-to-one basis with members, and his later attraction of others who would assist him in this task, that made the issue especially potent in the Temple.

On a practical level, selflessness was claimed to be the foundation of Jim Jones' behavior. He personified God, Christ, and Lenin in his sacrifices for the good of the Temple. Individuals were required to make only "small" sacrifices, rather than to match Jones' efforts. In reality,

nothing and nobody were immune from such an application of true selflessness. Material wealth, sexual partnerships, family relationships, all were subject to change once an individual's selflessness was assessed. While many rank and file members continued to believe in Jones, Temple leadership largely recognized his selflessness as a way to control the group. Failure to passively or actively adopt this social control mechanism was punished. A "traitor" member would be cast out with a vengeance, with special attention paid to retaining the member's family within the Temple. Physical violence was authorized against members and ex-members for the crime of being selfish.

Eventually, it was this selflessness that formed the basis for the means of mass suicide at Jonestown. Over the years, Jones tested his members in big and little ways. Minor tests involved sacrifices of time or wealth. Major tests required sacrifices of relationships, or life stability. Within these parameters, testing one's willingness to sacrifice one's own life is predictable. This was accomplished symbolically in frequently occurring dramas, which played an important role in the emotional life of the Temple. Sacrifice of one's own life was acted out in two ways. A member was seen as a victim of injustice by society in a small drama, or a member was willing to drink poison and die for the Temple if necessary. A substantial amount of time was spent preparing these dramas. The entertainment value was great, and no one died as a result. The specific dramas of drinking alleged poison had become a ritual without consequence to Temple members. Indeed, surviving members report that they initially believed that the adults were feigning death by poison at Jonestown. It was only when the children and infants began to die that they came to realize that the poison was real. Actual individual suicides and attempts had occurred during the Temple's existence, but the reasons were personal, rather than political.

It is notable that members were held to the selflessness mechanism, while the larger society was not. The multiple failures of society, instead, justified the manipulation of those outside the Temple for the Temple's own ends. Only during the last stages of the Temple was violence planned towards governments and non-members. Such planning was limited to a small leadership core.

Temple members journeyed to Jonestown not as a unitary group of pilgrims, but as individuals with a limited view of the Temple that was determined by their membership within a subgroup and by the presence or absence of a dual identity. For many members, it was the individual attention they found in the Temple, for better and for worse, that bound

them to the group through the move to Jonestown. For those in the leadership group, Jonestown was simply another point in the exploration of its power, and of individuals' roles in that power. Selflessness touched each member, however, and in the end made suicide possible and real.

### Summary

The Peoples Temple deaths at Jonestown is the most contemporary example of group control and coercion leading to mass suicide. However, history shows a sequence of mass and sequential suicides both before and since Jonestown. Such suicides have taken place under religious and political subsystems in diverse cultural settings. The control and coercion procedures in the Temple were initiated by charismatic leadership, but were ultimately successful due to selective recruitment of members and a high degree of organizational sophistication. Finally, the use of the concept of selflessness provided a rationale for the required control of members finally leading to their deaths.

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## A Light at the End of the Tunnel

Garry L. Scarff

"Be patient with yourself. There is a light at the end of the tunnel." I never knew until these last few years how much truth there would be in those words. Over ten years ago, in the summer of 1977, I fled the Peoples Temple, leaving behind my beloved father, my girlfriend and our eight month-old son, my "brother" Mike Prokes, and the man whom I sacrificed my soul, my love, my identity and ultimately, my family to — the Rev. Jim Jones. It was ten years ago when disillusionment with the Temple and "Dad," the nickname I was forced to use when referring to Jim, took its course. The disillusionment became more profound than all of my feelings of hopelessness and personal failure which I knew would follow me if I left the church.

There was a constant barrage of humiliation, never-ending catharsis — or criticism — sessions, and homosexual abuse. I was totally devoted and loyal to Dad, whose conduct alternated between drug-induced and violent vituperation and fatherly affection. There were incidents of disciplinary actions performed in more severe, and creative, fashion as time passed. I was a loyal participant in perverse and criminal acts which stood against every moral and Christian standard I have ever held.

I remember my defection from the Temple well. It's as though it happened yesterday. On July 14, 1977, at the Geary Boulevard headquarters of the Temple, I decided to share my disappointment with Dad. It was hard because the last time I was disciplined for my rebelliousness, I was held down and paddled with the popular Board of Education 38 times. The resulting injury and pain lasted several months. But I decided to act like a man. I consulted with my natural father, who accompanied me to Dad's office. My father told Dad why we were there. Dad told his aides to leave the office, and he assured me that everything

was all right. Dad reminded me of when I first came to the Temple in Los Angeles, how hard I worked to convert my father into the fold, how irresponsible and troubled I was before I came to him for guidance, and how much he loved me.

Dad told me that they would soon be leaving for the Promised Land in Guyana. Dad told me that the Promised Land had no room for visitors, and that if I wanted to see my family and friends again, I would be forced to remain and commit my life to the cause. I remember how confused and pained I was, as I did not want to leave my family behind. At that point, June Crym, Dad's secretary, came into the room and told my father that he was needed downstairs. When he left, three of Dad's aides came back into the room. Dad's behavior had now changed, and he was seething. He told me it was not my personal decision that counted. In the most vulgar and angry terms he told me that I was "sick and retarded," and didn't have the intelligence to know what I really wanted, and that he was getting sick of arguing with me. Then he declared that I must be punished.

The aides forced me out of the room and to a room downstairs where I was beaten with fists and taunted with a gun. The aide, Jim McElvane, said he was going to cure me once and for all of my "cocksucking faggotry by blowing away my cock." While I was held down to the floor by two of his aides, McElvane clicked the pistol at me, all the while laughing and joking about me in vulgar terms. I started to resist, and again I was punched with fists. In the horror of it all — the physical abuse, the taunts, combined with my intense primal fear — something in me snapped. Somehow, in some way, I managed to break from the room and run outside and away from the Temple building, while being pursued by the aides who ordered me to return. As I ran toward the fence surrounding the building compound, a guard at the gate approached. I ran to a nearby school bus, climbed on top, and used it as a springboard to leap over the fence. I heard a noise like a firecracker and a whizzing sound. I felt a sharp pain in my right forearm. I leapt to the fence and climbed over. In exhaustion and fear, I fell to the ground on my ankle and sprained it.

Blood was all over my shirt and my arm. I realized the Jim McElvane was serious about shooting me with his gun. I ran away from my pursuers down the street, across Geary, and through Japantown, which sits across the street from the Temple building.

I spent the rest of the day and night hiding out in parks, behind buildings, and in the bathroom at Hamilton Baptist Church, down the

street from the Temple. I called Deanna Mertle, who later changed her name to Jeannie Mills. She met me in front of the church and took me to her home. Deanna, who asserted that I was being sought by Jim McElvane, protected me for several days until I boarded a Greyhound Bus for Portland, Oregon, to my mother's home.

Shortly after my arrival in Portland, in August 1977, Temple members constantly harassed me by phone and by letter, reminding me of the unspoken dangers that confronted me by not being committed to Jim and the Temple. I occasionally received a telephone call from my father, who told me how much he loved me and how much I was needed at the Temple. Mike Prokes often called to see how I was doing, and made several visits to Portland to be with me and to speak with my mother about the attributes I brought to the Temple, of my good works there, and what I left behind. Mike remained evasive about the numerous abuses which occurred, often at the decree of Jim Jones. My mother, raised a devout Catholic, was extremely naive. She did not believe that a minister of Jim's calling or position could do the things that I told her. Eventually, my mother put my words, and what she heard from Mike Prokes and others, to the test. She and I would go to San Francisco to meet with Jim Jones and get to the truth of the matter. For some odd — and misguided reason — I felt some security in going back to the Bay Area with my mother. She felt that she could not be deceived or manipulated.

Our meeting took place around a table in a small room on the third floor of the Temple building. Mike Prokes sat on my left close enough that often during the meeting he would put his arms around me to show concern and support. My mother sat on my right. Directly across the table from me, like a sentencing judge in court, sat Jim Jones. To his immediate left was my father, and to Jim's right was Annie Moore, a Temple nurse. I remember well, though I cannot appropriately express it, the zombie-like fear and confusion I felt when I once again walked into the Temple building, and sat in that room with Jim. Thoughts ran through my mind. Would I be killed in that room? Was the meeting planned so Jim could snuff out both me and my mother? A paralyzing terror gripped me when a stony-faced Jim McElvane came into the room and placed himself with arms folded behind the smiling Jim Jones.

I remember the cold, unnerving stare that Jim McElvane pinned on me during the meeting. And I remember my fear, even to look up and meet his eyes. The meeting itself was a combination of drama, trauma, emotion, anger, and what was addressed as sincerity, though in the end I was made to look like I was at fault for all of my ills. Jim Jones

took this opportunity to destroy my credibility in the eyes of my father and my mother, the only objective person there. Eventually I began to wonder if Jim were right, that I had nothing going for me and that my life was totally messed up.

Jim began by offering a biographical sketch of my two years in the Peoples Temple, starting with my arrival at the Temple in Los Angeles in the summer of 1975. Several months before, I had left an Assembly of God-owned college in Florida where I was pursuing a ministerial career. But I wanted to make Christian-oriented films, so I traveled to L.A. by bus with \$400 in my pocket to pursue an acting career. Three months later, I had found little success and was rapidly going broke. With no job, no money, and no support system, and close to eviction from my apartment, I did what was necessary at that time to survive.

Jim Jones eloquently described how I dumped my Christian standards and moral values “in the toilet” by performing in pornographic “fuck films,” both straight and gay. He claimed I had told him — which I didn’t, because it wasn’t true — that I came to enjoy my profession as a film actor and hustler. Despite my denials, Jim persisted in telling my mother how I prostituted in Hollywood when I wasn’t a “sleaze” in front of the cameras. Jim went on to fictionalize how this led to my exhibiting homosexual tendencies to men in the congregation and the numerous times I had been caught in homosexual acts with men outside the church. Jim then produced photographs of me in the very acts he described, which he claimed were from vice officers with the San Francisco Police Department. These were, in fact, photos taken by Jim’s aides during homosexual acts ordered by Jones — and many times with Jones himself. Jim also offered to show a film of me, which he claimed to have rented, but my grieving and emotionally distraught mother at that point declined the offer.

Jones went on to speak about my overt promiscuity and how I forcibly raped a female member of the congregation, impregnating her. I denied this lie, which prompted Jim to respond with the offer to bring in the victim and let her speak for herself. In reality, this so-called rape had been a consensual act between my girlfriend and me that we had tried to hide from Jim. Fearing punishment, Karen confessed to Jim. My punishment was to be boxed and forced to perform oral sex on several Temple aides. Jim was right about the pregnancy, though: it resulted in the birth of my beautiful son, although he was kept from me for most of the duration of my Temple experience.

Jones spoke of my drug addiction problem, which I picked up while doing "fuck films." He spoke of Mike Prokes' role in helping me to recover from drugs, and lamented on the failure of the Temple's drug rehabilitation program to help me. Mike did in fact help me on a number of occasions during drug withdrawals, but I was not addicted by choice. To reduce rebellious attitudes in the Temple, and to enforce obedience to his decrees from the most resistant of members, Jones ordered them drugged. On various occasions, particularly when Jim decided to have sex with me, I was given drugs to lessen the pain of anal sex, and to make me less rebellious to perverse acts he wanted to explore. When I eventually became hooked on this medication, Jim would reduce the dosage until I became the obedient puppy dog, begging for more from my Master.

Jim spoke of my closeness to Mike Prokes, and how I looked up to him as a brother, a support system I did not have growing up. He spoke honestly of how closely we worked together and enjoyed being around one another, sharing our views and our dreams of what we thought would make the world a better place. From that high point, Jim turned it sour and asserted that I had also made sexual advances upon Mike. Now it was Mike's turn. Never looking at me, Mike confirmed Jim's statements. When I reacted emotionally, and asked him why he was telling those lies, Mike rose from his chair, near tears, and stated he could not continue in the meeting. He left the room.

Annie Moore related how I volunteered to fly with a team of members to Guyana to help build the new settlement, and was a positive and constructive force the entire time I was in Guyana. She described the problems I had with the climate and environment there, and how constant attention and medication did little to cure me of the chronic asthma attacks I had suffered. It was on her advice, Annie said, that I was permitted to return to the U.S., "at great expense to the Temple," because I was in mortal danger. Annie claimed that I never bothered to mention my asthma history to her or to anyone in the Temple before going to Guyana. This was untrue.

The three-ring circus of the meeting ended when my mother, ignorant of reality, bitterly attacked me for doing everything possible in my power to make other people miserable. Jim had won another round. He said I knew I had lied and tried to force me to admit what he called the truth while my mother was present, but I remained quiet and emotionally drained.

Jim offered my mother a place for her to stay, but she chose to go

back to her motel for peace of mind. Before the night was over, I called Al and Jeannie Mills, and somehow managed to bring my mother together with them. It turned out to be a very productive meeting.

Jeannie asked about my involvement in the death of John Head. In September 1977, just a few months after I joined the Temple, another member, John Head, was found dead outside a warehouse on North Vignes Street in Los Angeles. The coroner officially reported John had died in a suicide leap from the top of the building. Jeannie said that Jim was spreading the word that several renegades and I had pushed John off the building. John had earlier expressed his intent to defect from the Temple, and Jim asserted that my complicity in the murder was an inappropriate and misguided act of loyalty to him. Several police officers later questioned me about the death, as a result of Jim's innuendoes, but I was cleared of all charges.

The meeting between my mother and the Mills was so productive that my mother extended her stay in San Francisco for several days. In that short time, she began to understand Jim's true nature and what really happened inside Peoples Temple. We left for Portland, Oregon together.

Throughout 1978 I regularly saw mental health counselors, although I didn't really talk with them about Peoples Temple or Jim Jones. I had felt suicidal, and talking with counselors — in spite of the fact that they really didn't know the truth of my situation — helped me feel secure. My mother remarried an Air Force officer, and I found myself with a strong, disciplinarian father figure. My stepfather became very protective, and through his contacts in the Bay Area, he was quickly able to gather information on Peoples Temple that had taken my mother months to uncover.

The harassing phone calls and threatening letters continued. Unsigned, typewritten letters purportedly came from my father. Occasionally I received old photographs that belonged to my father. They were snipped in half, or torn at where my neck was, with red lipstick or crayon rubbed at the edges to simulate blood. Unlike my mother, my stepfather took constructive action to help rid me of the strain I was under. We went to court and he legally adopted me, thus giving me a new name. My stepfather divorced my mother in 1981, and remarried in 1984, but he still considers me his stepson, and our relationship blossoms to this day.

As time passed, and I made attempts to recover from the Temple horrors, I was shocked once more when Jeannie Mills called in Novem-



ber 1978, to report some tragic news: my father, son, Karen, and 912 other members of Peoples Temple, including Congressman Leo Ryan and members of his party, were dead. She also told me that Mike Prokes had been arrested by the Guyanese, and was being held in detention.

Mike was eventually released, and he returned to the U.S. Shortly before his suicide at a press conference in March of 1979, Mike and I met and assessed our relationship, with each other, with the Temple, and with Jim Jones. I was thankful and appreciative for the opportunity to renew an old friendship but remained quiet and respectful most of the time. I recognized that Mike had high praise for Jim and the people of Jonestown, and that he wished he had died with the rest of his church family. Despite my anger and hatred for Jim Jones at that time, I buried my feelings, as I did not want anything to disrupt our friendship. It was tense and strained whenever my defection from the Temple came up in the conversation. The suffering I had to endure after the tragedy was rekindled when Mike killed himself.

In April 1980, memories of the death threats took on renewed meaning when I learned that Al, Jeannie, and Daphene Mills had been murdered, execution-style, in their Berkeley home. Their son Eddie was taking a shower at the time of the killings. Police considered him a suspect at first, but he was later released with no arrest. The murders set off a wave of fear and paranoia among Temple survivors and their families. I learned only recently that just prior to the murders, Daphene, who was very involved in the use and sale of drugs, had stolen a large quantity from a major drug dealer in the Bay Area. The Mills case has never been solved.

Two months later I sought another avenue of escape and rehabilitation. I enrolled in summer college courses on a fulltime basis, thinking that a preoccupation with studies would release me from the pain I felt. The first six months were a complete waste of time, as I accumulated all but one failing grade. My teachers questioned my lack of concentration or interest in studies.

With the help of a classmate, my life took another interesting twist when I participated in student activities in college and joined the student government on campus. Shortly after the start of the fall semester, the campus was visited by members of the Unification Church's collegiate recruiting arm, the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles, or CARP. I cannot recall why I took up the cause as fervently as I did, but I created a student group called Students for Personal Freedom and Choice, with the intent to lobby students and



“throw the Moonies off our campus.” After much effort, to the disintegration of my academic life, the Moonies were motivated to leave the campus. They have not returned to this day. As I studied more about the Unification Church, I came across a book entitled *Hostage to Heaven*, about a young woman in Portland, Oregon, who joined the Unification Church and was later deprogrammed by another ex-Moonie, Gary Scharff — no relation, although we are often mistaken for one another in the Cult Awareness Network (CAN) and are said to look identical. The book speaks of various techniques used by the Moonies to recruit and retain members in the cult, similar to what I experienced in Peoples Temple. I was surprised to find that there were indeed others that faced the same dilemma I had.

In the book I came across the names of two people, Adrian and Anne Greek, who founded the Positive Action Center in 1977, a family education and counseling center, and an affiliate of the national Cult Awareness Network. Their original motivation for creating the center was seeing their two children, a son and a daughter, join the Moonies. I remember well the day I called the Greeks for information on the Moonies, and they invited me to their center to speak with them directly. They were very inquisitive about my interest, since they believed there was something I was not telling them. I’m not sure why I felt comfortable in sharing my experiences with them, but I admitted my involvement in Peoples Temple. I guess I expected condemnation and criticism. I was surprised to get a warm, compassionate, and understanding response. For the first time in a very long time I was accepted as a normal human being, with feelings, dreams, and goals like anyone else.

Eventually the Greeks and I grew to accept and trust one another. They painstakingly took it upon themselves to counsel me and to direct me on the path of constructive recovery and rehabilitation. They helped me assimilate back into society without pressuring me to forget who I was or what role the Peoples Temple played in my life. Through counseling I learned the techniques of mind control that destructive cults use and that Peoples Temple used widely. There was the group pressure that was intended to discourage doubts and questions and to reinforce my need to belong to the group. There was the isolation and separation from the outside world which reinforced a loss of reality. The subtle hypnosis used by Jim Jones in his catharsis sessions induced states of high suggestibility. The flagrant use of fear and guilt, and the demand for public confessions reinforced the ability to reveal sins and

secrets. We ended up informing on one another in an effort to maintain loyalty toward Jim.

In the Temple I was also pressured to reject old values — including my previous lifestyle, my career goals, and my relationship with family members and relatives — so Jim could replace them with new values. There were the countless periods of sleep deprivation, poor nutrition, and lack of adequate diet. Confusion reigned in the Temple, and through this confusion, Jim successfully offered new and complex ideas and beliefs which replaced the old ones. Finally, the Peoples Temple stood as a glowing example of absolutism. Jim demanded unquestioned obedience to his decrees, preventing independent thought or actions, and through our unquestioning obedience to him, Jim promised us power and salvation.

In addition to counseling me, the Greeks took steps to insure my privacy and protection. The media were like starving sharks after their prey when they sought a story. On one occasion I was asked for information by a youth pastor in Portland so that he could talk to his youth group about cults. He also wanted me to say what I thought about Mark Lane, the former attorney for Peoples Temple who was in Portland that day, promoting his book. I later learned that the pastor was also a columnist for a city newspaper who manipulated me for a story. A threat of a lawsuit resulted in destruction of the story, and it was never published. I never heard from the pastor again.

As I continued on the road to recovery, I felt more at ease about sharing my experience with others. I accompanied the Greeks on presentations to the community in schools, churches and other public forums. I found people interested in what I had to share, and sympathetic to the pain and suffering I had to endure as a former member. Many expressed shock and surprise that so many people, including myself, would so fervently and unquestionably follow a megalomaniac like Jim Jones. How could we let him rob us of the precious and invaluable freedoms we most treasured: the freedom to think for ourselves and the freedom of self-expression.

As I learned more about the techniques and activities of other cultic groups, by former members of those groups, it provided critical information to me about my own experience. This helped break Jim Jones' hold on me long after he perished in the Jonestown tragedy. As I slowly and patiently assimilated into society, I found that I faced a number of hurdles adjusting to life on the outside.

I would often be overwhelmed by moods of depression and loneliness, since most of my family and friends had died in the tragedy. My contact with other survivors after Mike Prokes' death also had moments of both alienation and closeness. Some survivors branded me a traitor. One family spit upon me. Because of the prevailing fear of Temple death squads, my desire to meet survivors was suspect, and oftentimes my plans were aborted. But there were the few survivors whom I was lucky to be able to see. Away from the overwhelming media and public scrutiny, we were able to renew our ties in privacy. In a few instances this cohesion sealed our friendship. Today, after ten years, these friendships remain intact and continue to grow. Because of their request for privacy, these friends must remain nameless.

In Portland I met another ex-Temple member who had left the Temple prior to my joining in Los Angeles. Steve Buckmaster, who with Larry Schacht — the Jonestown doctor — was sent to Mexico to attend medical school, defected in 1977. When I met Steve for the first and only time in 1981, he was still paralyzed with fear and paranoia, as I had been when I left in 1977. I never heard from or spoke with Steve again after that one meeting.

I later met Richard Cordell, who had been a Temple member from 1957 to 1977. He had lost 18 members of his family in Jonestown. After bouts of depression, he killed himself in 1984.

For the most part, former Temple members made considerable efforts to go their separate ways, to maintain few contacts among close and trusted friends, and to try the best way they could to put their ordeal behind them.

One form of therapy which helped me was to counsel other cult members and their families by sharing my personal experiences with a cult. I noted how the psychological and mental implications were comparable. I found that in many other cultic groups the destructive characteristics were about the same. As in the Peoples Temple, there was the manipulation by use of coercive techniques without informed consent. And like Jim Jones and the overwhelming awe I had of the man when I first met him in 1975, there was the very charismatic leadership. Jim claimed divinity and special knowledge, thus demanding absolute obedience, with power and privilege.

Deception, alienation from the outside, fatigue, changes in diet, and the total lack of privacy which interfered with private contemplation and independent thought, were all characteristics of the Temple. Cult groups share these characteristics.

The most telling statement I've ever heard about cults was made by Jeannie Mills:

"When you meet the friendliest people you have ever known, who introduce you to the most loving group of people you have ever encountered, and you find the leader to be the most inspired, caring, compassionate, and understanding person you have ever met, and then you learn that the cause of the group is something you never dared hope could be accomplished, and all of this sounds too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true! Don't give up your education, your hopes and ambitions, to follow a rainbow."

One of the most difficult obstacles and challenges that I have encountered was my tendency to float. The term "floating" is used to describe the slipping back into the cult-altered state of consciousness. Like the flashbacks of drug abusers, this trance-like condition can be set off by stress, conflict, and depression. These episodes have made some ex-members feel like they are ready for the insane asylum.

In September 1984, I experienced an episode of floating which set in motion a dramatic change in my life. Because I was used to having every thought and every activity spelled out to me in the Temple, I often felt incapable of making any personal decisions in my post-cult life. It was during this episode of floating and my overwhelming desire for structure and purpose in life that I made the decision to join and be baptized in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or Mormons. It was a decision I would later regret.

As I progressed as a member of the Mormon Church, I began to rebel against the edicts of the church. My prior counseling and experience reinforced my inclination to rebel against calls for blind obedience to church leaders, acceptance of church prophets as the only guides for divine inspiration, and adherence to the instruction of church leaders without question or doubt. My decision to leave the Mormon Church was sealed in 1986 after I was ordered to accept the counsel of church leaders and to forget my Temple experience. They also ordered me to accept the counsel that my involvement in the Temple was a result of a pathology in my personality. I was excommunicated upon my demands in early 1986. Perhaps the public scrutiny and criticism the church has come under, being labeled a cult itself, pressured the leaders to act this way. I don't know, but I found it repulsive and irresponsible.

For years after my defection from the Peoples Temple I longed for some attachment with the Temple again: to be with Mike and my church family, aching to die and be with those who had perished in Jonestown,

inwardly cursing fate for allowing me to survive. The Greeks remained patient, committed, and were always there for me. Today they are like an adopted family.

One of the most disturbing post-cult experiences I have had to face is society's attitude toward cults and their members: ignorance, hatred, misunderstanding and the widespread attitude that "what doesn't happen in our backyard is not our problem." Ironically, this is the same attitude that was expressed by President Jimmy Carter after the Jonestown tragedy. Unfortunately, ignorance has paralyzed society's ability to address the problem of destructive cults intelligently. I feel that we have to be bold, and take every opportunity to inform and educate the public about the growing threat of destructive cults.

Nevertheless, there is a need for great caution in defining these cults and in designating who their victims are. We must not condemn a movement, merely because its tenets, philosophies, and practices vary from the norm accepted by mainstream society. We cannot allow our own personal faith and standards of conduct to dictate what others must believe.

Many so-called experts in CAN are willing to designate any religious or spiritual movement as a "cult," if it does not fall in line with mainstream Christianity. Part of that willingness is based on the tendency inherent in many close-knit organizations, such as CAN, to adopt an "us versus them" attitude and to see the opposition — in this case, different religious movements — as mortal enemies. I believe there is danger in that course.

I've had firsthand experience with that danger. As part of my own program of recovery from Peoples Temple, I indulged in various naturopathic and meditative techniques. Several members of CAN have disapproved of those techniques, and wondered aloud whether I am part of a New Age cult.

Since leaving the Temple, I have experienced many new thoughts, ideas and feelings. I have learned to accept my past mistakes, whether they were due to misinformation, poor choices, or mere human frailty, and to make constructive changes. One of the hardest challenges in that growth has been to evaluate and judge events based on my own perceptions, regardless of outside pressure. I can now disagree with the majority opinion, and can stand firm in the face of opposition. My freedom of thought has turned me into somewhat of a social and intellectual outcast, and, on a more personal level, cost several friendships. But then, I'm not the mere follower I once was.

I have best understood this through my friendship with John Biermans, an attorney and longtime member of the Unification Church. Many members of CAN know John for his outspoken advocacy of the Unification Church, religious freedom, and constitutional liberties. He has suffered the emotional and psychological scars of an involuntary deprogramming, a painful irony for me, since I once considered that an active career choice.

CAN considers the Unification Church as "one of the five major destructive cults today." As can be expected, my friendship has been criticized and condemned. To many, I am now a marionette doll, my movements orchestrated by John and his masters. Some within CAN perceive me as a traitor to the cause. Some dismiss me as "cult-prone." They undoubtedly believe themselves to be consistent and me to be, at best, wavering.

Consistency is not always a virtue, though. I remember the attacks on the Temple while I was still a follower, how consistently the outsiders defamed us, without knowing — or wanting to know — our thoughts, our goals, and our dreams. We listened to it, accepted it, and went on with our lives. It is still a valuable lesson.

Perhaps my greatest accomplishment, and greatest curse, is my ability to forgive one's trespasses. Many ex-cult members cling to their hostility towards their former leaders, just as they once swore their undying loyalty. And it's true that I still harbor anger, resentment and malice towards those responsible — primarily Jim Jones — for the downfall of the Temple and the deaths in Jonestown. But there is another side of me which tries to forgive Jim and all his acts arising from the humanness we all share.

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My forgiveness does not blind me to Jonestown's legacy, though, or to the existence of other Jonestowns in the making by their all too human leaders.

To most people, Jonestown is but a faded memory that has been long forgotten. That hurts me very much. What is even more unfortunate is that the tyrannical system set up by Jim Jones to brutally and completely seize control of people's minds and lives continues to be repeated in many cults today, with an eye toward perfecting the techniques and increasing power and membership rolls. Cults are becoming an acceptable and ignored part of our culture, and I wonder if a repetition

of the Jonestown tragedy would be anything more than something for the media to toy with again.

Despite all that has happened, our judicial system today grossly affronts our efforts for increased cult awareness. The courts today still do not support the theory of mind control or coercive persuasion. Rather, they see it as little more than a negative judgment by laypersons about the religious beliefs and practices of a group.

Little or nothing has been seriously done on the government level. Ted Patrick, a pioneer of the cult awareness movement, and a well-known and well-hated deprogrammer by many cults, once stated: "If moral courage and guts were dynamite, our politicians wouldn't have enough to blow their noses." This accurately describes the steadfast resolve of our representatives to ignore the issue of cults.

What did we learn from Jonestown? Let us hope that there will never be another Jonestown in the future, taking with it so many good lives. Yet how many hundreds of lives today are being hoodwinked, ruined, raped, and destroyed because we consider cults as nothing more than passing fads or controversial groups?

Graham Kilgus, a friend who lost his sister, Sharon, in Jonestown summed it up: "If there are lessons to be learned from Jonestown — and there are a lot — one is that God didn't give us a brain so that we'd turn around and sell it to a false God like Jim Jones."

As for the cult members today, I want to say that one of the most important things the rest of us can offer is hope. There is hope with positive direction, encouragement, and credibility. We need to remember the quotation posted so prominently in Jonestown: "Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it."

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*(Editor's Note: Several changes in Mr. Scarff's life affecting his essay occurred in the months following the submission of his work. Mr. Scarff describes those changes in the note below.)*

Due to several developments in recent months, including fallout from my association with this volume and the events I describe in this essay, I have resigned from the national Cult Awareness Network and its Oregon affiliate, the Positive Action Center.

Since leaving the Peoples Temple and surviving the calamity that took my real and church family, I have attempted to be a positive

force in educating the public on cults. I look back on my nine years as an active CAN member with both pride and regret.

It is easy for one to get so involved in an organization, that one tends to become a part of the group identity and thus lose perspective on one's own thoughts and feelings. CAN's success has been largely due to public awareness of cults following the Jonestown tragedy, and I was its "golden boy."

However, in the course of my work, I have come to acknowledge and promote an individual's personal liberties, freedoms and right to worship and believe in whatever that individual chooses. I also recognize the authority of legislative and judicial bodies to determine the laws we live by, in contrast to groups which believe, for "moral reasons," that one may usurp that authority and dictate what are acceptable beliefs.

My beliefs and efforts have become affrontive to CAN and its membership. Its defense mechanism has been to attack and discredit me, voicing concerns over my credibility and character and labelling me a "cult spy." Since my defection from the Temple, nothing has left me with such a strong sense of disillusionment, betrayal and shock as I continue to endure these attacks.





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## Together We Stood, Divided We Fell

B. Alethia Orsot

On September 30, 1926, I was born to Antonio and Alethia Kay Orsot. My father was professor of architecture on the campus of my birth, Georgia State College, as it was called at the time. When I was two years old my mother died of cancer after an extended illness. For many years I wondered, as I sometimes do now, what life would have been like had she lived.

I hated Mother's Day, the only day of the year I would be singled out to wear a white rose, the symbol of motherlessness. I didn't need or want to be reminded of the pain. I wasn't thrilled about birthdays either. I wished I had never been born, or maybe born a turtle instead of a little girl. I could shrink into my shell and never come out. Now, with additional sorrow associated with being a mother, I still feel alienated on Mother's Day.

But I was proud to have a father as intelligent as mine. It wasn't every day of the year that a little girl could ride her bike on pavements that led to buildings designed by her father. His work was his life, and it now shows in a building named after him at Savannah State College.

When distinguished guests were invited to the college, they stayed at our house. And though I took it for granted at the time, this was a privilege to meet the great black personalities of our time. They included Langston Hughes, my favorite poet; Congressman Adam Clayton Powell; Hazel Scott, the vocalist and pianist; Dr. Charles Drew, a scientist in blood plasma; Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, founder and president of Bethune-Cookman College; Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, physician and President of the National Newspaper Publishers Association; and many, many others whose names read like a roster of *Who's Who in Negro America*.

During the Depression of the early 1930s, I faintly remember soup lines and old men standing around a fire trying to warm their frozen hands. I recall the children with holes in their shoes, and a piece of bread and a carrot stick in their lunch bags. I remember the other children too, the ones with fancy metal lunch boxes loaded with more than enough food for one child. It seemed I spent more time being aware of them than I was of what the teacher was saying, and I found myself often standing in the corner for doing so.

I can never remember a time when I didn't feel that I belonged with the poorest children instead of where I was. I was always more comfortable around children and people who had the least. They made me feel free to be me. My family wasn't rich, but we ate well and were fortunate enough to have the necessities and comforts of life.

I challenged my teachers. When we said the pledge of allegiance I asked, "With liberty and justice for all of whom?" The other children giggled, teased and called me "justice wagon." After school, feeling more tormented and very much alone, I searched for one of the children who appeared to have less than others. Ellen and I were always secretly close, and the children who thought they knew me well, didn't know me at all. When other classmates teased Ellen about her ragged clothes, I felt they were cruel. She had been in a fire and all the hair was burned off the back of her head.

By 1943, I had attended two private boarding schools for "colored": Mather School for Girls in Beaufort, South Carolina, and Palmer Memorial Institute, in Sedalia, North Carolina. At the age of eleven I was the youngest student enrolled in Mather School. Other youngsters teased me for being too young to listen to their jokes. I thought the iron bars that divided us were those of the prison that I was in, since where they were was full of smiles and laughter. Always on the outside looking in, I felt like being outside was prison, and inside must have been freedom.

The iron bar of division was everywhere. Blacks, colored people, Negroes, by whatever name white America called us, we were all automatically associated with communists, radicals, criminals. Evil. Bad.

I thought these things through my years at Mather, but they did not originate there, nor did they end there. I was eleven summers and a thousand years old when I entered Mather, and already life had forced me to be an independent thinker. My person may have been segregated with the others of my color, but my mind was free.

As an industrial school, Mather taught me how to be a worker. I learned more about life in those three years than many people learn in a lifetime. I acquired the knowledge of being actively responsible for my well-being, appearance and environment. A dormitory matron inspected our rooms daily, checking on who was naughty and who was nice. If one received five demerits for nonconformance to order, it meant packing your bags; you were expelled. Later in life I learned to understand the importance of order.

Palmer Memorial Institute was quite different and was looked upon as a finishing school of high learning and black culture, good taste, proper table manners and etiquette for black students whose parents could afford the steep tuition. I learned how to say the proper thing at the proper time, how to hold a knife and fork in the correct manner, how to place a napkin just so, and by all means, how to sit, walk, speak and act like a lady. Personally I was more concerned about the quality of human life than ruffles and lace, table manners, and elitist attitudes and conversation. I received my high school diploma on May 23, 1943. I had earned it.

By September 1943, I had enrolled at Georgia State College with a major in Business Administration. Business subjects bored me and left me feeling cold and empty. I was more interested in learning why people treated each other so cruelly, and why the world was at war.

In 1946, I transferred to West Virginia State College, in Institute, West Virginia. Having moved from what was then an unaccredited college to one of accreditation, I found myself completely immersed in a boisterous sea of insecurity. My first challenge was to prepare for a comprehensive examination that embraced four years of study at a college I had just enrolled in. "I can't do it," I said. Statistics, Money and Banking, and Business Law were uninteresting, but I managed it all with a B+ average. My grades qualified me for the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and on August 15, 1947, I graduated with a B.S. degree in Business Administration.

Two years later I was working as a secretary in the Veterans Administration in Washington, D.C. Here I encountered my first on-the-job struggle against racial discrimination. Within a year I was well known as a spitfire, fighting racism every step of the way. White secretaries with high school diplomas were promoted within months, while black secretaries with college degrees and ten years' service remained at the lowest grade level.

After obtaining the cooperation of the victims, we petitioned for

relief on the grounds of racial discrimination. With the help of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, we won our case. The white racist supervisor of the stenographic pool was removed and a black lady took over. We were told it was the first time in history. But there was a price to pay: the word "troublemaker" was placed in my personnel folder.

In 1949, I married and soon found another job with my husband at the Department of Justice. Again I said, "What justice, and for whom?" What else could I say when we couldn't find a decent place to live? Even real estate newspaper ads were divided along color lines.

On August 16, 1952 I gave birth to our one and only son, Antonio A. Harvey. I gave him my father's first name rather than my husband's name of Woodrow because I refused to name him after a white American president. I wanted for our son a gift of honesty on this, his first day on earth.

By 1959 my husband and I had divorced because I wanted to be free of the boundaries that restricted my mind. Following the divorce, I was faced with rearing our son alone in an economy that fell short of meeting our needs. We just barely existed in a one-bedroom apartment.

The most compassionate person I knew during my eleven years of marriage was my mother-in-law, Victoria Harvey. I married my husband so I could have the mother, friend and sister of my choice, instead of someone else's.

It was an unending struggle for survival on a secretary's salary, even with the consistent financial help of his faithful father. Segregated neighborhoods were a part of life then, as they are now, in ghetto apartheid fashion. Poverty remains, as it shall always be, the worst form of tyranny.

Less than ten years later, my son and I moved from Washington, D.C. to California. One year and three months after that, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. The bottom of my life fell out. This one man whom I had the pleasure of meeting personally in 1956, and joining with in the March on Washington in 1963, the one person who had done more than anyone else to further the cause of human rights and human dignity, was now dead at the age of 39. Who was going to represent our interests now? Who would be our leader?

The wicked have drawn their swords  
And strung their bows  
To bring low the poor and the needy

And to slaughter honest people  
Their swords shall pierce their own hearts  
And their bows shall be broken.  
—Psalms 31:14, 15

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I am not writing to judge or be judged, to prove or disprove, the actions of anyone in Peoples Temple, dead or alive. Nor is it my intention to bring pain to any living being by what I say. My only intent is to reflect what has been true for me and to show my indebtedness to the forgotten.

As in all wars, blood is shed, and people die. Peoples Temple, a political organization, was in a just war with capitalism. It was at war with a deceptive system of government which, by definition, cannot equalize the wealth of the governed. It was at war with the political compromises that rob us of those inalienable rights and democratic principles we in this country once fought a revolution over.

Indeed, I am saddened by the death of our Congressman and those wounded or killed on the Port Kaituma airstrip. Equally so, I am dejected by the deaths of 917 people, those jailed in connection with the tragedy and the need for the Jonestown community. It is extremely distressing for me to think that advocates of social change might have died in vain.

Now I am alone without Jim Jones, the master teacher of my life. He gave me the kind of family I never had before or since. His example of living principle was beyond imagination. He was a friend, my only one, at the time I met him in 1970. I am now a person with meaning to my life, because I knew him.

I was not brainwashed by Jim Jones and he certainly is not here to brainwash me now. But most assuredly, I was deprogrammed by Jim Jones from a capitalistic mentality to a socialistic viewpoint, which, fortunately, is one of high moral commitment that supercedes money, illusion and geographical boundaries, and that places people first. Now I see what Jim meant when he said, "The only sin is capitalism." When people are taught and forced by the system to deceive, to assume superiority, and to exploit and delude others in order to survive, it's wrong. If we do not recognize our responsibilities towards other members of the human race, we victimize everyone — including ourselves — in our high act of treason against truth.

I will never forget that electrifying moment on Saturday, April

11, 1970, when I saw Jim for the first time. He called me out from an audience of hundreds: "Bea Orsot from Savannah, Georgia, come up to the podium." When I did, I noticed he had tears in his eyes as he looked down upon me with the words, "You've suffered long enough, my child." When he told me the contents of a note I'd written to God 37 years earlier, I knew he wasn't an ordinary man, and that I would be with him forever.

When I wrote to him about my faults, as he insisted we do, he appreciated and respected me regardless of the content. Who of us was not guilty, least of all me? From the beginning I loved him for that. When I offered a humble apology for insensitivity to others of less fortunate circumstances, he accepted and respected my written analysis, honesty and ability to see and correct my faults so that others could live in peace. Active empathy was the key. My personal struggle to admit my humanness played a vital role in building character. How could we win worldly peace if we couldn't find peace within ourselves? World peace can never be won without the triumph of principle.

Jim Jones was the most understanding person I have ever known because he took the time to understand. Out of necessity to put himself in another's unfortunate shoes he studied the ills of society that cause our sorrows, as does a doctor of psychology, political science, or world history. He was not an ignorant man. This is why it is extremely painful to realize that few give him the understanding he not only taught, but gave us every moment of his life. I shall not forget him, nor do I want to. His memory will always be the eternal flame by which I live.

There would have been no need for Jonestown to exist if Jim Jones had not cared about the quality of life for the minority population in this country, those so-called misfits of society of whom I am one. Each day since the tragedy, I have remembered that this man created harmony and rhythm in the lives of thousands. I remember a note Jim wrote to me in 1970:

Dear One:

Thank you for making the quest towards a united mankind along with me and others who truly understand my administration of justice!

At last, without pain, ridicule or abuse, I had finally found someone who took the time to listen and with whom I could be honest and



direct, someone who understood my motives. Heretofore, for the most part, the people in my life didn't want the truth. They were more comfortable believing a lie on the inside rather than taking the time to accept the truth from the outside. They wanted to control and use me for their own purposes and a few of them finally admitted it. They wanted the center of attention and glorified flattery to enhance their starving egos. My perplexed life started preparing me long ago to be with Jim Jones. He let me be who I am without interference or desire for selfish gain or control. For that I will forever love him. Pure love never dies. Love is eternal.

Nonetheless, I can only say that if I had been in Jonestown that day, I would have proudly joined others who laid down their lives for what they, like me, believed to be right rather than surrender to the world the freedom and egalitarian model that we worked so hard to achieve. We wanted to demonstrate to the world that people of all races, color and ethnic backgrounds, age or circumstances, could live and work together harmoniously for a common cause. In the end, we made a decision to die, as the Jews did in Masada, rather than forsake the dream.

I miss the caring family Jim provided for me, the camaraderie we shared and the security of knowing that I would never grow old alone, with no one to understand and care for my needs. Now I'm a senior citizen without my family who toiled in the burning sun, who struggled, sacrificed and surrendered their egos to the greatest cause on earth. Who is to speak for them? Are they to lie there forgotten and thrown away behind exaggerations, distortions and misrepresentations?

Not a chance while I live, because the only peace for me is in the triumph of principle.

It is not easy to relive a story about a man whom the world has labeled as a madman. And though I don't support his every action, write it I must because I hail him as master teacher of life, friend, saviour, father, liberator, and peacemaker.

Although time has answered many questions for me since the tragedy, there still remain jagged pieces of the puzzle that do not fit. No doubt my life will end before all of the truth is known. There are so many possibilities. The tragedy has come and gone, and no one knows exactly what happened throughout the entirety of such a mysterious and complex cataclysm. Assumptions are not truth.

Whether the burden of telling this side of Peoples Temple is



meant for me or whether I have chosen it, I cannot say. Probably both. As with many things in life, one's work is dictated by a combination of God-given talents and fate.

In 1976, I received word from Jim through Gene Chaiken that I would be the writer for the Temple. At the time, I had no idea what he meant, because the only writing I was involved with was as Head of Letter Writing in the San Francisco Temple. Gene had a camera with him and took my picture, also at Jim's request. After the tragedy, only one person I knew had a copy of the photograph, but she died before I thought to ask for it. The truth was, I didn't remember the picture — or Jim's message — until much later, when I started writing.

I know now what Jim meant, that the story of the Temple must live through my words. I must write what I feel just as I began to do after the tragedy. Intense thoughts, jotted down from time to time and tucked away in an old shoe box have now become notebooks, drafts of manuscripts, letters and journals of ancient reflections as they have been moved from one hiding place to another in order to avoid painful rehearsals with broken hearts. It has taken the kind of courage I would have had on that last day of November 18 to force myself to review all the voluminous pages I've written, to reorganize again in an attempt to condense a lifetime into one essay, and to continue making my life matter in the face of an unpopular cataclysm. The world is against me, the same world we tried to save.

Few people in Jonestown or in the states had the opportunity of speaking personally with Jim Jones other than in public meetings. I was never in his presence where there were only two of us. If this had been allowed for all, he would not have had the time or the energy in one lifetime to talk to the thousands of people who came through the doors of Peoples Temple, people deprived of a fair chance, recognition, understanding, lasting friendship and love.

Jim Jones did not need or want this thankless, torturous responsibility. He got involved because no one else had. In the 1960s, leaders of the poor had been gunned down. Who was to care now? He filled the vacuum and gave the credit to socialism.

Contrary to what one heard or read, thousands of people sincerely loved and highly respected Jim Jones. We could not do otherwise. Only one who has experienced such love and compassion, unselfishness and pure motives can possibly know the indestructibility of that immortal truth. Any other illusion of love is simply another fantasy created by the glorified images we have of ourselves.

We in Peoples Temple were composed of a cross-section of all personalities nourished by the political system. Some, like myself, were fortunate enough to be formally educated, and to be able to think logically. As leaders and workers, we were not mindless robots, but intelligent human beings. We were made intellectual by life itself, not by words on a scroll presented on graduation day.

I learned more about human behavior in Peoples Temple than from all the books I've read and all the professors I've known. I've learned over the years what different personalities are capable of when pressured for commitment to an unpopular cause. Some sacrificed their personal desires in exchange for a greater, higher cause; it is to them I owe my allegiance. But then there's also the other side of truth. Without it, I'd have no story with which to compare or further prove that all things work together for good.

Most people cannot be trusted to honor their word when the time for commitment to truth has come. They run, using lame excuses to avoid cooperative involvement, fearing the personal pain which is as much a part of life as joy is. For part of the truth is, unless one can feel pain, one cannot feel anything else. They cover for themselves. They desert, and then turn on the deserted like poisonous snakes when their personal comfort is threatened. They forsake the people, then lie, distort and misrepresent in order to make their irresponsible selves look good and right. They defend their positions perfectly, even when the good people die, and they never explain or defend the deaths. They cast them aside in shame, causing their sisters and brothers of the human family to be wounded, killed or jailed, tragic events that their earlier commitment to elevated human principles could have prevented. They refuse to accept constructive criticism and to discipline their lives to force themselves to grow up to the truth. They choose to label those who try to enlighten them as undesirable, difficult, brainwashed, and overly demanding. Having chosen the path of least resistance, they never recognize that those who enlighten may be the ones on the path of responsibility.

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At approximately 3:30 a.m., November 14, 1978, Jim's daughter, Agnes passed along a message from her father to prepare myself to board our boat, the Cudjoe, to keep a dental appointment in Georgetown on the 17th. I didn't want to leave, because I was trying to help a 19-year-old

black man from a San Francisco ghetto learn how to read, and I asked Agnes to express my feelings to Jim. She returned with another message. "No, my dear, you've had that toothache long enough, and enough is enough." Along with his refusal for me to stay in Jonestown came a personal apology for having overlooked my dental request of long standing. In the midst of continual harassment and threats to our survival, either by concerned relatives, traitors, or sources unknown at this writing, I wondered how he found the time or energy to think about something so minor as my toothache. This was the Jim Jones I knew four days before the tragedy, not the insane, demonic personality portrayed by a defector-influenced media.

Now since November 18, 1978, the day of the tragedy, most who knew Jim Jones have forgotten the sense of justice and humanity he brought into their lives. Even now some of the survivors don't appear actively to realize that what he taught was a way of life never to be forgotten. The majority no longer remember that Jim Jones is the same man who was once their only friend when concerned relatives and friends turned their backs by refusing to listen; the same man whose discipline oftentimes saved human beings from eventual capital punishment; the same man who freed them from jail for crimes no fault of their own; the same man who then developed, organized and redirected their skillful, hidden talents for service to their brothers and sisters.

It's extremely difficult for me to understand how anyone can totally denounce the one person in their life who gave meaning to his or her being. Frequently I have asked myself, "How could they desert him in the last days of his illness when he made them well by giving them a reason to live?" Such questions have plagued me constantly since the tragedy. They allow his memory to lie deep in the gutter of scorn when it is they who caused him to fall.

At Jim's insistence, then, I kept my dental appointment in Georgetown, Guyana, 125 miles away, on November 17, 1978, the day before the tragedy. The next day, November 18, I prepared a full-course dinner for more than 35 people. This was the last meal Sharon Amos and her three children would eat.

When all the dishes had been done and the kitchen was in order, I took a shower, dressed, and prepared myself for an evening out at the movies. I never saw the film, though, because as I waited in the living room for others to join me, someone walked in saying "God, my God, I don't believe it!" Trying to find out what had happened wasn't easy.

People were dazed as they realized that Sharon and her children were bleeding to death in the bathroom with their throats slit.

As I watched Guyanese police carry their covered bodies past my horror-petrified face, I remember thinking that Jim would be devastated. It wasn't until I returned to the States that I learned that Sharon had received an order from Jonestown for all to die. Then and now, I did not perceive Sharon's act as one of insanity, or as the result of brainwashing, but as one of unmatched self-sacrificial courage, of which I am not capable.

On the morning of November 19th, the day after the tragedy, we were awakened by news flashes blitzing into our Georgetown headquarters. "Three hundred people have committed suicide in Jonestown." In a flash, we were without family, homeless, friendless, and penniless in dead center of the eye of a hurricane that had shattered our lives. Trying to keep pace with conflicting media reports was torture. We were never certain of the truth. Here we were, without a fair trial, being judged by America, and the world, when we were the victims!

"It can't be," I cried. "Not without me, it can't." But it was. The end of our hope to change the world. The death of a political organization whose goal was to unite the world before we self destruct. The end of solidarity. And now it was over, all swept away and buried in the name of madness. "God, how can it be?" I wasn't there to exercise my final commitment to ultimate principle for what I knew to be right. I was very angry: they had gone without me. A toothache had separated me forever from those I had loved so long. I couldn't believe it. I wanted so much to be there, not left back here in hell in the struggle for survival, where people are not true friends but merely glorified performers on the stage of pretense. I wanted to share in that final moment of unity, and knew I had been robbed of the chance. My body shook, and my tear-filled eyes stared into empty spaces that had no places to go. I wanted to die.

Tears flowed into oceans of inner torture as I remembered the words of Dr. King with regard to ultimate principle: "We must develop the quiet courage of dying for a cause," and I knew that nothing in my life had ever been worth dying for except in Peoples Temple. Now everything had gone wrong. Blood was shed, people hurt and killed. God, how could it have happened? The lies, exaggerations, distortions and outright deception had gotten out of hand. An impossible situation snowballed: people believed what they heard and came to help, never knowing what had caused them to be there. Over-reaction, misunderstanding, conflict

of interests, invasion of privacy, violation of human rights, treachery!

Arriving back in the United States was devastating. The mind-shattering nightmare deepened as responsible citizens of democratic principles and advocates of necessary social change were labeled by America as criminals of the insane. While waiting at New York's Kennedy airport for a plane to California, I saw them for the first time: books for sale about a movement the writers knew nothing about; books that purported to know our final moments, when we didn't know ourselves; books that professed to know us, when the authors had never been members; books that judged our leader insane, when the writers hadn't even met him.

Newspapers all around shrieked with exaggerations, misrepresentations, concoctions of half-truths and outright lies; treated us like fugitives from justice when we were the victims. "Vultures," I screamed, "capitalizing on the pains of shock victims who had lost as many as twenty relatives!" And the vultures were there themselves: reporters with tape recorders and microphones and cameras, wanting a glimpse at this sideshow of their self-created three-ring circus.

Pressured, loaded questions were thrown at us with the expectation of split-second answers. Questions set the stage for negative responses. Years of work, sweat, tears, sacrifice and struggle can never be expressed in mere news flashes.

The press had never been fair. It was unwilling, long before the tragedy, to write more about our many humanitarian works. Reporters gloated over minor distractions, such as sex and "false healings." The healing of the mind, what Jim was really after, can never be false. The matter of sex is a private affair.

When we blindly believe what we read and hear to be truth, we are victimized by the real form of brainwashing, the most effective weapon of oppression, the opium that insures absence of knowledge.

The media attack began in August 1977 with a *New West* magazine article by Marshall Kilduff, a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter. Jim accurately prophesied the trouble Kilduff would cause. As a recording secretary for the Temple, I had written his words down: "Beware of a man with other than dark complexion who will be wearing thick-rimmed glasses. He'll come to spy on good people and bring this place down."

So when Marshall Kilduff finally came through our doors, I knew who he was. Kilduff directed his focus completely on sensational-

ist, distorted versions and false accusations made by disgruntled former Temple members.

After the Kilduff attack, others hurled themselves into the inferno. Frightful articles blazed up out of nowhere. It was more akin to a horror movie. Why did they focus their cameras and cutting words on the secure iron gates at the San Francisco Temple, instead of on the beautiful, secure, rent-free home it provided for us? Or upon the packing crates bound for Guyana, full of grain and dried beans, clothes, shoes, toys, dairy equipment, and everything else 1000 people needed? Why didn't they write about the guards at Jonestown who protected us from outside threats to our survival, rather than about the guards who, according to them, kept people in Jonestown against their will?

The power of right-wing media chased us miles across this country and over the rough seas. They hounded, clamored, demanded, invaded, violated, discredited and destroyed us. They wouldn't leave us alone to heal and try to enjoy the happiness we had earned. And they waited for us upon our return.

Some interviewers reported the facts as I gave them, but at the same time, they seasoned the interviews to make me look brainwashed, unbalanced, ridiculous, and without human dignity. Given another chance, I'd choose to speak to no one. The knowledge I gained from those encounters gave birth and strength to the realization that I would have to write my own story someday.

Out of all the reporters who questioned me, only one — somehow — understood what I was trying to say. Lidia Wasowitz of United Press International captured my perspective and wrote her piece under the headline: "Jonestown Survivor's Regret — 'I Missed the Final Moment of Unity.'"

She was the exception, though. I remember one reporter asking me, for example, if I thought life would ever be normal again. Life was never normal for me before. With all these jagged, deceptive pieces still outstanding, how the hell could life be normal ever? Bombarded with insurmountable questions, I wanted to scream, die, or both.

When traitors deserted socialism in the early 1970s, Jim knew that the rumors they would circulate would be a concoction of deceptive measures in defense of the glorified images they had of themselves. He talked about it then, and he talked about it in the end. He knew how people would misunderstand our disciplinary measures, for example, because our organization functioned on a different set of human values. We were

at war with a system that divides the hearts of people one from another! So when traitors returned to the system, Jim wept, not for himself, but for humanity.

It's important for me to say that not all the people who left the Temple were out to destroy us. I remember good people who left, and I remember why some of them left. It wasn't because of Jim Jones, or because of discipline, but because of the anti-social human behavior patterns of some of the members: telling lies, exaggerating, misrepresenting, deceiving and discrediting the human dignity of people drove some from the church. I remember a time I nearly left for the same reason, but when I remembered my vow of loyalty to truth, I could not leave.

A few other good people left Jonestown on the last day. The tremendous and unimaginable pressure on every phase of life caused by constant outside threats to our survival was at the zenith every moment. Wanting to leave was clearly understandable, even though my own decision would have been to remain with my people.

I remember well when the first traitors left. Behind the podium he sat, twirling around in that big black chair of his, tears streaming down his face. For a long time, I stared as if there were only two of us. Yet the auditorium was filled with people. That day, that hour and moment, I decided "I'll never leave him, even if there are only two of us left."

The traitors' work filtered throughout the media coverage, which focused on the unproven negative sides of Peoples Temple. They misrepresented the facts about themselves, describing "beatings," "spankings," and so-called "torture boxes" (a legitimate means of sensory deprivation in this country), to defend their egos. The fact is, drugs were a necessary means to calm the violent, those who were angry with capitalism, and those who were determined to continue their inhumane practices of child molestation and abuse on our children. Discipline was always warranted when disrespect for our seniors was shown. And for those who disrespected and violated the human rights of people by further expanding threats to our survival, drugs were necessary to preserve the lives of human beings; disciplinary measures to equal the offense to cause the offender to feel what it was like to experience the suffering one had caused for others. How else could they learn?

I didn't see an "elite" inner circle at work. I saw the Planning Commission comprised of people whose formal education and natural



talents rightfully qualified them for responsible positions. They did not receive favors. Instead, their work requirements caused them to get less sleep than anyone else. In my mind, the situation evened out.

Upon my return to the United States, close family members, with the exception of a precious few, wanted no part of my views. None had ever sought me out, or responded to my letters while I was living in Jonestown. After the tragedy, no one offered me money, or permanent shelter. No one called me in Georgetown with an offer of temporary shelter except for my son, who has never shown an interest in Peoples Temple.

Some labeled me "brainwashed imbecile of the insane." Others wanted to separate me from "the rest." I was "the rest" as I am now. Those who wanted to be seen by the camera's eye — both family and Peoples Temple-related — didn't miss their chance either to appear self-righteous and exalted.

My life began moving uncontrollably in reverse motion after the tragedy. In the twinkling of an eye I was an alien in my native land. Again, that is. I wasn't at all happy about it because these same people who had used, abused, deceived, deserted and caused me to be in Peoples Temple in the first place were still here, and very much alive. Where was I going? I couldn't go back and I couldn't go forward.

I was stuck in a land where people escaped scot-free after they used me as a pawn; where honesty is often ignored, unacceptable, and ridiculed, and where deceit is honored as dignity and a "character" reference; where a few rich, powerful, disguised slavemasters keep us in their yoke of bondage; and where men who kill people defending themselves are not sent to prison but awarded gold medals instead. And from their luxury-coated, egotistical, deceptive pedestals of insecurity, they strip us of our dignity, and dictate what their definitions of justice are.

How could I rest when I saw the Temple's teachings all buried with my people? How could I respond when children threw veiled hints of emotional blackmail at senior mothers, instead of respecting the caring and sincere nature of the sacrificial suffering they have endured for them?

How could I stop the turbulent sea of tears when denied a Christmas right to leave gifts for my son without making an appointment first? Who is married to whom, and who is mother? No one?

How could I find peace when people without children were not



reprimanded but instead supported for disrespectfully dictating to mothers what justice is for mothers? A mother's sacrifice, pain, hunger and love will forever survive for her only son.

For the first few months I barely lived through it. I attempted to convince myself, with little success, there must have been a good reason for my being alive. Preoccupied with death, I wanted to escape the imprisonment of this inequitable, unjust planet of hell; such lack of respect for one's intelligence and integrity by those who claimed to love me; relatives saying they were related, when I knew that the majority of those who had demonstrated relativity were all dead; insensitive relatives cruelly saying, "I told you so. You are worse off because you knew Jim Jones." But I knew, a fighter in the struggle for justice can never be worse off. They were determined to rob me — and themselves — of our black identity both as life-long victims and proud fighters in the struggle for human rights and human dignity, intent on destroying all I had left to survive.

My family forbade me to call anyone connected with the Temple, when the Temple, not they, had been my only friend. Stripped of the dignity of who I was and am, I was deprived of the few friends left, to heighten the despair. They wanted to strip me of all. Even the writing of one's own life they would not allow. "Worse than death," I cried. But trying to explain this to someone uneducated in truth is like talking to a dead man.

The previous eight and one-half years had liberated me. I was no longer as I once was. I was back now, facing the same people who love only themselves, the same deceptive tactics and undercover tyranny I thought I had left behind forever. Now I had to live it all over again. My oppressors, personal and impersonal, were staring me in the face. Now I had to worry about survival again.

I no longer wondered who the gangsters, murderers, deceivers and terrorists were. They weren't all behind bars, that's for sure. And some were behind bars because of the inequities in our society. And others, like Nelson Mandela in South Africa, were behind bars for political reasons.

I pondered why some women continued to allow themselves to be controlled and used by chauvinistic personalities instead of being independent and free. How could I be calm when sons dishonored their mothers for speaking the truth, but glorified them for being submissive to tyranny? How could I be free when people were ridiculed and shunned because of the shabby clothes they wore, or because they associated with

me? How could life be normal when no one understood the absolute need for a jungle community to have weapons? How were we supposed to defend ourselves? How could I rest when our attempts to establish conscientious eating habits through smaller portions and periodic fasting — and to understand to a small degree the hunger that most of the world feels every day — were deliberately misinterpreted as indicating we never had enough to eat?

Now that I've had ten years to think and place further facts in perspective, I can only lay the blame elsewhere. I can't blame my relatives for being born into a deceptive system that creates their personalities. Nor can I judge them for attempting to protect me from the non-existent hit squads.

Some attempted to coerce me into writing an instant book, solely as a profit-making venture. Only the society we live in can be blamed for that, not the individual pawns. Knowing my story would require years to unfold, I flatly refused. Therefore, in order to set the printed record straight and to insure that the contents of my mind will continue to live long after the planet earth has claimed my body, I've condensed my life's work into these few pages, taking the time it requires and deserves. Ten years. My struggles in life against all odds have taught me that the jewels of pain can move mountains when properly channeled, and that each moment of suffering is worth a lifetime of wisdom.

In 1979, I moved away from the people who claimed to care in an attempt to re-establish myself and bring some stability into my life. To have remained would have been instant death, and complete surrender of my ideals. I moved in with another senior Peoples Temple survivor whose human values equaled mine. Thanks to the honorable character of Nettie Scheynayder, I found a highway out of hell in keeping with the teachings of Jim Jones: socialism.

I eventually began working as a secretary in Charles Garry's office in San Francisco. He had been the Temple attorney for years. I remember his visit to Jonestown in 1977, when he came away calling our community a "paradise." During that time I met Sally, a faithful comrade like none other. In ten years she's never deserted me, or my cause, regardless of circumstances. With the exception of my roommate, she's the only one who has demonstrated consistent interest and understanding of my writing.

During my time in Charles Garry's office, I was interviewed by several people writing books about Peoples Temple. It seemed incredible to me, since none had been members. After one book was published, I

noted that none of my words were used. Again I knew I would have to write my own story. Otherwise, too much truth would go unsaid and unrecorded.

I moved in with another Temple member that same year. A decade later we are still living together and are committed to each other for life in keeping with the teachings of socialism. We've been through many rough struggles together, trying to survive. In nine years we've moved four times because the houses we rented were sold. We never had these kinds of worries in Peoples Temple.

In 1981 I became disabled as a result of a chronic back condition. With all I was enduring, mostly alone, my body had to cry out in rebellion. For over two years I was confined to bed. I lay there, day and night, looking up at the ceiling all those months, remembering Jim's words of assurance, "All things, including pain, work together for good." I remembered too that there are others who suffer more, who have no sight, arms, or legs. Surely I was no more special than they. So I accepted the pain and inconvenience in a positive manner, as Jim Jones always advised. I assured myself that this was the interim period needed to properly portray my true perspective as to who I am and why I didn't die on November 18, 1978, along with my real family of the human race.

My health began to improve by 1983. The possibility of writing became real. In certain positions I could sit down, walk, and stand briefly. Maybe now it would be possible for me to return to my roots in Georgia. Because it seemed important, I decided to take the drive across country before the pain returned.

I would drive alone, if need be, but my friends insisted that another Peoples Temple survivor come along with me as a traveling companion. His wife and daughter died in Jonestown. Such a trip offered him an experience he would not otherwise have been able to afford. Neither would I, had I not just received my share of what the courts awarded to Peoples Temple survivors.

On May 13th — Jim's birthday — my traveling companion and I left California for the east coast. The trip had been planned long before in my mind. I wanted to feel the perspective of my roots as a fully mature, free-thinking person, to set the record straight in my mind.

Five days later we arrived in Savannah, Georgia. The trip across country had done wonders for my health, and one of my small dreams had materialized. Barely recognizable by night, Georgia State College had become the integrated Savannah State College. Eight buildings designed by my father, Antonio Orsot, now stood strong and proud. What

a relief, now, after all these years to see black and white together walking side by side, the way it always should have been.

The next morning I phoned Dr. Joan Gordon, my sociology professor. She insisted we come right over. Before long, I pulled out a letter I had written to someone who had recently interviewed me about the possibility of creating a film about Jim Jones and Peoples Temple. That letter read, in part:

No one can portray it in a single book, including the one I write daily. No one can write it all. Jim Jones was as 'you' saw him only. His wisdom-intelligence led you only to the brink of your own mind. So, therefore, no pages can contain everyone's story, everyone's truth. There can be no single movie, no single book, only what is! Hence, I cannot participate in or be involved in any movie, or anyone's story in proper length, except that of my own, which I know to be true. It is I who have lived it, am living it, and write, as I live...

s/ Beatrice A. Orsot  
A Jonestown Survivor

I gave the letter to Dr. Gordon to read. After reading it, she looked up from the page and said, "This letter is a book in itself. You shouldn't stop writing." The truth is, I never have. To cease writing would be to die.

During the next three years, being determined and intense, I typed the first draft of my manuscript in a standing-up position because the back pain returned. It didn't matter, because writing truth is far more important than comfort.

In 1985 I presented the first part of my manuscript to a literary agent. He rejected it because the contents conflicted with an acceptable, published book written by ex-member Jeannie Mills, entitled, *Six Years With God*.

I have no interest in the news media, talk shows or classrooms. Nor do I have the strength or desire to appear on television to relive a nightmare. It's not my intention to make war by cross-firing with anyone who was a member of Peoples Temple or an outsider. An eye for an eye simply further serves to divide the world in absolute, premature darkness. Nothing can be attained.

I am in my senior years now, faced with a far greater struggle to survive than before the tragedy. Except for times of temporary employment, I exist — barely — on a fixed annuity from the federal government after 27 years of service. How ironic that the annuity granted by the society which condemned the “madness” of Jonestown can’t begin to meet those needs that were automatically guaranteed there, such as dental and medical care, food, clothing, shelter and prolonged hospitalization. I work for temporary employment agencies to supplement the annuity, but my time is getting shorter and my body tires more often. If something should happen to my loyal roommate, I would rather choose death — as many seniors in this country have done — in order to avoid starvation, disrespect and an unearthing of my dignity by a generation uneducated in truth.

The community of Jonestown, as it was when I lived there, is seldom beyond my mind’s reach. It required a basic willingness to subordinate personal desires for the greatest desire of all. At least we tried. I am unaware of any other American group who experimented with any greater degree of commitment. Some gave, and found their lives as they lived. Others did so as they died. As in all liberation struggles, people are always hurt, precious life is lost while still others are left behind with the blood of all the people on their hands. This is not my rationalization for wounded bodies, loss of life and dignity, but my strong protest against deceptive education in truth.

As one among many, I miss the secure, productive lifestyle we had in Peoples Temple because of Jim Jones. He was a friend to us all at one time or another. He has never ceased being the one person in all the world who cared about me more than any other.

The death of Peoples Temple also represents the loss of some of America’s greatest freedom fighters. I remember Jim saying in Jonestown, “America has no idea how much I have loved her.” He wasn’t referring to the politics that rule the day-to-day affairs of government, though. He meant the democratic principles upon which our country was founded.

Jim Jones never said he was perfect nor that he was a God in the sky, other than a struggling example of socialistic and democratic behavior on earth. He and his dedicated wife Marceline were the most perfect souls in principle of any two people I’ve known. Over and over, Jim said God is love. His exact words were:

Perfection should be seen as embodying and transcending all races or colors, for the spirit of love should serve to equalize and unify all humankind; not set one group above or against another by the insipid notion that God is a particular color or race.

Christianity was never based on the idea of an unknown God; I'm going to cause you to know that you are what Jesus was. Jesus said that every human being was a god. It is written that "Ye are Gods." I'm a god and you're a god. I'm going to stay a god until you recognize that you are a god. Then when you recognize that you are a god, I shall go back into principle and will not appear as a personality.

Peoples Temple was named for specific reasons by Jim Jones. First, he wanted a temple where all people could come without being locked out for any reason. He wore no color other than the color of justice. Second, he said, "Take up your own 'T' formation, actively balance the struggles within, not by reading the word of an illusionary image of God someone has placed in print for you to believe. The force of justice wears no ego." Jim tried desperately to teach people how to understand this truth. It's unlikely that I will forget since I spent long hours recording his words. Frequently meetings lasted ten hours or more. But some of us sat there on the edge of our privileged seats, thinking we had just arrived. I hear his voice now.

If anything happens to me, forget me as a personality because all that gives life meaning is principle. We've got to find a way to share the wealth of the world more equitably. It seems unless America learns this, she will meet as tormented an end as the multi-millionaires she has spawned.

I don't want you to worship me. I want you to become what I am; I want you to enjoy the fearlessness that I have; the courage that I have; the firm and gentle compassion that I have; the love that I have; the all-encompassing mercy that I am. How much I have loved you. How much I've tried to give you a good life. This world is not our home.

By whatever means necessary to expose truth, he became all things to all people who listened attentively. Whatever one personally saw in him, one personally received. Under the mask of orthodox religion, he created a political organization whose ultimate goal was to unite the world by a living example.

The teachings of Jim Jones are indestructible. Therefore, they can never die. As this essay only minutely depicts, they are freedom stripped of false images and myths. When we liberate our minds from others' expectations and concentrate on who we are, we define our own realm of freedom.

Today nothing has changed, and I am forced to let the dead bury the dead against my heart's deepest desires. I can only rest my case with peace and love, because too many people have been hurt by their deeds and misdeeds, humiliated, victimized and used by questions that set the capitalistic stage for negative answers, deception, ridicule and profiteering.

My body grows weaker as my mind races on. I am finished with exposing the human dignity I've rightfully earned to deceptive wild-winds and committing suicide slowly when the direction of my soul is within. I struggle to be compassionate and have no hostility for anyone personally. My hostility remains strong towards the hypocritical systems of government which use people as pawns, and value money, personal esteem and greed more than human beings. In so doing, those governments enslave their people, denying them an equal right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness to which we are all entitled.

We as individuals, and nations, are responsible to remove the images we have of our faulty selves. If we do not, our planet will blow up while we are arguing who is right and who is wrong.

Personalities begin and end, but the mind of principle is an endless circle. What Jim Jones and I still have between us is the divine marriage of eternal revolutionary principle, the highest form of love there is.

I want to crawl inside the center of my soul. It's peaceful, friendly and triumphant there. People are loyal, honest, united and finally free there.

Together we stood, divided we fell. But if we had remained honestly united to truth, there would have been no tragedy, for anyone.

In the words of the great American philosopher George Santayana, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

## Acknowledgements

This essay could not have been written without an acknowledgment of the contributions made by the following people, to whom I dedicate its publication:

To the truth and memory of all the people who died and their surviving relatives;

To all those who were wounded physically and emotionally;

To all survivors of Peoples Temple whose persecuted lives have been a constant reminder to them of who they are and what they stood for;

To all those who have personally persecuted me, because they have unwittingly provided the necessary pain that has motivated my determination to write;

To Dr. Joan L. Gordon, retired sociologist, Savannah State College, Savannah, Georgia, whose sincere understanding encouraged me beyond measure;

To Lidia Wasowitz-Pringle, a United Press International reporter, for her courageous persistence and sensitive reporting after the tragedy;

To my faithful friend, Sally Sweet, with enduring love, gratitude and distinguished respect for her personal encouragement and struggle for world solidarity;

To my beloved son, Antonio A. Harvey, for his enlightenment;  
and

To all oppressed peoples of the world whose suffering has caused this essay to be.





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## The Emergency Relief Committee

An Interview with Rabbi Malcolm Sparer,  
Donneter Lane, and John Lane

**Donneter Lane:** I will never forget how the religious community mobilized around a central thing: that was burying the dead. Politics got in there to the extent that people weren't really concerned with burying the dead. All they were concerned about was how much money they were going to sue for, and who was going to get the bodies. The U.S. State Department didn't help. The messages we got from them were confusing and contradictory. We didn't know whether the bodies

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*(Ed. Note: After the Jonestown deaths, an interfaith committee worked in San Francisco to heal the wounded community. Called the Emergency Relief Committee (ERC), the group went to court to obtain money from Peoples Temple assets to return almost 500 bodies from Dover, Delaware to California. Ultimately the group saw to the interment of the remains in cemeteries in Los Angeles and Oakland.*

*Two of the three principals on the ERC — Rabbi Malcolm Sparer and Donneter Lane — were interviewed on May 4, 1988. The third, Father John O'Connor, wrote a statement about the committee, which follows the interview. In going public with their story, the three agreed to break a silence they had imposed upon themselves ten years ago.*

*John Lane, Donneter's husband and in 1978 a member of the Board of the American Baptist Convention, was also present for the interview. Fielding M. McGehee III was the interviewer.)*

were coming back to California, and we learned that some legislatures had gone in session and voted that the bodies could not be transported through their states. We were talking with our representatives in Washington, D.C. We were talking with the mayor, trying to get the city to take some kind of position so we could act on this.

The Emergency Relief Committee came out as a result of a man named Rev. Bishop Miles, who held a meeting with the clergy to find out how they were going to bury the dead. They brought the issue to the Conference on Religion, Race and Social Concerns, but then it bounced back to the San Francisco Council of Churches, and we became the central focus for the Emergency Relief Committee. There were people who were just waiting to capitalize on this whole scene. The religious community moved in and did just the opposite. That offered the most relief for me, because it had been so chaotic. No one knew what to do, government didn't know what to do, families didn't know what to do. Nobody knew anything. We couldn't even go to a reference book and find out how someone else had done it before. It had never happened before.

**Malcolm Sparer:** Jonestown had ripple effects in our city. I have long felt that the assassinations of Harvey Milk and George Moscone were a direct result of that violence and trauma that kindled the emotions in this city. The Sunday night before Mayor Moscone was assassinated, the Council of Churches sponsored a community memorial service for the Jonestown victims at the Congregational Church at Post and Mason Street. To the disgrace of our community, I believe there were fewer than 50 people there. As we walked out that evening on the sidewalk, after the service, Mayor Moscone and his wife Gina, walked out together with my wife and me, and we chatted. That was the last time we saw him alive. And I have always wondered since then, to what degree was the trauma of violence triggered in our city. There are always ripple effects. Good breeds good, and violence breeds violence.

I remember being in the sacristy of St. Mary's Cathedral for the funeral of Mayor Moscone. The archbishop, John Quinn, turned to me and said, "Isn't it a shame that it is a tragedy like this that brings us together?" As a result of that comment, the two of us sat down, and we had a series of joint services through which we were able to share our common heritage by virtue of being Americans. As a result of that, we have built up an abiding, very warm friendship which I think has reached down to the priests in the archdiocese.

Donneter does not give herself enough pats on the back. The Board of Rabbis was in the same building as the Council of Churches at

that time. We were all thrust together, and we all worked together. In fact, the Board of Rabbis didn't bother to buy a Xerox machine, because we used to go down to the Council of Churches and do all our xeroxing there. Of course we would pay for it — Donneter would see to that — but the fact is that almost on a daily basis, Donneter and I sat closed up in her inner office or my inner office, and the very proximity of being in the same building was healthy. It brought us together. We have become lifelong friends as a result of this.

**Donneter Lane:** Everytime something happened, I always checked it out with the rabbi, because he always would come from a different perspective. That was the main thing. It was a place where you looked forward to going to work. All your buddies were within one block. The Jewish Human Relations Committee was on the next block. So whatever happened at 942 Market Street [the offices of the Northern California Ecumenical Council], we just marched down to check it out.

I agree with the rabbi that the assassinations were fallout from Jonestown. We'd had violence for several years, going back to 1976 when the city had one of the largest labor strikes in its history. The Plumbers Union went out, and the violence started then. In 1977, we had a Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration at Peoples Temple, trying to heal the city. It was hot here. In 1977, Moscone became Mayor, and it was uncertain for awhile. Alioto was going out, and Moscone was coming up. Two totally different styles of politics. Everybody thought Moscone was going to make it. Jonestown was next in line.

**Malcolm Sparer:** The result of the tragedy of Jonestown was to bring together a host of rabbis, ministers, community workers, and priests who never would have worked together. This was the first time in the history of the Republic that the major faith groups — the Catholics, the Protestants, and the Jews — sued the federal government in federal court. That was an historic event that has never been picked up by any news service. It was the first time. The key to it was that the federal government had made a decision based upon whatever powers of thinking they utilized, without reaching out to the religious leaders. The President and his administration made a decision to bring the bodies back to Dover, Delaware, where they would be prepared to be claimed by family or interred or whatever.

We challenged that concept. First of all, we challenged it on the basis that as religious organizations of Northern California, we were not consulted, nor were the families. While we were grateful for the federal government responding so rapidly and bringing back the bodies,

we felt we had appropriate mortuary facilities in Northern California by Travis Air Force Base and Oakland Naval Station. Consequently, we felt the federal government had no validity to say that the only large mortuary was in Dover, Delaware. On that basis, the federal government put in the first claim [for Temple assets], saying that it wanted \$4 million reimbursement for its expenditure, before the court appointed trustee could distribute any other monies.

It was at that time that the Council of Churches, the Archdiocese of San Francisco, and the Board of Rabbis challenged that decision in federal court and won. The state of California, through the Attorney General's office, had its own claim, and we challenged that too. So we challenged both the U.S. government and the state attorney general, saying their claims for refunds or recovering of the money they laid out must wait until the bodies were returned to Northern California. We finally won that decision in federal district court. Justice Ira Brown made the decision, and the federal government decided not to challenge it. Its claim for \$4 million was set aside, and the Receiver [of Peoples Temple assets, Robert Fabian] went into court and got a prescribed amount, which I think was \$535 per body.

The story is not that the political, civil or municipal community brought together the religious bodies, but rather the reverse. The religious community came together first and brought together the civic leaders. The new mayor, Dianne Feinstein, appointed a psychiatrist out of UCSF [University of California, San Francisco], who became a liaison between the mayor's office and the ERC. Out of that committee, before we even had money, Donnetter told me to call someone who knows about Holocaust, and we reached out and called a professor at Tel Aviv University who deals with and teaches psychological counseling as a result of the Holocaust. From his guidance, we started to make ourselves available for counseling to the families who needed it. It was very inspiring to see Catholic priests and rabbis and white ministers counseling with black families wherever they may be. Donnetter and I went sometimes in the middle of the night to funeral homes, to be with the families who had no place to go and felt that they wanted to be at the funeral homes. You had a few funeral homes that wanted to cash in and some others — I wouldn't even call them ministers, I would just say that they were public charlatans who just paraded around in colors — who tried to cash in.

I remember one black girl who worked as a delivery girl for UPS. She lost three or four in her family, including her father and mother.

Several times, on the steps going up to my office at the VA Hospital, we would sit and talk together. Whenever I see her to this day, we talk.

Father O'Connor talked about the feelings all of us had, unified feelings we had when the bodies were finally brought back, and we joined together in a unified burial service for these people. But there's a moral to all this: we cannot be so concerned about heaven that we disregard what happens here on earth. Sometimes we must scrutinize and be very careful who we endorse and whom we give credit for living to.

**Fielding McGehee:** Regarding the suit filed against the federal government, did the decision note there were three religious groups coming together for the first time?

**Malcolm Sparer:** I don't remember what the decision was, or if the court noted it. I know the media didn't, and I know some of the religious leaders in town didn't. I don't think some of the groups involved realized we were making history. It was the first time in the history of the republic that religious groups sued the federal government in federal court and won, and sued the act of a U.S. president.

**John Lane:** Reflecting on that, that's unique. Usually when someone spearheads something, they want credit for it. Here is an instance that the religious community worked together and wasn't seeking any credit.

**Malcolm Sparer:** In fact, I want to interrupt here, because John used the term "credit," and I don't want us to forget that we met today and agreed to meet only when Father O'Connor, Donneter and I agreed to speak and to break our silence. At the time, we made a pact that we would not give any interviews to any news services. *Time* Magazine called us, *Newsweek* called us at our homes in the middle of the night, newspapers from all over the country called us, from all over Europe. We decided that we would not talk about it, nor write about it, nor cash in on it in any way. We only saw you because Donneter met with Father O'Connor and me and we agreed that after ten years, it may be time we could appropriately speak with you. But again we're speaking, not through our own pen or editorship, so there should not be any challenge to any one of the religious groups, and those who participated as co-chairpersons of this group should take specific credit for it.

**John Lane:** I think that's the key, that even at the beginning moments, this was a religious group coming together to address the suffering so that those who were survivors could mourn their dead.

**Malcolm Sparer:** We never spoke publicly, in spite of constant calls. We agreed to refer those calls we had to answer to Donneter Lane,

who at that time sat as Executive Director of the Council of Churches of San Francisco. She would speak on issues that had to be addressed, so there wouldn't be ten, fifteen, or thirty different voices. The Council of Churches, I think, really should be given credit under Donner's leadership at that time. Donner was the mother of us all, and she guided the group. The reason it worked out — I have to say this, Donner — was that we became a family. I have never figured out if we became a family because of what we put in, or because she started off by treating us as a mother would a family. So we just sort of fell in line around the table that we met on, in the wee hours of the morning, so we wouldn't take time away from our own chores and work and ministries and organizations. We met at seven in the morning, so that by nine a.m. we were back in our own offices, doing our own work. Or we would meet late at night. Never trying to take time away. People couldn't say the work of the living was not being done because we have a couple of organized religions here who have banded together and are only concerned about the dying and the dead. We never let them think that, because we always met before or after a normal workday.

**John Lane:** That was the beauty of it, because everybody says the cause of the ministry to the suffering is what takes precedence. We're going to do that in addition to everything else we have to do. It's an extra burden we'll have to share, and bring more people in to do that.

**Malcolm Sparer:** The faith community has a role in lifting up the have-nots. It's not only the role of government. It is the role of the faith community. I refuse to say that I will give that credibility to my government or to any government, that they're the only ones which should have ethics and morality and be the ones to give. I feel that those of us in the grassroots have a responsibility to be the givers as well.

I believe that there is a serious polarity that exists and may grow, to some degree. You always have the political divisions. Nuclear war, anti-nuke, disarmament, no disarmament, pro-Central America, do we invoke the Monroe Doctrine, do we not invoke it, and America lives through this and its citizens live through this. These are not polarities; these are legitimate political differences and interpretations of how we view current events. This is the way it should be. That's what makes us a democracy.

But there is a serious polarity which is accentuating the have-nots and the haves. While we know that it exists in our society, to accentuate it to the level that it should only become governmental concern and not the concern of people of faith, we really are doing an



injustice to the system, and are contributing to the polarity.

**John Lane:** I was on the general board of the American Baptist Church, USA, and I had fought very fervently to get a social action agenda on and up to the front. But we wanted to evangelize, to love everybody, rather than looking in on the hurts and addressing the hurts. I'm talking about the kind of church image that says, oh, you're out there, come on in.

**Malcolm Sparer:** There's another thing, John, that must be remembered, especially in the black community. During this post Jonestown period, as a Jew and as a rabbi, I learned how much common culture and customs the Jews and the blacks share over the ritual of death and burial. They're very similar. I think that to some degree we share something else, which is negative. We don't enjoy the unity of an umbrella church. The Jewish community and the black community are awfully democratic. We don't have a Pope, we don't have that umbrella. And in the black community, there are a lot of divisions. There are black ministers who will not sit down with other black ministers, black ministers who will not recognize other black ministers because they came from different seminaries and different regions. This division, I believe, made it possible for a Jim Jones to come into being. I think it's important for the black community to look inside its own church system — and black ministers who today are equally divided.

In the Jewish community we looked at this many years ago, and that's why we formed the Board of Rabbis. The Board of Rabbis represents a pluralistic organization. We are composed of rabbis who come from every different religious philosophy and persuasion. There are a few who choose to remain outside the Board of Rabbis. But for the most part, most rabbis in communities throughout the U.S. belong. I should add, the Board of Rabbis is an animal only of the American Jewish community. It does not exist in Europe or the British Commonwealth, where orthodox meet with orthodox and conservative meet with conservative and reform meet with reform, and there's no interchange. I think it's important that the lessons of Jonestown bring something of this pluralism, and the necessity of it, to the black ministers. Because by not being together as a pluralistic organization, and being divided, they give birth to the possibility of another Jim Jones.

**John Lane:** That is the key of going back to the guilt that is trying to be pushed off, people saying that 'It wasn't my fault.' There's so much plurality that they have no common basis of understanding. So we say, I didn't do it. We're trying to absolve ourselves, all the black



Baptists and black religious community.

**Malcolm Sparer:** You've also got to realize, in the Jewish community, that was also a period of an alienation between blacks and Jews, to some degree. The Jews and the blacks marched together in Selma and Montgomery, and worked together on civil rights, but then there came a time when the Jewish community was very silent. While we did not lose our interest in civil rights, it was a period when the black community did not tap the Jewish community, and the Jewish community did not offer advice or experience to some of the problems that blacks were experiencing. This is something else we need to think about, the physical estrangement between the two communities, post-civil rights, which polarized the community. That polarization made it possible for someone to drive right in. One has to examine the fact that if one permits our communities to be consistently polarized, we also invite creatures such as Jim Jones or sickies to drive in. It's evident he was a sick man. He may have been mean and cruel, he may have had ulterior motives, but in the end, he certainly was a sick man.

**Fielding McGehee:** What do you think the San Francisco religious community learned as a result of the whole experience?

**Malcolm Sparer:** I don't think we learned anything. I think the rest of the country has yet to learn from us. I think we're twenty years ahead of the rest of the country. I would like to see anywhere in the country — New York, Chicago, Atlanta, L.A. — where the religious community has such a healthy relationship as we have here. We didn't learn anything, because let me tell you something: San Francisco is what it is because of the people in the church community and the synagogue community and the faith community who are here. We came here, and we dragged this through the community, each one of us, in our own way. I had a lunch with some of the bishops in the area a few months ago, and we were discussing the uniqueness of San Francisco. To some degree, we have to somewhat selfishly say, maybe it's because each one of us is unique. So we don't have anything to learn, but we could teach.

**John Lane:** It's true, and I'd like to add to that. I came out of the tradition where doctors and attorneys were outsiders just practicing, while ministers and teachers had something exact. Preacher or rabbi, he was certain of his faith. Now it's just the reverse. Separation of church and state means you don't have anything to do with each other, and that's wrong. We still believe that some things you practice and some things you've got to be sure about. Because there will always be someone, another Jim Jones, to capitalize upon your weaknesses.

## Recollections of the Jonestown Massacre and My Role in the Burial of the Victims

Father John O'Connor

Like everyone else, I was shocked and horrified by the events at Jonestown.

For approximately two years prior to that event, representatives of the Peoples Temple began to attend the Conference on Religion, Race and Social Concerns. I do not recall their names, but I was very impressed with them. They were fine gentlemen, seemed very concerned about the social issues that faced the city, and whenever they had the opportunity, told us about the wonderful community that was developing in Guyana, and their relatively frequent visits there.

The Rev. Francis DuBois from the Golden Gate Seminary in Mill Valley was also on the Council of Religion, Race, and Social Concerns. He really did his homework. He would often raise very difficult issues around documented reports that he had on the Peoples Temple and the Jonestown operation. Most of us were not as well informed and believed it when Peoples Temple members claimed that the Rev. Jim Jones was being persecuted.

After the massacre, the U.S. government asked families to claim the bodies, which they had removed to Dover Air Force Base in Dover, Delaware. A few families did claim the bodies, but most remained on the tarmac at the air base.

Shortly thereafter, three leaders from the major religious communities in San Francisco — Malcolm Sparer of the Board of Rabbis, Donetter Lane (who led the meetings) of the Council of Churches, and myself representing the Archdiocese of San Francisco — began to try to cope with the trauma that family members were experiencing. The Council of Churches set up a grief counseling service in which we all took part.

After some time, it became evident that the majority of the Jonestown bodies were going unclaimed. No one seemed to know what to do about it. We began to meet intensely on the subject. We were all concerned that reverence be accorded the victims, that a suitable burial for the bodies be provided.

As I recall, we made a united effort to recover the bodies. We met regularly and as called to deal with problems and obstacles. There were rumors and threats of violence and reprisals, so we pursued our efforts with as little publicity and fanfare as possible. The three of us agreed among ourselves not to issue press releases or grant interviews.

As a group, we went before U.S. District Judge Ira Brown to see if we could have some of the Peoples Temple estate to pay for a proper shipment and interment of the bodies.

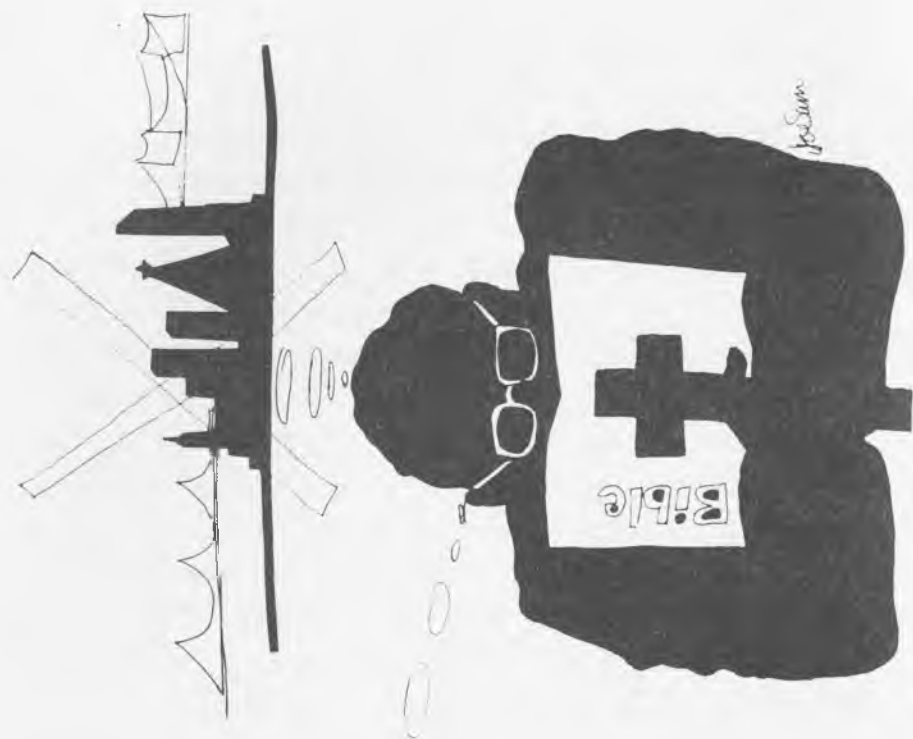
I remember being shocked when I attended Judge Brown's hearing. Every imaginable attorney was there. I came away from the session feeling very dirtied by all these people that seemed like fortune hunters suing the Peoples Temple for rather large amounts of money. We were the only ones concerned about recovering and burying the bodies. Judge Brown made an early determination that we should receive proceeds from the estate to ship the bodies. He assigned responsibility to the three religious entities here in San Francisco.

Then it became a matter of getting the bodies from the federal government, which required additional court action. We took bids from various shipping companies to bring the bodies back home. There were a number of threats from people. What was even more shocking was the number of charlatans who came with truly unbelievable business propositions to transport the bodies. Indeed, their deals were as fantastic as they were untrustworthy. Finally we agreed upon a very reputable moving company located in Maryland that seemed to be willing to do this out of conscience, caring and a religious grounding. This company turned out to be a truly outstanding firm.

In the meantime, we arranged for a mass grave in Oakland. When the bodies arrived, we were ready to see that the bodies were properly buried, with dignity and feeling. A religious ceremony took place to honor the dead.

This was a very traumatic time for San Francisco. But I was proud to be part of these great religious traditions that pulled together to honor the dead when nobody else seemed to care. It was a very proud moment, and I think that the proper burial of the victims brought a certain sense of closure to a very difficult period in our history.





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## **After Jonestown: Survivors of Peoples Temple**

**Chris Hatcher**

Each November 18th since 1979, a small group gathers on a hillside in Oakland, California at a cemetery. Beside a few graveside markers, words of remembrance and anger are spoken in the memory of those who died at Jonestown. It is the relatives of the Jonestown victims who come to this ceremony. Survivors — the people who escaped by chance or by design — have not felt that their memories should be a part of this place as well. Yet both survivors and relatives alike are convinced that society has learned little from Jonestown. This almost unanimous conclusion has been distilled through their experiences in the intervening ten years. They see nothing to prevent the future rise of another group like Peoples Temple which will produce yet another small group of isolated and unheard survivors.

This chapter will examine: (1) the experiences of Guyana and California survivors of Peoples Temple from November 18, 1978 to the present day; (2) the process of government response to the aftermath of this large scale man-made disaster; and (3) the identification of a survivors' ten-year adjustment pattern. In reviewing these issues, it is essential to have an understanding of the Peoples Temple control and coercion processes reviewed in Chapter 5 of this volume.

### **The Jonestown and Georgetown Survivors**

In the hours before the Jonestown suicide/murders began, Peoples Temple members in Guyana were divided into four groups. The majority of the members were in Jonestown, although a small group

was in a Temple residence in the country's capital of Georgetown. The basketball team was also in Georgetown, and a few members were ferrying supplies aboard a Temple boat. Several others, however, had just left Jonestown, deciding to abandon their life in the jungle and leave with Congressman Leo Ryan or on their own.

The majority of Jonestown residents appear to have been aware of Jonestown's failure at economic self-sufficiency, the increasing failure of the medical clinic to handle tropical health problems, and Jim Jones' increasing obsession with external threats. The failure to become self-sufficient was of greater concern than the loss of faith in the Temple's principles. Members had contributed all of their assets to the Temple. They were well aware that a return to capitalistic society would require starting over at the bottom of the economic ladder. This issue split Temple families into those willing to risk a new start, those willing to risk a new start but not without their families, and those who clung to the Temple, refusing to deal with the attention of investigative reporters and Congressman Ryan.

Ryan's visit represented a new level of attention focused upon the Temple. Jim Jones had always successfully mastered such challenges in the past, employing a major relocation of members to divert both public and member attention away from his group's problems. Such challenges had precipitated both the Temple's mass migrations, to California in the mid-1960s and then to Guyana ten years later. In the fall of 1978 Jones was once again planning a move, and Temple leaders negotiated through the Soviet Embassy in Guyana to transfer the group's operations to the Soviet Union. Jonestown residents were learning Russian by audiotape that fall. While the exact terms of such negotiations remain unknown, the Soviet Embassy did accept a substantial amount of money from Jones which it returned to the Guyanese government after the Jonestown deaths. In mid-November 1978, the Soviets appeared interested in the media value of such a move, but were proceeding with caution.

While Jim Jones had a well-known history of hypochondria and self-medication, his concern over his health heightened considerably that fall. He appeared to be in poor health to others, and complained more frequently that members' misbehavior was affecting his health. Much of the day-to-day control had been consolidated into a small leadership group serving Jones. While this group had been influential before that time, it became increasingly active in the exercise of disciplining dissidents.

Jonestown residents knew clearly that the leadership would vigorously carry out Jones' wishes, or what it believed to be Jones' wishes. This produced an extraordinary degree of group control. The leadership was redoubling its effort to maintain the structure of Jonestown, while not challenging Jones on his growing preoccupation with external threats. The result was that the majority remained controlled, even as Jones' outrageous demands and unsuccessful contacts with the outside world became apparent to all.

Jim Jones presented the world to his followers as a melodramatic conflict between good and evil, right and wrong, socialism and capitalism. The events at Jonestown reinforced this for Jonestown residents. While individuals might be subject to coercion and manipulation, they did not die by Temple direction. As long as the individuals played along with the required behavior, life continued. By the fall of 1978, this had produced a dull acceptance of long speeches by Jones, nightly air raid drills — called "white nights" — and required testimonials by letter or by verbal statements.

For these reasons, members did not perceive a legitimate physical threat in Congressman Ryan's visit. Only a small number had decided to leave with Ryan. This group feared a continuing living nightmare, not the possibility of mass suicide.

Thus, the mass suicide/murder was unanticipated by members in both Guyana and the U.S. For the group which had escaped Jonestown, the primary emotion was disbelief that the event had actually occurred, accompanied by continuing fear for their own safety. This was not an illogical fear, as members of the Temple leadership, including several involved with beatings and punishments, had also survived, and were in Georgetown. Further, approximately 150 members were in the San Francisco Temple, an additional 100 in Los Angeles, and a small group in the Ukiah, California facility.

For the basketball team and other loyalist members detained in Georgetown hotels, the primary emotion of disbelief was accompanied by anger, confusion, and a growing concern that the Guyana or U.S. governments were going to find a member — or members — to prosecute for the deaths. Guyana police had arrested Larry Layton for the murder of Congressman Ryan, and this increased, rather than decreased, the apprehension. No one was allowed to leave the country. Additional arrests by both Guyana and the U.S. were very real possibilities. The absence of reliable information on this issue, and the loss of the comforting structure of the Temple forced this group to rely on each other. Some



members felt that the Temple could still survive as an entity, especially if Jones' biological son Stephan would assume leadership. Telephone calls on this and other issues did take place between survivors in Georgetown and members in San Francisco.

The members who defected from Jonestown prior to the deaths consisted primarily of individuals from two families. They were also housed in Georgetown hotels, and were aware of their proximity to members whose loyalties remained with the Temple. A number of these defectors surrounded themselves with the media representatives and journalists who descended on Guyana en masse. Soon, however, they began to experience the difficulty of trying to explain the complexity of the Temple to others, and of talking for the first time between each other about personal experiences in the Temple. Because each individual's experience had been so compartmentalized, they began to realize how little they really knew about what had taken place.

Dr. Hardat Sukdeo, a professor of psychiatry in the New Jersey School of Medicine and a Guyana native, decided to go to Georgetown to try to assist the survivors. He worked in the Georgetown hotels which housed survivors, talking quietly with them in the midst of increasing numbers of reporters from all over the world.

All survivors — defectors and loyalists — were detained initially in Guyana. Neither group had access to funds for air travel, and both the U.S. and Guyana governments did not want any Temple members leaving pending further investigation. Small groups began to come back in December through the U.S. State Department's repatriation program. Under the program in 1978, the U.S. government advanced a loan for return travel to citizens, who then had to surrender their passports until the loan was repaid. It is debatable whether survivors were adequately briefed on this issue in Guyana or simply did not understand the terms of the program. In any event, survivors were surprised to find their passports confiscated upon arrival in New York, followed by intensive individual questioning by the F.B.I. These procedures confirmed their fears and Jones' predictions that they would be outcasts when they returned to capitalistic society. At the conclusion of the F.B.I.'s questioning, they boarded flights home to San Francisco.

### **The San Francisco Survivors**

Although approximately 950 Temple members were in Guyana in November, 1978, a substantial number had remained in California,

including an estimated 150 members in San Francisco, 80 members in Los Angeles, and 20 members in northern California. San Francisco served as the headquarters, coordinating financial, legal, supply, and transportation operations for Jonestown. Members' personal assets were converted here to Temple assets, and placed in foreign bank accounts. Members who had a limited ability to manage their own affairs had passport applications and transport to Jonestown prepared for them. Many of the San Francisco resident members had been to Jonestown at one time or another. Although eventual movement of all members to Jonestown was the goal, Temple administrators knew that only continued cash flow from converted assets of the new U.S. members could keep the Temple financially viable. A Temple presence in the United States would always be necessary.

The San Francisco Peoples Temple was a large structure in the predominantly black Western Addition district of the city. The front entrance, through large wooden doors, fronted directly on the sidewalk of busy Geary Boulevard. The back entrance opened onto a very large parking lot. The Temple housed an auditorium, a kitchen, a dining room, offices, meeting rooms, residences, and short wave radio communication facilities with Jonestown and Georgetown.

It was through these short wave facilities that San Francisco Temple members first learned of the attack on the Ryan party at the Port Kaituma airstrip and the deaths in Jonestown and Georgetown. Jones had made two predictions about life after Jonestown. Surviving disloyal Temple members would be killed, he told his followers. At the same time, surviving loyal Temple members would be labeled and hounded by society for the rest of their lives.

By noon on November 19, news reports from Guyana persuaded Temple members in California that the suicides had indeed taken place. These news reports had also convinced hundreds of San Francisco relatives and friends of now dead Temple members. In their anger and grief, they surrounded the Temple. This required a 24-hour San Francisco Police presence to separate an angry crowd from Temple members. The Berkeley, California house of the major group of U.S. resident defectors, the Concerned Relatives, was immediately surrounded by specialized units of that city's police department. In the coming days and weeks, the crowd would dwindle around the Temple after midnight, but rise to the hundreds in the afternoon and evening. Journalists from all over the world added to the crowd's size and to the siege-like effect.

As the members inside the building struggled to comprehend

the reality of the event, some hoped to reconstruct the Temple. For others, the deaths would not be real until they could talk face-to-face with loyalist survivors. If the deaths had in fact occurred, they must have been in response to some external threat or government action. None of the Temple members could deny the increasingly angry tone of the crowd surrounding the parking lot fence, nor the intense media focus upon the Temple's newly achieved place in history. For a few Temple members, loyalty to Jim Jones never wavered. They professed regret at not participating in the suicides, and immersed themselves in the memories of past Temple activities. Another small group re-activated, or created, Temple membership for themselves, although their membership in the past had been quite tangential.

The Temple, however, had encountered negative publicity before and had always managed to survive. While the remaining Temple structure was being reconstituted, an elderly black minister served as spokesman, making statements to the media. Jim Jones, director of the Temple drama, was gone, but the remaining Temple actors still knew how to play their individual roles. A *New York Times* reporter was invited into the building to hear the full story of the Temple, in the members' attempt to try to balance the media's perception of Peoples Temple as a suicidal cult.

For the first time, these efforts faltered. The spokesman was unable to answer persistent media questions. Stephan Jones was not openly interested in assuming leadership of the Temple. The *New York Times* reporter had promised to tell the whole story, but the final version did not describe the Temple that members had believed in. Temple funds for food and incidentals were running out.

### Government Crisis Assessment

Within days of the confirmation of the Jonestown deaths, San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk were assassinated by recently-resigned Supervisor Dan White. The combined effect on San Francisco of the assassinations and Jonestown has been compared to the reactions to the John F. Kennedy assassination on the country as a whole.

The President of the Board of Supervisors, Dianne Feinstein, became mayor of San Francisco under the rules of the City Charter. Mayor Feinstein was determined that additional Temple suicides or homicides would not take place in San Francisco. Her concern was

prompted by the demonstrated capacity of the Temple for violence, the growing anger of the relatives of deceased Temple members, and the imminent return from Guyana of Temple members. While a number of elected officials struggled to distance themselves from Jim Jones and Peoples Temple, Feinstein knew that she would have to associate her office with the Temple in order to prevent further violence.

Within days of assuming office, the mayor convened a meeting of a small group of advisors, including myself. After discussing various options, it was decided that (1) direct contact needed to be made quickly with members inside the San Francisco Temple; (2) the potential for self-destructive violence inside the Temple needed assessment; and (3) the potential for violence between Temple groups and relatives needed assessment. To implement this plan, a team composed of myself — representing the mayor — and Chief of Police Charles Gain — representing public safety — would attempt to meet with Temple members within 48 hours. The choice of a police chief for such a team initially might seem unusual. However, Charles Gain, though sometimes a controversial figure, was a popular and visible individual in minority communities. Further, he would not retreat from necessary, but unpopular, tasks, and was skillful at conveying this in heated meetings. While skills acquired during psychological training would be useful, my role was to serve as the mayor's representative. This meant that counseling services would be provided through designated city mental health staff employees.

The meeting was quickly arranged for late the following night. It took place inside the Temple, in the room where members had received beatings and punishments. The membership was cautious and suspicious. Some were fearful and disoriented, while others were assertive, aware, and confident that a reconstituted Temple would emerge. Still others believed the Temple upon which they were totally dependent was now dead. These individuals were curious about any new information or guidance. Members' education, socio-economic status, and ethnic background mirrored the Temple as a whole. Well-educated, articulate persons sat side-by-side with former heroin addicts and others with lifelong psychological dependencies of one kind or another.

In the midst of this, a common ground was found. The members were quite concerned about the continued protection provided by the police, and the need for food and shelter since Temple funds were no longer accessible. Later that same night, individual members repeated

Jones' prediction that failure to join the suicide act would result in society's permanent rejection and persecution.

The following morning a second meeting took place in the mayor's office in which these findings were reviewed: (1) Individual, serial suicide was a frequent thought of selected members, and a concern of a few remaining Temple leaders; (2) selected members were still strongly committed to Jim Jones and believed that the suicides were the fault of the Concerned Relatives group and others in the U.S. government; (3) almost all members were very apprehensive about potential violent retribution by relatives of now deceased Temple members; (4) members had virtually no financial resources left; and (5) concern was great over the imminent impact of returning survivors' first-person accounts of the final hours in Jonestown.

During this meeting it was acknowledged that the Temple had skillfully manipulated prior contact with governments at the local and international level. Obviously no prior program of response to mass suicide survivors existed. However, Mayor Feinstein was decisive in her resolution to press forward.

### **Government Crisis Response**

It became clear in that meeting that in order to succeed in preventing further violence, it would be necessary to break Jim Jones' predictions for the future of Temple members. The mayor adopted a three-part plan that: (1) assigned public safety resources to prevent violence against or by Temple members; (2) mobilized job and welfare assistance to members to facilitate reintegration into society; and (3) provided counseling to survivors. Mayor Feinstein stated that no special favors or privileges would be extended to any Temple member. At the same time, unless proven guilty of a crime, they would not be denied public services due a citizen.

The plan to assist Temple survivors was not publicly announced, although we agreed that if aspects of it became known, the mayor would acknowledge its existence. At the time, this entire effort entailed substantial political risk to a newly appointed, non-elected mayor. President Carter was experiencing sharp criticism for his decision to bring the Temple bodies back to the U.S. Four governors had already stated their refusal to allow the bodies to be buried in their states. The mayor, however, was decisive in implementing the plan and in

subsequently directing divisions of the city government to comply with the plan.

I met with Temple members again that night inside the Temple. They were accustomed to hard work and long hours, and told me they did not want welfare assistance. They wanted a chance at a job, any job. The primary goal of both San Francisco members and returning Guyana survivors was to establish stability in their day-to-day lives. The Jonestown deaths destabilized their highly ordered and dependent world. Positive motivation alone was insufficient, however. One member had been physically ejected from a job interview in auto sales. Others found interviews quickly terminated when the job application listed Peoples Temple as previous employer. Still others had learned technical skills in the Temple, but could not practice them in the outside world until they had received formal education and certification. Some members, unable to find jobs, had been turned away by welfare agencies who refused to deal with "baby killers."

To cope with this, individual job history interviews took place with all willing Temple members. Employees in city and state employment assistance agencies were assigned to help these individuals, and were briefed on procedures for effectively assisting Temple members. Employers who had shown a willingness to give a second chance to individuals with a prior history of criminal behavior or emotional disability were contacted. A number of these employers stated that the only job criterion at their businesses was the ability to do honest, hard work. The Mayor's Task Force also assisted members in utilizing pick-up sites for labor which provided pay at the conclusion of each day's work.

Not a single Temple member placed through this system was fired or quit. Employment agency counselors found them willing to work, and in turn they worked hard to convince employers to take a chance.

Others with families to support and serious physical problems reluctantly agreed to apply for welfare support and state indigent medical coverage. As with the employment agencies, city welfare workers were selected and briefed on procedures for processing these applications. This did not prove to be a smooth process. Some welfare workers, when confronted with Peoples Temple members in person, simply refused to assist them, and their supervisors were reluctant to take action to deal with this issue. The mayor's team obtained an immediate

directive from Feinstein which changed this, and new welfare workers were assigned. From this experience, it was evident that screening of the city workers' attitudes toward assisting these individuals needed to be improved. Clearly, we would need to periodically re-state the city's commitment to integrating Peoples Temple members into society. This would not be the last time the mayor's team would encounter individuals whose professional commitment evaporated when they confronted Temple members in person.

### Survivor Psychological Adjustment

Concurrent with the process of integration into society was the process of psychological adjustment. Six factors complicated this adjustment. First, the Temple had conditioned its members to believe in an ongoing internally-focused drama. It would often be a difficult drama, but it would go on forever, and it would not require dealing with the demands of the external world. However flawed the internal Temple world might have become, it was better than the external world. The idea of returning to live in this highly flawed, external world was overwhelming, and competed strongly with the grief over the loss of others at Jonestown. Second, members knew that it would take many years of difficult work to regain their pre-Temple standard of living. Most of the extended family which might ordinarily have helped, had died at Jonestown. Third, members found themselves incapable of explaining to others the reasons they'd joined and remained in the Temple. Fourth, individuals who had been active in the leadership group were still alive. Some who had ordered and participated in punishments and beatings were not going to be prosecuted. Fear was high that these members would return to mete out new punishments. Fifth, members' experience of the Temple had been highly compartmentalized. After Jonestown, an exchange of information, unprecedented in the Temple, took place among members. The unfolding pattern of coercion and hypocrisy shocked members as much as the deaths at Jonestown.

Sixth, subgroups remained a strong force for members even after Jonestown. At first these subgroups structured psychological adjustment in a predictable manner. Loyalist subgroups emphasized the good works of the Temple to help others, while retreating to dreams of the past. Opportunist subgroups within the surviving leadership organized to reconstitute the Temple. Former Temple managers tried to provide a semblance of normality. Dependent subgroups clustered at the



Temple or at members' residences seeking companionship and additional news. Outside the Temple, defector subgroups, including the Concerned Relatives group, experienced mixed survivor guilt, grief, and an ominous sense that the Temple experience would not end with Jonestown. More than the other subgroups at this time, the defector subgroups knew Jonestown would be the central event of their lives. Interestingly, these same subgroups were found in both the San Francisco Temple members and in the Guyana survivors.

Approximately 600 extended relatives of Jonestown victims did not create a formal subgroup. Some relatives became the focus of media attention and hence the public symbols of this extended relative group. This attention would not be without a price, as these relatives often became the object of criticism and derision by other relatives. But the negative reaction soon turned to envy and jealousy when it became apparent that the substantial remaining Temple assets would be distributed among relatives, rather than among members.

The psychological adjustment of survivors depended upon an individualized combination of these six factors, plus their prior history. As a result, a uniform pattern of coping with Jonestown was not present. Further, no Temple member had gone to any mental health center in the city in the several weeks' period after Jonestown. The preparation of mental health professionals to assist survivors would not be meaningful if members rejected the service delivery system.

Mayor Feinstein had approved a mental health program with four parts. First, members had to get out of the isolation of the Temple building and begin to work with the mayor's team in public settings. Second, a small number of city mental health professionals would receive special training to provide counseling services. Third, a 24-hour phone line was established for information exchange as well as counseling. Fourth, the team would make efforts to obtain federal assistance.

In implementing the welfare, job, and health care programs during the first weeks after Jonestown, it became apparent that members feared being outside the Temple building. The angry crowd at the back of the Temple, the intense media coverage, and the anger of the average citizen justified this fear. Survivors considered the possibility of their own suicide, but were more fearful of suicides or violence by other members. It was essential to the normalization and reintegration process that the survivors get out of the Temple and meet with the mayor's team in a public place without incident.

Chief Gain and I arranged a breakfast in the dining room of the



Miyako Hotel, just two blocks from the Temple. On the morning of the breakfast, members walked from the Temple in two's and three's. The faces of almost every arriving member had been publicized around the world. The mayor's team knew that recognition, followed by a negative incident, would markedly damage the process of reintegration. As it happened, no one, not even the waiters who brought the food to the tables, recognized anyone, and the breakfast meeting proceeded well. Members talked openly about job concerns and issues of loss. Chief Gain, who could be a man of few words, was at his social best, and a number of members found themselves talking to a police chief for the first time in their lives. When the breakfast was over, we had all reached a small, but important, turning point.

Before the psychological support plan could be started, a few issues within City Mental Health Services had to be resolved. As is true in any disaster, different units of government want to be seen as useful. Mental Health Units are no exception. When no Temple members, and almost no relatives came to the mental health centers, a few administrators decided to shift their concern to the impact of this disaster upon the entire city population. One administrator publicly stated that many survivors and families were being served, when in fact his unit had only seen a few citizens, none of whom were members or relatives.

Because members were extremely reluctant to talk to any mental health professional, the selection and training of city staff as counseling service providers became quite important. Even though this was accomplished carefully, with several procedures used to weed out those who couldn't handle the task, some were still unable to carry out the tasks when meeting face to face with Temple members. This was particularly true when Temple members confessed to participating in punishments. One mental health staff member could not tolerate meetings in cafes or homes with such members, wanting the security of a professional office. While it is not necessary for all therapists to be able to work in all settings, the experience was just another reminder that personal reactions to Jonestown could override professional training and interest. The final group of mental health staff had an effective combination of professional skills, varied racial backgrounds, and personal comfort in outreach situations. When several staff members asked how long the effort would take, they were informed that the majority of the work would occur within a year, but that members would keep intermittent contact as long as the staff members resided in the San Francisco area. This proved to be quite accurate.

Temple members wanted information before they were willing to talk about their own feelings. They did not want to try to explain all about the Temple to a naive professional, however well trained. Others simply did not want to be identified by an in-person visit to a counselor's office. The 24-hour phone line was set up to provide contact with someone who was as knowledgeable as an outsider could be, who would seek information or act as a third party to pass messages, and who would refer callers to the designated mental health staff person as desired. While this line was housed in the San Francisco Suicide Prevention Center, considerable care was taken not to employ the suicide prevention label. Concern existed that housing the line at the center might create an inaccurate impression that additional suicide attempts were imminent. Although the line received limited use, members and relatives cited it as an example of the city's efforts to help survivors in several different ways.

All of these efforts were initiated without federal support. However, Dr. Frank Ochberg, the Associate Director of Crisis Management for the National Institute of Mental Health, found a way to obtain a \$25,000 grant to the city for counseling services. After Jonestown, Ochberg went on to make important contributions to the treatment of psychological trauma. Unfortunately, no federal mechanism exists to this day to provide prompt assistance to localities in these man-made disasters.

During these psychological support efforts, Dr. Hardat Sukdeo made two visits to San Francisco. He talked with a number of the survivors he had met during his visit to Georgetown, Guyana and with other Temple members. Relatives were cautious, as he had testified at the Guyana trial of Larry Layton that Layton was insane at the time of Ryan's assassination, and the jury acquitted Layton. Sukdeo's visits in California provided former Jonestown members with a sense of continuity, and his quiet style provided support. He very much wanted to arrange a meeting between the Jonestown defectors and the surviving Temple leadership, including Stephan Jones. He felt such a meeting would assist both groups in moving on to new post-Jonestown lives. The mayor's team opposed this, believing that it was months, possibly years, premature. Both sides had valid professional arguments, but neither could find actual cases that supported a position. History does not document any effort to assist survivors of a mass suicide.

When it became apparent that Dr. Sukdeo was going to go ahead, the city psychological support team decided it was essential to be present

and to participate, in case there was a problem. The meeting was arranged for late evening in a San Francisco neighborhood center with Stephan Jones, Jones' adopted sons, members who had been involved in the Temple security squad, and Jonestown defectors.

The defector group arrived first. From the moment that those who had been associated with the Temple leadership arrived, it was clear that the meeting was not a good idea. The defectors' anger and fear were visible in their physical behavior. While the former members of the leadership expressed their anger at Jim Jones and their grief at the loss of family, this had little impact upon the defectors' memories of punishment and coercion at their hands. Stephan Jones is a very different person than his father, Jim Jones. He does have the same raven black hair, however, and on occasion can show glimpses of his father's persuasive and charismatic style. That evening, Stephan spoke against his father. The defectors heard the words of the son, but felt with great apprehension the style of the father. After the meeting broke up, the psychological support team talked individually with members outside. Some of the Jonestown defectors were too upset to drive, and the talks continued for a considerable time in parked cars. Dr. Sukdeo subsequently acknowledged that it had been a mistake.

Just as things seemed to be settling down for all survivors, a number of things happened to upset their world again. The first was the death of Mike Prokes. Prokes was one of the loyalist survivors, who was frequently called the number two person in the Jonestown organization. Intelligent, verbal, and socially skilled, he had rapidly risen to a position of considerable trust and influence in the Temple. Because of this, the U.S. government focused significant attention on him during its criminal investigations. Through unknown means, Prokes managed to leave Guyana, enter the U.S. without detection, and return to his parents' home in Modesto, California. Prokes expressed his regret that he had not died in Jonestown. In some way, this seemed to give momentum to a feeling that it was his task to communicate to others the true meaning of Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple. He stayed in Modesto, substantially isolated from other members, and began to write.

During this period, negotiations went on between Prokes' attorney and myself to establish a way that Prokes could talk and obtain psychological support. The attorney was appropriately protective of contact with anyone, as a criminal investigation of his client was ongoing. As these negotiations proceeded, Mike Prokes called a news conference in March 1979, made a few statements about the Temple, and

fatally shot himself. He is the only known Temple member to commit suicide after Jonestown.

Mike Prokes' death had a pronounced effect on every surviving Temple member. A few grew frightened, believing it signified a new wave of Jonestown-like violence. But a number sought assistance, indicating that their attorneys had advised them to do so, and to set potential legal complications aside. Most had seen Prokes as a strong individual, likely to survive any turn of events. His death caused them to double their own efforts to press on and establish new lives.

The controversy over the return and burial of the Jonestown victims kept emotions high as well. Initially, the U.S. State Department proposed burying the bodies in a mass grave in Guyana. When the government of Guyana objected, the Carter Administration directed U.S. military units to fly the bodies to a military mortuary in Dover, Delaware. Humanitarian reasons were cited as the motivation for this decision, although the potential for the spread of disease was an equal factor. Such an epidemic would be difficult to contain, once started, and could easily spread to adjacent communities in Guyana. Blame would fall upon the United States. Under these conditions, the high cost of removing the bodies from Guyana could be a justifiable government expense. Because this was not openly discussed, public disapproval of the expenditure of tax funds by the Carter Administration was quite high. This lesson was not lost at the state level, when the issue of burial was again discussed. Four east coast governors stated their unequivocal opposition to having the Peoples Temple victims buried in their states.

Only a small, interfaith group of dedicated religious workers in San Francisco seemed to care about the burial issue. The task of the Emergency Relief Committee, as it came to be called, proved extremely difficult. Each time a local cemetery was proposed, community resistance was immediate. Residents feared that the mass grave would become a shrine to mass suicide. Many individuals whose relatives had been buried in the cemeteries pressured the cemetery owners. Vandals defaced a few of the cemeteries under consideration, adding justification to the fears of community members. Finally, just as it appeared that no cemetery could be found to take them, Evergreen Cemetery, near Mills College in Oakland, California, agreed to take the bodies. There was little opposition in the largely black, residential neighborhood.

The bodies were then transferred from Dover, Delaware Military Mortuary to the Oakland, California Army Base mortuary, the point of return for many Americans killed in the Vietnam War. The

mayor's team was present all day as forklifts moved hundreds of caskets into racks on top of each other. It was a grim, somber morning. The impact was intensified when the three-foot caskets containing the bodies of infants and young children were stacked from the floor to the ceiling of the large warehouse. At this point, we were informed that a small group of relatives was being kept at the gate to the base. The mayor's team found the relatives, holding onto the chain link fence, trying to catch a glimpse of the casket transfers. After some negotiations about base procedures, we were able to bring a group of the relatives inside. With so many unidentified bodies, these relatives would never know where their family members were, amidst the hundreds of caskets. No Temple members came that day.

The bodies were buried, stacked on top of each other, on a hillside in Evergreen Cemetery. Only a few simple stones mark their resting place. The location is all but forgotten, and has not become a shrine for mass suicide. Every year for the last nine years, a small group of relatives and Temple defectors conduct a memorial service on November 18th. Temple members and Jonestown survivors do not attend, yet they always want to know afterwards if it was a respectful ceremony, who was there, or how people are doing. The emotions between selected subgroups of Temple members and relatives remain strong, with Temple members maintaining a careful separation. There is no common meeting ground, not even at the cemetery.

In addition to the disposition of the bodies, the auction of the Temple's assets in 1979 also disrupted the normality survivors had begun to establish. The auction drew members, bargain hunters, and the curious from all over the United States. Items from buses to dishes were sold to high bidders. Temple members wandered through the building and out into the large, back parking lot. At this time, and later on, members found that the auction brought a sense of depressed finality to the end of the major dream of their lives.

The disposition of Temple assets was an emotional event as well. A court-appointed attorney methodically reclaimed assets from around the world, and distributed them to those filing claims against Peoples Temple. Some claimants received substantial sums. Surviving Temple members were chagrined, and angry, to see the wealth they had created awarded to people they felt helped cause the Temple's demise. At the time of the distribution, made according to a court order, there were discussions of establishing a foundation or center to prevent youth from becoming so disenchanted with life that they would turn to another Jim

Jones. These ideas, and the money that was to support them, drifted away. Other relatives simply wanted the money as a small token of compensation for their expenses and grief.

The murder of the Mills family, the most visible Temple defectors and leaders of the Concerned Relatives, sent a shudder of fear through survivors in 1981. One of the Mills' son was a suspect at one point, and police considered the possibility of family members' involvement in drug transactions. The Mills were powerful figures in a struggle against the Temple which dominated their public and private lives. Their violent end was a sharp reminder to the survivors of the fear that characterized the later days of life in the Temple. While the murders were never solved, many are convinced that they are in some way connected to Peoples Temple, whether directly or indirectly through the degree of stress placed upon this family.

### **General Survivor Adjustment Pattern**

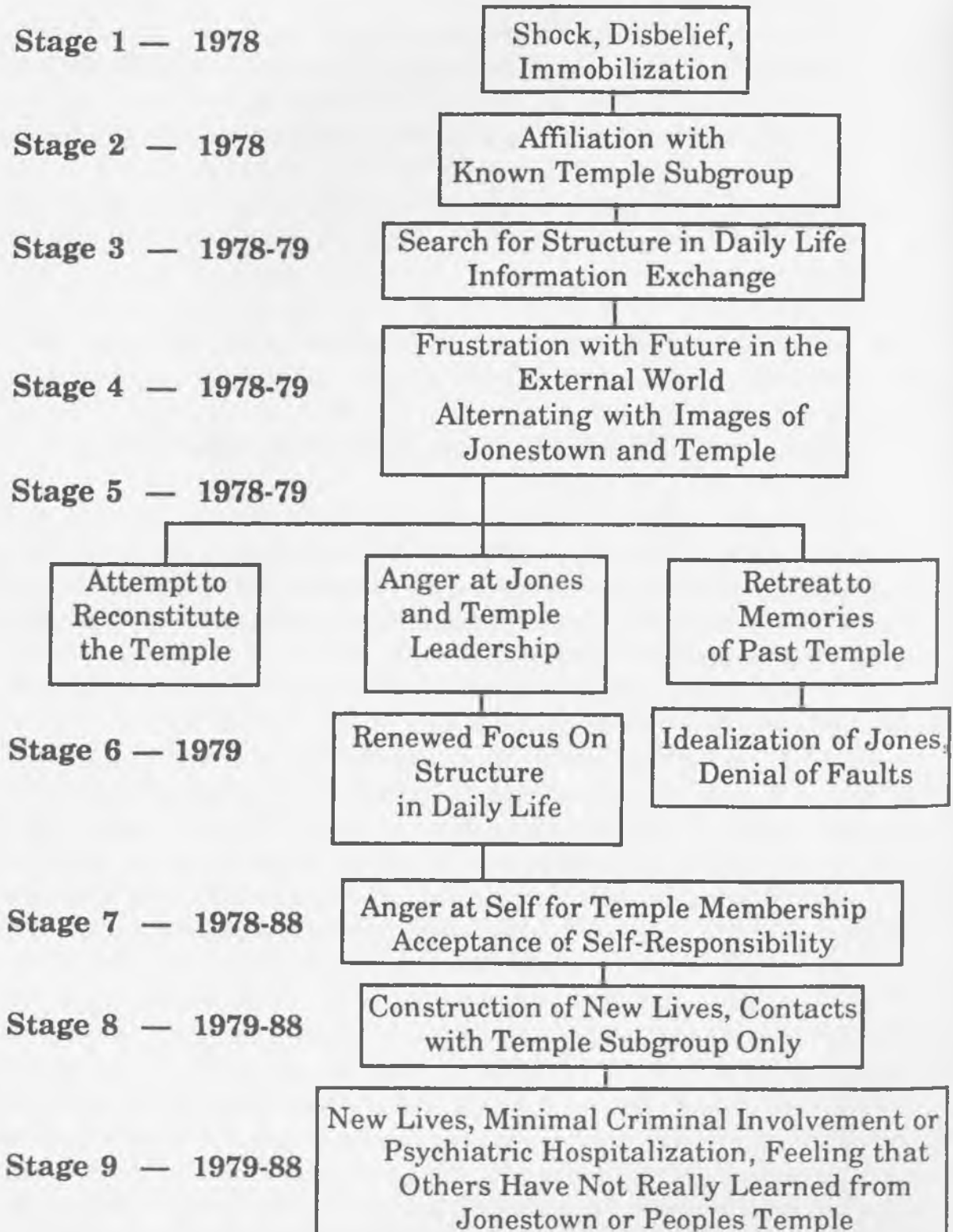
The above events made up the visible landmarks for survivors after Jonestown. While each survivor's adjustment possessed unique characteristics, due to their pre-Temple coping style and Temple subgroup membership, a general pattern of internal, less visible landmarks can be found (Illustration Table 1).

Nine stages can be determined in the general survivors adjustment pattern after Jonestown. Stage One occurred in the two- to four-week period immediately after November 18, 1978 and was characterized by shock, disbelief, and immobilization. The Temple had always engaged in rhetoric about suicide, but had no history of acting on this particular rhetoric. The dream of a Temple socialist society, tarnished by the coercion and humiliation of members, remained strong for many. Compartmentalization of knowledge had effectively limited the majority's comprehension of the Temple's decline.

In response to the reality of the Jonestown deaths, survivors affiliated with their families and their Temple subgroup. In Stage Two, which was experienced throughout December of 1978, each subgroup attempted to carry on its pre-November 18, 1978 methods of operation and support. This comfort was short-lived, as the economic realities of the capitalist world rapidly intruded. In these brief transitional cocoons, leaders and followers emerged. Survivors had little desire for immediate independence, even if it meant submitting to new leadership.

Stage Three marked a concerted effort to establish structure in

**Table I**  
**General Survivors Adjustment Pattern**





daily life. Temple members had a strong work ethic. They sought jobs, and made housing arrangements, avoiding group discussions of losses at Jonestown. Discussions between individuals, not within groups, predominated, centering upon the exchange of information about Temple affairs. The new information on coercion and control revealed during these discussions shocked survivors as much as the deaths themselves. This stage extended from December 1978 through early 1979.

Stage Four signaled a frustration with the external, capitalist world when survivors began to realize that they faced a long period of economic hardship without a dream of the future or friends with which to share the dream. This frustration alternated with past images of Jonestown and the Temple. These images were shared by other members, but were difficult to communicate to others. Post-Jonestown subgroups began to weaken as followers began to defy leaders. Overlapping with the previous stage, this process continued through the middle of 1979.

Stages Five and Six represented a critical point of division. Survivors selected alternative methods of handling their frustration with the external world. The majority began to vent their anger at Jim Jones and the Temple leadership. Over a period of months, this anger subsided, giving way to renewed focus on improving the structure of daily life. A small group, previously associated with Temple leadership, attempted to reconstitute the Temple. When this failed, they too had to confront their anger with both Jones and each other. A few survivors and San Francisco resident members retreated to live in pre-Jonestown memories of the Temple. Over time, this retreat turned to an idealization of Jones, with a concurrent denial of the Temple's faults.

The next stage extended from the middle of 1979 through 1981. Survivors faced their anger at themselves for having given over individual responsibility to others. The focus shifted away from the actions of Jones and turned to the internal decisions made by members at each point that they became progressively more committed to the Temple. While most openly stated the conviction that they would never give such responsibility away again, no survivors became public speakers or writers, in contrast to survivors of other violent religious groups. Today, only an occasional pre-Jonestown defector speaks to the public.

In the final two stages, survivors constructed new lives. Many of those most closely connected with Temple leadership remained in northern California. Their previous visibility drifted away, and they



worked unrecognized and unlabeled. A number went back to school, graduated, and began new trades. The majority of other members still live on the west coast. Contacts have been retained with their Temple subgroups almost exclusively.

According to the best available information, the low rate of subsequent criminal involvement or psychiatric hospitalization for Guyana survivors is quite remarkable. Less than ten percent have been psychiatrically hospitalized, and less than three percent have committed suicide. Less than five percent have had criminal involvement. Participation in organized religion is low, and only one member joined another violent cult. In recent years a few subgroups have had informal reunions, including survivors and pre-Jonestown defectors. For others, the boundaries are still marked by fear, anger, and grief.

### **Summary**

This study of the survivors of Peoples Temple holds primary lessons for future understanding of mass violence. First, Peoples Temple members allowed themselves to believe that rhetoric and rehearsals of mass violence would never become reality. In doing so, members severely underestimated the sophistication of Temple control techniques and the degree to which this control would intoxicate Temple leadership. Second, for post-Jonestown survivors, Jones had made powerful predictions of future violence and societal rejection. Prompt, active government leadership can play a significant role in insuring that such predictions are not fulfilled. Third, the experience of post-Jonestown Peoples Temple members, like that of concentration camp survivors, is most notable for its demonstration of man's ability to survive and go on, rather than to his many vulnerabilities to failure. Fourth, almost all Temple survivors, defectors, and relatives believe that society has learned little from the mass suicides and murders at Jonestown. Indeed, research into understanding violent groups remains limited, and response assistance after such violence remains unsupported at the federal level. In the absence of new efforts in these areas, we risk an unprepared response to the individuals drawn into the next Peoples Temple.





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## Reflections on the Human Freedom Center

Lowell D. Streiker

The Human Freedom Center in Berkeley, California and its founders, Al and Jeannie Mills, have become a footnote to the Jonestown story for most people. In the months leading up to the tragedy, they were little known to anyone other than to the defectors from Peoples Temple who took refuge with them and to the followers of Jim Jones whom they rankled. In the days following the suicides — and then again over a year later, when the Center itself died — it provided interesting copy for reporters looking for insights into the Jonestown legacy. Inside its walls, though, the Center provided counseling for the bewildered and grief-stricken, and affirmation for those who offered those services, including myself.

My own belief is that the organizational and personal dynamics of the Human Freedom Center revealed something about the psychology of Peoples Temple defectors. Much of the negative publicity which drove Jim Jones and his followers from California to the jungles of Guyana came from Jeannie Mills and her followers. Eventually pressure from these same defectors, as well as from some of the relatives of those in Guyana led to the involvement of Rep. Leo Ryan (D-Calif.) and his ill-fated fact-finding mission.

I think it is important to realize that self-interest, vengeance, hysteria, and the desire for personal vindication fueled the activities of some of the Concerned Relatives just as powerfully as sincere concern propelled the efforts of others. I also think it is significant that the Peoples Temple-style of interpersonal relationships did not perish with the Temple.

I have never known anyone like Al and Jeannie Mills. Although

I decided to break with them after an association of a few months, I found them more fascinating than annoying. They were caring, parental, generous, warm and amusing. They were also manipulative, controlling, insecure and, occasionally, infantile. Indeed, they combined the best and the worst of Peoples Temple. Even after their own defections, they lived as they had during their six years inside: adopting the familiar model as their own, completely unrepentant about their former role in the Temple leadership, still in search of a true utopia. They talked about “deprogramming” others, and never bothered to deprogram themselves.

### Beginnings

My association with Peoples Temple began a few months before the suicides, in July 1978. At the time, I was executive director of the Mental Health Association of San Mateo County, California, about 20 miles south of San Francisco. My book, *The Cults Are Coming!*, which had been published a few months earlier, was prompted by my longtime fascination with contemporary religious movements, by a personal experience with the Unification Church, and through the persistence of my wife who kept predicting the future importance of cults. The book spawned a number of phone calls from anguished parents whose offspring had found their way into some of the groups mentioned in its pages — the Moonies, the Children of God, and the Hare Krishnas — as well as some nastier sects then not familiar to me. Since I was more of a sympathetic observer of the cult phenomenon and of parental reactions than an active interventionist, I did little but listen, provide general advice, and recommend other books to read.

Claire Bouquet, a local school teacher, made one of those phone calls. She told me that her son Brian was in a place called Jonestown in Guyana, South America. Jonestown, she said, was the enclave of Peoples Temple, a Northern California sect led by a healer-evangelist named Jim Jones. I remembered both Jones' name and his questionable reputation. As I worked on my book manuscript, Peoples Temple defectors had spread tales of beatings, threats, theft of property, sexual improprieties, and worse. The regularly scheduled broadcasts of Jones' sermons and healing services had been mysteriously suspended, although display ads still ran in both San Francisco daily newspapers. I had planned to include a section on Peoples Temple in *The Cults Are*

*Coming!*, but my editor had asked me to delete it, because his publication committee believed that the Temple and Jones were purely California phenomena of little interest to anyone outside the state. Besides, my telephone calls to the Temple were never returned.

Still, my many years of participative observation of extremist sects and the scare headlines that Jones had engendered prepared me little for Claire Bouquet. She was animated, articulate, and overpowering. She wove together a tapestry of doom and gloom from defectors' accusations, a mother's intuition, inferential surmises, the speculations of yellow journalism, and awful, terrifying forebodings. She detailed her frustrating conversations with government officials, a radio-telephone conversation with Brian through which she "knew" he was trying to alert her to the true conditions of the utopian experiment in the jungle, her appeals to the media — including the tabloids — and even her efforts to recruit a Rhodesian mercenary to undertake an armed rescue of her son. It was that last detail which put me off. I was convinced that Claire was a crackpot much like the Kennedy assassination theorists I had once interviewed or the woman who believed the American Medical Association and the American Cancer Society were persecuting her husband, because his cure for cancer threatened the livelihoods of rich doctors everywhere. And so poor Claire Bouquet and the whole Jonestown mess was filed away in the recesses of my mind for possible — but not probable — review on some dull day in the future.

And then Joan Culpepper called. To me, Joan was even more bizarre than Claire. A fast-talking, name-dropping resident of Los Angeles — a city everyone in Northern California knows to distrust — Joan told me of her background in advertising and show business, as well as her following of "Bo and Peep" in an obscure UFO cult. Her latest association was with a fledgling anti-cult organization called the Human Freedom Center, with its Southern California branch in Encino and a larger office in Berkeley. The group had two purposes: to create public awareness of, and remedies for, "mental kidnapping" and other cult nastiness; and to provide shelter for refugees from Jonestown. She added that the Human Freedom Center expected Jonestown to collapse at almost any time as the result of the machinations of the Concerned Relatives, an HFC affiliate.

I found much of Joan's rhetoric distasteful, and I told her so. I wanted then — and I want today — no laws against "mental kidnapping" or "mentacide" or any other socially unacceptable state of mind.

Despite my objections to the models by which she expressed herself, there was something innately warm and human about Joan that enabled us to interact and continue our telephone conversation.

Joan said she was coming to Berkeley that weekend for a meeting of the Human Freedom Center Board of Directors. She invited me to attend, and to consider becoming an adviser or consultant. She flattered me a bit, claiming that both my knowledge of cults and my experience as the director of a nonprofit charitable organization could be valuable to the Human Freedom Center. Perhaps, she added, I could share my organizational, fundraising and public relations expertise with the amateurs who were running the Human Freedom Center.

I accepted her invitation, and a few days later, my wife and I drove from our Foster City home across the Bay Bridge to the large old house on Regent Street next to Alta Bates Hospital.

My initial impressions were mixed and confused. The building was a sparsely furnished, dilapidated nursing home with ratty, abused sofas and arm chairs, fading and peeling paint, and little evidence of upkeep. Strangely, though, the house was furnished with a sizeable and impressive assortment of antiques and collectibles: a large oak dining room table with a carved sideboard, marble-topped dressers and chests, and ornate stands for umbrellas and boots.

My wife and I were equally amazed and disoriented by the people we met inside the house: Joan was a gaunt woman, almost completely disabled by lung disease, who continued to smoke the cigarettes that had caused her ailments; a single mother and her child, both on welfare, lived there, but her dental student brother who had left Peoples Temple shortly before the mass exodus to Guyana, did not; and the facility "director," who served more as a house-mother for the place, was a blonde, blue-eyed college dropout who had decided to make the cause of the brother and sister her own.

Joan called the meeting to order around the oak table in the dining room. Our hosts — and the centers of attention — were Al and Jeannie Mills, former Temple leaders who were now directing the forces against Jones. Jeannie, an attractive brunette in her late thirties, seemed a warm, motherly person, although I found her enthusiasm a little over-projected. Her husband, about 15 years her senior, was a gentle, likeable man who constantly referred to Jones as "the master manipulator." He related vicious outrageous and sickening humiliations which Jones had visited upon his followers, particularly upon the Mills' compatriots on the 30-member Planning Commission, also known as the

PC. Almost as horrifying as his story of a male PC member who had been ordered to have oral sex with a black female PC member during her menstruation, was the glee in Al's voice as he told it.

While we discussed the bestiality of the defectors' former God and of the need for educating the public about the dangers of "destructive cultism," two severely disturbed mental patients — whose presence no one offered to explain — wandered aimlessly around the building, talking quietly to themselves. I wondered if they were among the "cult victims" the Millses had mentioned. I learned much later that they were board and care patients left over from the days when the Millses had operated the facility as a licensed nursing home. One, a woman who appeared to be in her late fifties, held her bathrobe tightly around her and interrupted Jeannie from time to time with a request that Jeannie would brush aside with a syrupy phrase and a wave of her hand. The other patient, a grinning young male schizophrenic like those in the social rehabilitation programs I directed for six years, sat at the table with us and interspersed giggles with imaginative rhymes from words he lifted from the serious conversation around him.

Despite a meeting without agenda, focus or purpose, often disturbed by the mental patients and tinged with an undercurrent of hostility, I learned much about Peoples Temple, about the kind of people it attracted and, above all, about a fact-finding mission to Jonestown scheduled to depart in two days. The delegation to Guyana would include members of Concerned Relatives and would be led by Rep. Leo Ryan, whom I knew both as my Congressman and as a slight acquaintance.

The air of unreality of our afternoon at the Human Freedom Center clashed with my feeling that something needed to be done, and quickly. For although my wife and I had doubts about the credibility of this collection of agitators among the ruins, the stories of "White Nights" and mass suicide rehearsals unnerved us.

Leo Ryan's San Mateo district office was a few hundred yards away from mine, and the following Monday morning, I went there to ask permission to accompany the Congressman and the Concerned Relatives to Guyana. My purpose was to offer my services as a trained observer who could help Ryan discover whether any of the sensational allegations — including the threat of mass suicide — were true. I also thought I could help the delegation see through any dog-and-pony public relations stunt Jones might try to pull. But I knew I would be sitting in judgment of the Congressman as well, a man I had found to be sometimes theatrical, superficial, and not altogether trustworthy.



As if I were applying for an academic position, I took along copies of my professional resume and some of my publications. My fear was that I would be mislabeled, as I had once mislabeled Claire Bouquet, as a paranoid nut.

I didn't speak with anyone in authority, but I left my materials and explained my offer to two clerical employees. Shortly afterwards, the Ryan party left New York on a jetliner to Georgetown, Guyana. I returned to my work, unaware that my message had, in fact, reached Ryan and that I had been cleared to accompany the group. The confirmation never reached me.

### **The Massacre and Its Aftermath**

November 18, 1978. Fanaticism's Pearl Harbor. A date which will just as surely live in infamy. An event which will never be fathomed. A community of more than 900 men, women and children took a forever exit, leaving behind a few disheveled survivors to offer inconsistent — and sometimes incoherent — stories of the last hours.

That afternoon, I busied myself around the house while an unattended television blared away. And then I became aware of news bulletins about a shooting at an airstrip not far from Jonestown. There were no additional details.

I called the Center in Berkeley, wondering if people there had heard the same reports and whether they had additional information. The director said the Center's knowledge was as sketchy as anyone else's, and asked me to hang up so that people with families in Jonestown could get through. I complied with her request. Soon enough, I knew, we would all learn the whole grisly story.

Within a month, my life as director of a mental health association had come to a close, and I became a counselor of individuals and families affected by cults.

The Human Freedom Center turned into a maelstrom of confusion, as surviving Temple members, earlier defectors, relatives of the dead, and members of the media from every part of the world converged upon the Regent Street house. The fear of reprisals against the Concerned Relatives and against the few people who had escaped the Jonestown holocaust were not irrational, and a heavily-armed SWAT team surrounded the facility. Indeed, those fears infected everyone.

Jim Cobb, a member of the Concerned Relatives who had accompanied Ryan to Jonestown, had been taken seriously ill, apparently with

some tropical ailment contracted when he fled into the swampy area around the Port Kaituma airstrip during the ambush. Several doctors in Berkeley refused to treat him, though, believing that the phantom "hit squad" would find them out.

The discussions that started at the Human Freedom Center with the first news bulletins lasted for months. It was never-ending group therapy, with the survivors, the defectors, and the bereaved relatives coming and going, being interviewed, photographed, tape recorded, and filmed again and again. Questions ranged from the insightful and compassionate to the cruel and insensitive. Novelists and non-fiction writers tripped over one another as they jockeyed for special arrangements for the "inside story," especially the ones that could be told by Jones' son, Stephan, and his adopted brothers and friends who formed the Jonestown basketball team. Mental health professionals, seldom hearing what the survivors and defectors actually had to say, offered their own theories of "brainwashing," "mind control," "thought reform," and "systematic manipulation of social influences," thereby enabling Jones' followers to blame everything on "Dad" and nothing on themselves.

It all made me wonder if anyone I met during those months was truly innocent.

I counseled about one-third of the survivors during the first months after Jonestown, and I continued with some of them over the intervening years. Between November 1978 and July 1979, I heard stories of Peoples Temple horror recounted on a daily basis as I attempted to console escapees, defectors, and relatives of the dead. I heard tales about Jim Jones from more sources than I can remember, some from associates who had spent 20 years with him. I listened to recordings of his sermons, firsthand recollections of Temple leaders and followers alike, bootlegged tapes of Jones' phone conversations, and unpublished — and perhaps never to be published — details of his activities provided by journalists, government officials, and others. Much of my time, none of it begrudged, was spent with the young adults who had spent almost their entire lives under Jones' influence.

I still carry many of the memories of what people told me about their years in the Temple and about the first few months following the deaths, but perhaps the strongest recollection I have from that period is what I learned to identify as "the Jonestown dream."

The dream came to defectors and survivors alike in the year after November 18. In the dream, the person would awake to find himself or

herself back in Jonestown, lying on a cot, feeling exhausted, bewildered, disoriented. The dreamer would then hear the voice of Jim Jones booming over the loudspeakers positioned throughout the community. Suddenly Jones himself would appear beside the cot, and say — or usually scream — to the dreamer, “You will never get away from me! Never!” The dreamer would then realize that the massacre hadn’t happened, that Jonestown was still the reality, that everything he or she had experienced since the suicides was itself a dream, and that there was no escape.

The nightmare would finally end with the dreamer awakening, oftentimes trembling and sweating. Any sense of relief was ethereal, because, as several of my clients told me, the dream returned again and again.

For some, the dreams finally ended when their friends and relatives were buried at the Evergreen Cemetery in Oakland. Others just stopped talking about it. From time to time, I suspect, some of them still have “the Jonestown dream.”

Despite the power that both the dream and real-life memories held over my clients, I managed for the most part to keep an emotional distance between myself and the tragedy. I listened, analyzed, categorized, and did what I could to help. I was impressed by Jones, the brilliant manipulator who had so skillfully woven together so many diverse strands of religious and sociopolitical thought. His claims to be God and his use of the title “Father” were purloined from Father Divine’s Peace Church. His concept of divinity as a potential present in each person and powerfully manifest in some, such as himself, borrowed heavily from New Thought and “positive thinking.” His notion that God incarnates himself in each era in a community which recreates the miracles of Jesus and the Apostles, combined Anglo-Catholic sacramentalism and Pentacostalism. His use of the Bible to provide prooftexts as pretexts was learned from revivalistic tent evangelists and independent Bible churches. The use of healings and speaking in tongues came from the charismatic/deliverance movement. His magic tricks, such as his gift of discernment or mind-reading, was passed on to him by former associates of midwestern spiritualists. He studied group persuasive techniques in National Training Laboratory experiments in which he took part during the 1950s. His “apostolic socialism” derived from the “communism” of the Jerusalem church of the Book of Acts and his lifelong fascination with Marxist-Leninism. His style of leadership, including the creation of four warring factions in middle management, all of which reported directly

to him, suggests Hitler's Third Reich as its inspiration.

His use of civil rights, nuclear terror, racism, sexism, and ageism as background for his creation of a hopeful vision of the future demonstrated his ability to discern the needs of the times, and to manipulate them for his purposes. But his brilliant mind was undone by his sadism, his drug addiction, and his complete inability to tolerate resistance or dissent. He had the need to control others, to be the sole focus of his followers' deeds and thoughts, to hold their lives — and their deaths — in his hands. He was a monster of depravity who delighted in debauching the innocent and making his closest associates as corrupt as he was. His hypochondria led him to an uncontrolled use of antibiotics which destroyed his body's immunological system. His nerves jangled with their dependence to powerful chemical substances. Had he survived the jungle apocalypse, some have said, he still would have died within a few days or weeks. What will never be determined is when he crossed the line between his calculated use of the threat of mass suicide with which he blackmailed the government of Guyana and tested the loyalty of his followers, and his decision to destroy 1000 souls who had committed themselves to his despotic rule.

Although the details of Jones' reign in his jungle utopia were revolting and unprecedented for the press, the government, and social service professionals, there was something about Jones which was disconcertingly familiar to me. Two decades of study of "fringe religious phenomena" had led me to many Peoples Temples and numerous Jim Joneses: storefront missions with their archbishops, independent churches with their apostles, sects and cults with their gods, gurus and messiahs. And I had met many abject subjects, ready and willing to do the will of their self-proclaimed prophets and prophetesses. Fortunately, the unique combination of factors which permitted a Jonestown have not repeated themselves on such a scale. But they could.

And then, on one rainy evening in March 1979, my composure, my ability to objectify and categorize, fell apart. I was driving home on the San Mateo Bridge, a ten-mile long span. My thoughts went back to the previous night, when survivors and defectors had met with an NBC crew to review videotapes shot during the Ryan mission to Jonestown. Many of the Jonestown victims, especially the children, were still unidentified at the time, so as the tapes labored along at freeze-frame speed, the survivors and defectors called out the names of the people they recognized.

As I thought about the Jonestown dead, I reasoned, somewhat

heartlessly, that they all would have died anyway, sooner or later, and that, had it not been for their slavish devotion, their lives would have probably meant nothing. The dream of Jonestown had both given them life and then taken it away from them.

That was when my mind shifted to the dead children, the 300 incipient human stories which had been snuffed out. I had never shed a tear for the fathers and the mothers, the grandparents, the husbands and the wives, the crafty and the outfoxed, the adults of Jonestown. Jones twisted their arms and mangled their minds while drawing his strength from their weaknesses. I worked each day with their legacy of grief, but never shared it. But when I thought of the deaths of the little ones, "Dad's nursery," the Temple's tomorrow that would never be, I began to ache as though someone had just announced my own death.

As I drove on, my hands tightened on the steering wheel, and I began to scream, "Sometime, somewhere, someone must accept responsibility! If the God I worship and love and serve, if this God deceives and defrauds, then I must own up and say that it is my own fault, that I gave him the power to destroy, and I must accept the blame."

"It is all so simple," I thought. "Accept responsibility for your own life, and let God be God." And for ten years, this is what I have told my clients.

## **Al and Jeannie**

Along the way, I spent scores of hours with Al and Jeannie Mills. They were the part of the post-Jonestown Peoples Temple I knew best, so I have more memories of them than of any other aspect of my experience at the Human Freedom Center.

When I resigned as director of the Mental Health Association, they offered to pay me for my services as a fundraising consultant for the Center. Within a day, I was asked to be the executive director and, soon afterwards, the president of the board. A psychic had told Jeannie that she was going to become rich, famous, and an expert in Egyptian antiquities. She and Al had left Jones and fallen into a kind of New Age "what you believe is what you receive" theology, and they believed they could make their own reality. When we went out for lunch, Jeannie would "materialize" parking spaces.

The Human Freedom Center was housed in one of the two board and care facilities they ran, but those ventures didn't represent the principal source of their income. Instead, as I understood it, they

acquired the properties of their elderly clients who could no longer afford even the taxes on their homes. After sending out a work crew made up of relatives and other Peoples Temple defectors and survivors to renovate the houses, the Millses sold the properties for a profit. The practice was one of the many they shared with the now-reviled Temple leadership.

I noted another pattern as well. Jeannie would offer free room and board and the promise of future financial reward to the workers in the rehabilitation ventures and in the board and care facilities. The arrangement seemed modeled after the structure which, according to Jeannie, Jones had used to exploit Al and her. After my first month at the Human Freedom Center, I remained virtually as a volunteer. Donations and fees were never adequate to cover expenses and salaries. Yet I, like the others, remained hopeful about the future.

In the midst of the Center's carnival-like atmosphere, Al and Jeannie were constantly trying to cut deals with the various journalists and agents who found their way to Berkeley. Al would try to peddle photographs, and Jeannie had a complete set of transcripts of radio traffic between Jonestown and San Francisco which she offered for sale. The latter scheme ended when the federal government informed them that they had no claim to ownership of intercepted radio communications, a ruling which, according to Jeannie, cost them \$250,000 in anticipated revenues. They were able to get an advance from a New York publisher for Jeannie's book, *Six Years With God*, but they spent most of that money on a Mercedes Benz. They explained that this act of faith in their financial future would cause the universe to support them in the manner to which they wanted to accustom themselves. Nevertheless, the sight of that new car deeply offended some of the defectors, who felt Al and Jeannie were using them and the Center for their own personal profit. Some of them also confided to me that they still harbored deep resentments towards Jeannie for the savage way in which she had treated them while part of the Temple leadership.

The Jeannie Mills of *Six Years With God* was an innocent idealist who had been deceived, misled, duped, and generally victimized by Jim Jones. The Jeannie Mills with whom I worked every day was a different person. She was proud of how powerful she and the other women of the Temple had been, and of the vast responsibilities she had had as director of publications. The poverty and the self-sacrifice had been for a cause, for friends and loved ones.

She also told me of a plot that she and another of the Concerned

Relatives had been involved in while still inside the Temple. They had tried to manipulate Jones — “the master manipulator” himself — into retreating into godlike solitude and turning over control of the Temple to them. Jones had seen through their stratagem, and curtailed their authority. That rebuke, together with Jones’ decision to renege on a promise to provide adequate support for her enormous family of natural, step-, and foster children living in her house, were the reasons she constantly cited for her break with the Temple.

Once Jeannie left — or had been ousted, depending upon the observer’s viewpoint — she determined to bring Jones down, even if it cost her her life. The first draft of what eventually became *Six Years With God* was a long first-person account of Jones’ excesses; she filed the manuscript with the archives of the State of California in Sacramento, so her voice would not be stilled even if she were murdered.

She and Al also went through the legal procedures to change their names from Deanna and Elmer Mertle. That decision, she said, was made to avoid culpability for the legal documents they had signed while members of the Temple. How the name change would have helped them was never explained to me.

Part of the cost of defection, as Jeannie and Al repeatedly attested, was their loss of more than 30 homes they had owned, mainly low-cost rural rentals. They were more circumspect about the fact that they quickly regained the deeds to the units.

I have often wondered what would have happened if Al, Jeannie, the other defectors, the media and the congressman had left Jim Jones and his followers in Guyana alone. I recall one chilling videotape segment from Jonestown in which an NBC correspondent thrust a signed statement from a handful of dissidents in Jones’ face and demanded an explanation. I could see Jones fighting to keep his composure, his tongue seemingly glued into silence. The newsman was making his news, not reporting the facts. And when the bodies had been counted and stacked like cords of wood, many of the Concerned Relatives seemed more interested in their own vindication — “See! See! Jones was a monster, and I was his helpless victim! I told you so!” — than in the tragedy which had consumed their friends and loved ones. Were they too numb, too overcome by the enormity and banality of it all?



## Leaving the Human Freedom Center

It was not the public fascination with the macabre demise of Peoples Temple, but other events of a more personal nature that led me to accept the position as director of the Human Freedom Center in the first place. I had just completed seven years as a political campaign consultant and as a mental health administrator, and I wanted to return to my true area of interest: religious experience.

I was also concerned about the virtual war declared the day after Jonestown on all non-traditional, authoritarian, innovative and/or communal religions. Suddenly, anything strange became suspect. Every cult, sect, and occult group became a potential Jonestown. Panic overwhelmed reason. Deprogrammings multiplied. And the response by the cults was natural: they resisted with increasing vigor, which, in turn, led the deprogrammers and other anti-cultists to become more violent.

Atrocity stories by defectors from other groups became commonplace. Nevertheless, as had happened in the months prior to the Temple's exodus from San Francisco to Guyana, there always seemed to be a reporter ready to swallow the stories whole, without examining the facts or questioning the motives of their bearers.

Jonestown became the most powerful negative metaphor in 20th century religious history. Its power could not be lost on cult members, and many of them re-evaluated their own commitment to movements headed by charismatic and fiercely demanding saviors. The truth is, defections were more common than even the anti-cult network has realized.

But the Human Freedom Center would prove to be a poor vehicle for my vision. It was too caught up in the continuing dynamics of Peoples Temple. It was too much an instrument of the Millses' need for "volunteers" for their various enterprises. It was too much an expression of the corrupting "if it feels good, do it" milieu.

The time soon came for me to leave the Human Freedom Center and to found my own agency, the Freedom Counseling Center. I had had enough of Peoples Temple and its ceaseless parade of broken survivors, the self-serving stories told by its defectors, the strident posturing of some of the Concerned Relatives, the simmering hostilities and jealousies of the post-massacre factions. But more than anything, I wanted to get away from the Millses and the little cult of Jeannie-worshippers which had evolved at the Human Freedom Center.

Jeannie was a loving and caring woman. But there was a price



for that love. She expected boundless appreciation, total dedication, and the furthering of the idiosyncratic vision of the future promised to her by her psychic adviser.

Her life started to unravel about the time she turned 40, six months after Jonestown. A male employee of the Center told me he had rebuffed her attempts to seduce him. Knowing nothing of the accusation, Jeannie recommended that I fire the man because he had allowed a young woman client to become emotionally involved with him. She didn't detail any misconduct, and her expression, tone of voice and choice of words implied there was another, unspoken reason for her request.

For Jeannie and her coterie to try to blacken the reputation of a fellow staff member seemed hypocritical. The sexual laxity of some of her followers was notorious. On more than one occasion, Jeannie and one of her disciples boasted of their sexual adventures with black men, although Jeannie never made clear whether her own escapades occurred during her Temple years or following her defection.

In addition, Jeannie insisted on playing off her three male employees against each other. She, or one of the two women working for her, would tell me that my male associates were incompetent, immoral and conspiratorial. The other two men heard the same characteristics attributed to me. Things were getting slimy.

When I eventually confronted her about this manipulation taken from the Peoples Temple manual of human relations, she started to cry and asked me to understand the hard times she and her family were going through. Her teenage daughter had developed a heavy dependence on drugs, she said, and then run away. Al had found her on the streets, prostituting herself for money to support her habit. Jeannie also said that her family was being watched by unknown parties and, as she had both after their defection from the Temple and following the suicides, she feared for her life. There were financial problems as well: the book was not selling as many copies as she had expected, their real estate dealings were not profitable, and, of course, the Center was not even making enough money to pay its rent on a regular basis. It was the fallout over the last concern that eventually led to the Center's end.

At first, Jeannie asked me to remove the Center from the Regent Street house so she could rent the rooms to university students. When I declined, she launched formal eviction proceedings. Then, when I moved to new office space, she went to the Berkeley police and claimed I had burglarized the Center and stolen its meager belongings, which consisted mainly of client records. When I showed the police the eviction

papers and the Center's by-laws — which gave me, as President of the Board, full power over the Center's assets and location — they shook their heads and left.

The day after the move, Jeannie and one other board member held a rump board meeting at the Regent Street house and approved a resolution declaring that I owed Jeannie \$15,000 for money she had allegedly invested in the Center. The resolution further stated that Jeannie was to hold the Center's research files — primarily consisting of newspaper clippings — as collateral. Finally, Jeannie and the other member resigned, leaving me as the sole active member. I was supposed to assume all the liabilities, while she kept all the assets!

A few months later, Al, Jeannie, and Jeannie's daughter Daphene were murdered in the tiny, shabby cottage behind their board and care home. According to the press and police, there had been a terrific struggle. Jeannie had fled to the bathroom, but the murderer — or murderers — smashed the door to bits to get to her. Several shots were fired. Eddie, Jeannie's teenage son, was considered a suspect at first, but was later released. The police then accused him of calmly watching TV in the midst of the commotion, his lethargy attributed to marijuana, but Eddie denied that as well, claiming he had neither seen or heard anything.

Anti-cult organizations were quick to seize upon the murders as evidence that the discredited Temple hit squad actually existed, and that Jeannie had been the target of the assassination because of her work. Although no one has ever been arrested for the deaths, and although the slayings could have had as much to do with Daphene's involvement in drugs as with her mother's work, Jeannie has achieved martyr status over the years.

My wife and I were in Capetown, South Africa, when we heard of their deaths. We were stunned and sickened. Whatever the Millses had been, they hardly deserved this. With all their quirks and failings, Al and Jeannie had been important to me. They had helped me to make a break with work that no longer satisfied me and to commit myself to new forms of service. Their encouragement and support had been indispensable at the outset, and I was grateful to them. But I did not want to be part of the miniature Peoples Temple they were creating, replete with head games, sexual pranks, personal and financial manipulation, and dependence upon their whims.

By nature, training and experience, I disdain fanaticism, whether that fanaticism is the unreasoning bombast of self-appointed

messiahs or the demand for suspension of civil liberties by the enemies of "destructive cultism." I am also deeply touched by the pain and bewilderment which characterizes the loss of faith. And, as I believed that my presence both as a sympathetic listener and as a reminder of forgotten options was valuable to Jonestown survivors, so I hoped I could act as a guide for other ex-cultists as they sought to re-program themselves for self-fulfilling lives. I wanted to help families sundered by religious differences, to provide them with insights rather than scare stories, to help them develop appropriate strategies for reconciliation. I wanted to counsel cult members, to stimulate them to think outside the narrow confines of ideological cliches, easy answers, and prooftexts learned by rote. I wanted to do this without resorting to violence, compulsion or deception, and without making anyone dependent upon me in the process. Finally, I wanted to help former believers, no matter how they had lost faith, to see that there is life after cult, that it is possible to separate the wheat of basic living truth from the chaff of self-delusion and to go on with one's own life. In the fall of 1979, as I left the Human Freedom Center to begin my work with the Freedom Counseling Center, this was only a wish list supported by a number of unexamined presuppositions. They were the articles of a faith I had not yet tested.





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## **We Cannot Forget Our Own**

**Jynona M. Norwood**

I was in contact with Representative Leo Ryan's office about my plane ticket two weeks before the Congressman's trip to South America. I had planned to go representing my family, because we had so many people in Jonestown, Guyana. My family encouraged me to go, because I was an aggressive speaker against Peoples Temple. I learned from the Congressman's secretary that I could go, but it would be one day late. I could have gone on the trip that day, November 15, 1978, since I already had my passport and was ready to travel. But Ryan's party had already gone so I settled and said that I would go on the next trip.

It was a Saturday night, November 18, 1978. I had invited several friends over for dinner that night. At about 10:30 p.m. my uncle called me and told me to turn on the radio. I noticed his voice was shaking as he said, "They believe the Congressman has been shot." I turned on the radio and heard that Congressman Ryan had been shot and possibly killed by members of the Peoples Temple church. I looked at my friends and began to say, "What do they mean shot? What do they mean shot?"

I started calling relatives, and relatives started calling me — my sister, my grandmother, and my uncle, who was very upset. I started asking my friends, "Does that mean my mother was shot?" My friends kept trying to console me by saying, "Jynona, don't worry. Nothing has happened to your mother. Nothing has happened to your relatives over there. Everything is okay, don't worry." I called a close associate, also a minister, Pastor E. W. Wilcots in Houston, Texas. He also told me not to worry, but instead to leave it in God's hands.

In spite of everyone telling me not to worry, I really had bad feelings about Jonestown in my heart and in my gut. I asked my friends to leave, so I could go over to my relatives' house. Once there, we began calling Washington, D.C. We kept calling and calling, but we couldn't

get any response. By midnight that night we heard that everyone in Jonestown was killing themselves. I became upset, almost hysterical. "What do you mean everyone is killing themselves?" I said, "Get a plane and get my family out of there. I know this is a lie. It just can't be true."

The next day when we got up, we were all upset — uncle, sister, grandmother, everyone. We met at my grandmother and uncle's house. They kept saying that all the children were dead. I kept wondering why they couldn't get a plane out there, but they told me it was too dark. I just couldn't understand with all the bright lights they have on the airfield why they couldn't get over there and get those children out of there. And although they said everyone was dying and getting killed over there, I just knew my family would run and find some way get out of there. We kept calling Washington, D.C. — the White House, the F.B.I. — everyone we knew to call those days, asking them to search the jungles to find my mother. "I know she is not dead," I kept telling myself. "Try to find my cousins. I know they're not dead." I was convinced that they had escaped somehow and were hiding in the jungle. I thought maybe they were staying with an Indian family.

This was not the case, of course. Every day they came up with a new bodycount. The first day it was 200, the next day 300, the next, 400. As the hours passed, the numbers grew. We asked government officials why the bodycount kept changing. They explained that parents were lying on top of children, and they couldn't count the children until the parents were removed. But in my mind, if you have people laying on the ground stacked up like that, you should wonder why that person's body is mighty high off the ground. That puzzle was never answered for me.

While they were counting the bodies, I just knew that my family was somewhere in the jungle. I didn't care what was out there, whether it was lions, tiger, spiders, or what have you. When you've been in a civilized country and you enter an uninhabited jungle, I know you might have a fear of wild animals. But being with wild beasts would have been better than death by gunshot or poison. I began to think that maybe some family members were in Georgetown, since the body count was so high and they said there were no survivors. That was our next hope because we knew the basketball team had gone to play ball, and we knew our cousins were good at basketball.

We stayed around the television and radio, but no word ever came that our people had been found alive. I was going to fly to Guyana because I was upset, and I wanted to see my mother's body if she was dead. I wanted to see all of them if they were truly, honestly dead. The

U.S. government encouraged me not to go. The F.B.I. and C.I.A. came and talked to us. My family was already afraid that I would be killed if I went. But since I already had my passport and the money, I was ready to go.

Finally my mother's name flashed across the news: Fairy Norwood. Then my aunt's name, Doris Lewis. Then Lisa Lewis, Karen Lewis, Freddie Lewis, Jr., Barry Lewis. I don't think Barry was identified, but the names started coming down of our identified dead. And that's when the tears broke. That's when we began to cry. I really didn't know, or believe, that my mother was dead until I saw it come across the TV. I continued to believe that the rest of my family had fled into the jungle, because only about ten out of our 27 people were identified.

None of us could eat. We were all sleeping in one room. We were crying. My uncle, Fred Lewis, had lost seven children and his wife. My cousins in Los Angeles had lost their children. Even a three-week-old baby who had been born, Charles Henderson, Jr. Why did they have to kill a baby? That's what I couldn't understand. What could that baby tell? They also killed my relatives, ages five, six, seven, eight, ten, fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen. Why did they have to kill all of the children in our family?

They've tried to tell us it was suicide. But a three-week-old baby does not commit suicide. When an adult gives a child poison, that is not suicide. The autopsy report says that my mother and other relatives were shot three times. That is not suicide.

Sometime later, I asked Diane Louie, who left Jonestown on November 18 before the deaths started, why she didn't help get my mother out of there, since she knew my mother was against Jim Jones. She told me they were all scared. Everyone was afraid to tell anyone that they were leaving.

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My family was one of Jim's first black families out of San Francisco. My grandmother, Julia Gales, was one of Jim's first missionaries. My mother, Fairy Lewis, was an Apostolic Guard, as was my aunt, Doris Lewis. Because my family believed in Jim Jones so much, they persuaded many others to join Peoples Temple. People came from Texas, Oakland, San Francisco, Oklahoma, Kansas — all over the country.

My mother was not a hypocrite. Neither was my aunt. They believed in what they were doing in Peoples Temple. My mother and I



had discussed Jim Jones in 1972, and she told me why she believed so greatly in this man. I told her that what Jim Jones taught was not true religion or real Christianity. Peoples Temple focused on the man, Jim Jones. The people magnified the man. They lifted him up, whereas real Christianity lifts up Jesus and magnifies the Lord. I knew I planted the seed of doubt in the heart of my mother and my other relatives throughout the years. I thought that once trouble hit, and they realized that Jim Jones was a fake, they could denounce him and repent right on the spot. I told them that Jim Jones was of evil, and that they should accept our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But they believed in Jim Jones. If you tried to get them to skip going to Peoples Temple, Jim Jones would call, and off they'd go. He could call them at two, three, or four in the morning. He did that many times as long as they lived in the U.S. And every time he called, they responded. He began programming them here in the U.S. before they ever got to Guyana. They would do whatever Jim asked them to do.

And it wasn't all bad. Peoples Temple believed in education. My sixteen year-old cousin, Freddie Lee Lewis, Jr., could take a television or radio apart and put it back together. Some of my cousins were learning to speak two and three languages. Other children had mastered that already. My mother and the rest of the adults had gone back to school. And if they weren't at school, they were at Peoples Temple, feeding the poor. Or they were at the hospital, visiting the sick. Or they were getting someone's child out of jail.

These were the things Jim taught them to do. However, I believe this was Jim Jones' mask. I believe that he did these things and taught these things so that he could ingratiate himself and impress himself upon their hearts so that they would believe in him, trust him, and love him. My mother gave every dime that she had to Jim Jones. In 1975 my father died and left everything he had to my sister and me, plus all of his insurance money: over \$24,000. Because I wanted my mother out of that church, and wanted her to know she didn't need Jim Jones in order to have something in her life, I turned the money and a brand new Oldsmobile over to her. Maybe I was using the wrong things — material things — to get her out of that church. Being a young adult, I thought that my mother simply needed a break, and the cash money to make a down payment on a house. Instead, she took the money and gave it all to Jim Jones. He had taught them that they were not loyal, or Christian, unless they gave him every dime that they had, all their cars, diamonds, homes, or material things. He would say, "When I see you down and out and poor,

without material possessions, then you are loyal." Jim succeeded in teaching this philosophy because of his personal struggle against capitalism. But this act of devotion by his followers strengthened his hold on his congregation.

Black people had been down and out all of their lives. What they wanted was something better. Jim Jones taught them that the only way they could get something better was by giving him everything that they owned that was of value. He would then liquidate those assets and pour them into a new community where our children would grow up free and strong. He promised that our kids would never be prostitutes again, or never be hooked on drugs, and would never drop out of school. That's why my mother gave Jim Jones the money. She did it for the cause. That's why my loved ones and relatives went to Jonestown. It was for the cause.

"I have a dream," Dr. Martin Luther King told his followers, and for many of them, that dream seemed to die with Dr. King's assassination. It was Jim Jones who told his Peoples Temple congregation that, with their help, Dr. King's dream would live on.

Jim crossed the racial barriers by combining Christ's commands to feed the poor, clothe the naked, and love one another, with Dr. King's sermons. He lived his philosophies by adopting children of other races, and he insisted that his followers do the same. The sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners sat at the table of brotherhood in Peoples Temple. People who violated the practices of non-discrimination within the congregation were called out during services to be chastised and publicly humiliated. With the interracial philosophies being lived every day within Peoples Temple, it was easy for blacks to believe in Jim Jones.

Jim also filled social and spiritual gaps within the black community. He took his followers on cross-country trips to cities they had never seen before. He led them to political functions in San Francisco. He delivered great sermons during his services, which also featured gospel choirs and free food afterwards. What more could anyone ask for in a minister or a church?

His ability to turn out people for different events, especially political rallies and election day get-out-the-vote efforts, had another effect as well: Peoples Temple became part of the San Francisco political scene. Jim had personal contact with national leaders such as Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale, state legislators such as Assembly speaker Willie Brown and Sen. Milton Marks, and San Francisco politicians such as Mayor George Moscone. He became well-known in the black commu-

nity, religious as well as civic. The good works of the Temple membership allowed Jim Jones to deceive almost everyone in the Bay Area about his own sincerity and honesty. The credibility and basic goodness of the people within the congregation masked Jim's personal evil.

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Once I started counting up all the relatives who had died in Jonestown, I got angry. I called relatives and more relatives and finally found out that 27 of our people were lost. When I got to 27, however, I was so mad I said "forget it." I didn't continue the count. I wish I had continued. The 27 did not include people I'd gone to school with, people I knew, ministers I knew. Jim Jones even had pastors who had closed down their churches to follow him. I knew thugs, friends who had stopped being thugs and had come off the streets to join Peoples Temple. I knew ex-dope dealers and hustlers off the streets. Even militants had joined the movement.

Jim Jones brainwashed my family. He tricked them with faith healings. He got information from people about other people. He got friends to give him information about friends, and then he pretended to be a prophet. Jim Jones took a little bit of every religion from every race and incorporated it in his religion. He pretended to be concerned about their health. He taught them not to eat this or that, but when they got to Guyana he fed them a very harmful diet. How could he treat people like that, those who care so much about him that they gave him everything they owned? There was nothing that he could ask for that they would not give.

Though his people loved him, the truth is, he didn't love them. You don't strip people of everything they own, verbally abuse them, teach them to hate their own families and their country, in order to prove you — and only you — are capable of love. And in my mind, he proved that inability to love anyone but himself when he called white people "red-necks," and "bastards," and black people he called "black snaggle tooth S.O.B.'s."

My mother was an honest, real, compassionate, truthful woman. She always taught me that "Truth is the glue that holds the world together." My aunt wanted greater things for her seven children than she'd had. Jim lied to her and told her, "If you bring your children out of America, I will make your children great and they will have a place

where they will not have to be in slavery to the white man any more." That was the reason his congregation stayed with him: they shared Dr. King's dream for a better life, for the paradise of equal rights.

One of my friends, Chris Lewis, was very militant, and very muscular and strong. I could not believe it when he joined Jim Jones' church. He had been into some crime, but when he joined Peoples Temple in the late 1960s, he stopped using drugs. That still didn't persuade me to join Peoples Temple. I just did not like what I saw or heard or felt. Then suddenly Chris came up dead. Chris had criticized Jim Jones, and Jim had prophesied that Chris would die. You were not allowed to say anything or go against Jones. Chris was always in some kind of trouble, so I don't know just how he got killed. All I know is that he was in trouble, out of trouble, then he joined Peoples Temple and was in trouble again, and then he ended up dead.

I never liked Jim Jones. I had nightmares and dreams for four to five years. I kept seeing all of my family killed in a jungle. I kept telling my mother that Jim Jones was going to be the cause of all of them getting killed. No one really would believe me. My mother told Jim Jones, and the first thing he replied was "She doesn't know what she is talking about." I kept insisting, however, and told her that I saw all the babies in our family, and all the women in our family dead, and the bodies of the children were laying everywhere.

Most people chose to ignore my dreams, but they became a reality. I believe that God is fully divine, and that He chose me to reveal the impending massacre at Jonestown. I also believe that other people received warnings through similar dreams, but no one believed them either. I prayed that my dreams would stop, but they lingered for several years after the tragedy.

I don't think a person must believe in every dream he or she has. But as a Christian, I can identify with the men in the Bible whom God visited in dreams. As profound and recurring as the dreams about the Jonestown murders were, I believe their message — and their Source — were clear.

I believe Jim Jones acknowledged that, in his own way. As Jim Jones told my mother, "Oh, she has a gift, but she only has a little bit of second sight. If she would hook up with me, and join my church, she would have a greater gift later."

Jim Jones offered to make me the assistant pastor over all of the youth. I am an evangelist. I had young people following my ministry,

youth outreach programs by the hundreds across the country in every city and every state. Churches and charitable groups were contacting me to lecture to their youth. My mother told Jim about it and he sent his assistant minister, Archie Ijames, and a host of other men, with a letter of invitation, and all kinds of documents from Jim Jones requesting that I be his assistant over his youths because I was such a powerful speaker for the youth. "Jim has called for you," they told me, "and it's time for you to come and you better come." I regret now that I tore up the letter.

I never do anything without prayer, and I didn't feel right about the offer. I could not accept that position. It was a high position, a big one in that church. My family kept urging me to take it. But I visited Peoples Temple many times, and every time I did, I did not feel right. There was something wrong. Jim was teaching the wrong doctrine: he wanted people to worship man, not God.

When I began to talk against Jim Jones, my mother told me to stop. They got upset with me. I was jumped on by family members because of Jim Jones. I was kicked, beaten, and scratched because I tried to have prayer in my mother's home. Jim taught his people that if you did not pray to him, you shouldn't pray at all. He also told them, praying on your knees only puts you in the position to be kicked from behind.

I learned from survivors who returned from Guyana that my mother went against Jim Jones, that she was one of the people who defied him in Jonestown. She tried to kill him one day with a machete while they were cutting weeds and bushes. I was told he had her in what he called his security hospital, which was an inner prison. He had her chained, drugged, and handcuffed to the bed. I was also told that my cousin, Freddie Lee Lewis, Jr. had tried to escape on several occasions, but was brought back and beaten.

I wanted my family out of Peoples Temple. I took my mother to the church I attended, trying to get her out of Peoples Temple. She liked the pastor's ministry, but Jim had taught them not to believe in anyone who was not a Peoples Temple member or believer. My minister friend, Pastor E. W. Wilcots strengthened my support, and told me that this man was of evil, and that he, Pastor Wilcots, was praying for my family. Another friend of mine, an evangelist named Carolyn Abroms, would fly to whatever city I was in and try to talk my mother into leaving Peoples Temple. I had other ministers, evangelists, and pastors talking to them, but Jim had brainwashed them.

I was able to save my son. I hid him for four to five years from Jim

Jones. He was raised in Peoples Temple, and when he was four, I kidnapped him and began hiding him from my mother. I would change my telephone number because Jim had people working for the telephone company who would call and tell me, "You can't hide from us." My mother didn't know where I lived for three or four years. I would take Eddie to see his grandmother, but I was too afraid to leave him with her or at the Temple for fear they would kidnap him to Jonestown.

My fear that he would be kidnapped was real, because members of the Temple had justified it in their own minds. Parents believed their children were better off with Jim Jones than they were at home. "Father will take care of him," my family told me on several occasions.

When my evangelist work took me on the road, I would allow my son to stay in my mother's house. However, I was constantly on edge, calling to see how he was, telling my relatives not to take him to that church. When I was home, though, I tried to isolate him completely from his relatives — his grandmother and great-grandmother, and his little cousins he grew up with. It broke his heart, and theirs.

Eddie Lee (Norwood) Ray, Jr. is now eighteen years old and attending college.

For years I would travel across the country to Houston, Washington, D.C., New York, Detroit — different cities where I knew Jim Jones was going. I would preach to different people and share in churches that he was anti-Christ, and to please not be deceived by this man.

When Jim Jones would return to San Francisco, he would bring all of his constituents. They would stay in our home, my mother's home, and would sleep on the floor, in the bed, in the hallway, with backpacks and sleeping bags. You could not walk through the house because people would be everywhere. Some even brought their dogs because the Temple believed in treating animals right.

The young people liked the fact that Jim Jones had a swimming pool in the sanctuary in Redwood Valley. People would peel their clothes off, put their bathing suits on, and jump in the pool right after morning worship. He had a different type of church. He also had animals everywhere on the church grounds. It was a family setting in Ukiah, with unity and togetherness. The country setting was a treat for people who accompanied Jim from Indianapolis, or who left the fast-paced California cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles to join him.

But I could never join his church. Coming out of the Catholic movement into a non-denominational church, the first ministers I had

contact with told me that if anyone ever taught against Jesus Christ or against the Bible, not to trust them. I knew what God's word said about false prophets, those people who claim to be the Messiah or even God, people who preach against the word of Jesus Christ, people who divide families. The Bible tells us to have nothing to do with them. Those were the things that kept me from believing in Jones. Those were the teachings that saved my son and me.

I was holding my own crusades with hundreds, and at times thousands, of people in my audience. I also had my own television talk show for about ten months. I could talk to thousands of people about Jesus Christ, but I couldn't talk to my own family about Jim Jones. He was God to them. He told them, "I am God." He said that he was reincarnated, and that he had walked during the time of Jesus. He said terrible things about Jesus, including that he was an alcoholic, and that Mary was a prostitute. This really bothered me.

Because I didn't like what he said, I couldn't look at all the good things he was doing. I couldn't look at the people's rent that he paid, or his bailing children out of jail, or the poor that he was feeding, or the naked he was clothing. I just could not look at all the good he was doing and erase the bad that he was saying about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It did not balance. The puzzle did not fit.

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I understand why people went to Jonestown. For many of them, it was their last hope. It was a paradise for them. What I could not understand was how all of these people could get killed, because they went to Guyana for a good cause, not to die. I do not believe that it was mass suicide. I believe, and it was reported, that they were held at gun point or they were injected, or they were forced to take a bullet or die with the poison. Jim Jones used to teach his congregation to never commit suicide. He was a heavy believer in reincarnation. He taught that if they committed suicide they would have to come back 500 times over into this mess and hell he called life. He taught them that they did not want to ever come back into this life, especially America, because it was a dog-eat-dog world.

The Guyana tragedy has given me insight as to the capabilities of evil, and what people really will do. It has also taught me that I never want to be as a leader or a follower. I now investigate people more than

I normally would. I'm skeptical, yet I trust people because I do not believe that one bad apple spoils the whole barrel. Jim Jones was the bad apple. He didn't spoil the whole barrel, he murdered his barrel. He took the love and dedication of people who really cared for him and loved him, and used it for his own greed and power and ego. So the tragedy gave me the desire to go on radio, and open a center in San Francisco and Los Angeles to help heal those who were members of his church or any cult, to help heal those who have lost faith in God and themselves.

In order to do that, I had to know God's word, because I understand that it is the search for God and righteousness that draws many people into cults — cults which take Scripture and twist it to insert their own meanings or complement their own teachings — and I had to be able to combat them with God's true word. I also understand that any success in bringing people out of cults requires a calmness and an appreciation of their search for the truth. Love and knowledge have become my strongest weapons in my ministry. Over and over again, I tell people with families in cults, to keep in touch, no matter how their relatives might try to isolate themselves, and to remain strong with a personal knowledge of Christ's true word, no matter how appealing the cult looks from the outside. Only with that love and knowledge can we save our families from cults; only with those weapons can we prevent future Jonestowns.

The worst tragedy of all was to trust in a man of the cloth and then be betrayed. It hurts me to think of all the people left behind who trusted Jim Jones as a man of God. Jim Jones did not have true religion. True religion focuses on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the one God. True religion does not magnify man, and Jim Jones was magnified.

Jim taught them that America was failing, that they could not be happy here. But people need to know that you do not have to leave America to be happy and to make a peaceful and positive place for children to grow up in. I will continue to encourage other young people to get out of cults such as the occult, satanism, witchcraft, and communes like Jim Jones'. I will always try to reach people who are being held prisoners of their minds. I will always share my story about how I went to my family and how I shared Jesus Christ with them.

I want to say to those who are reading this that true religion is not being controlled by some man or woman who would be harmful to you, it is to worship God, to love your neighbor as yourself, to give to the poor and comfort the afflicted, and to accept Jesus Christ into your heart as your Lord and Savior.



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The first memorial tribute for our loved ones that were lost in Guyana was held June 18, 1979 at one o'clock in the afternoon. The Emergency Relief Committee was part of the program, as were a representative from San Francisco, Mr. George P. Agnoust, and different family members.

Every year since then I have organized memorial services for the 918 persons lost in the Guyana tragedy. Some say it was 913; some say it was 1,002, some say 918. Whatever the count, that was just too many people to lose.

It was eight months before we got the bodies of our families back, and every November it's a painful memory. It is not easy to remember how my family was lost, but I remember, for I cannot and will not forget my own. I will never forget my own.

The people who went to Guyana were good people who were led by an evil and very wicked man who was never once, even in the beginning, good or Christian. That's why I will never stop organizing memorial services in San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles. Some people have wanted me not to do the services every year, but I'll never stop. My ministry pays for the services, and will continue to do so. I've asked other relatives to come with me to Evergreen Cemetery in Oakland, other people have invited their own relatives and friends to become involved, and those who've attended past services have asked other family members to come to remember their own. Some say that it is embarrassing, and painful. How much more painful can it be? Their lives are lost, they are gone. They cannot speak any more. We are the only ones left who can speak for them now.

The people of Peoples Temple were not selfish, crazy people. They were compassionate people who loved their children so much that they traveled to a strange land, carved a community out of the jungle with their own blood, sweat and tears, and did so in an effort to get their families away from a life of drugs, jail, discrimination, poverty and unhappiness. In one sense, Jim had taught them to stand and fight; in another, their flight to Guyana represented a loss of hope.

This is the true lesson of Jonestown: we must remember we can never outrun evil or our problems. We must deal with life as it comes, right where we are — here — and we must never forget, that where there is life, there is always hope. And when we hope and dream, we must

always remember to make that dream a reality on our own. Don't depend on someone else to do it for you. Trust and believe in yourself. You are somebody. You are the one, who, with God's help, will do it.

We cannot forget our own, our own who tried to make it, but who made the fatal mistake of depending on someone else for their triumph. If I do nothing else in my life, I know I can make it, through the grace of God, to the hillside of Evergreen Cemetery every year, to remember.



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## **The Deaths of Two Daughters: Grieving and Remembering**

**Barbara Moore**

Our daughters, Carolyn and Annie, and grandchild Kimo were miracles of light and love and humor. Like meteors, their lives were brief and shining.

They died in Jonestown, Guyana on November 18, 1978, along with more than 900 other members of their community.

Carolyn first met Jim Jones in 1968 at Peoples Temple in Redwood Valley. My husband, John, our other two daughters, and I met Jim in Carolyn's home a few months later. Twenty years have elapsed, and I have only now begun to arrange events in my mind and to assess my perception of the persona of Jim Jones. I shall leave to psychiatrists, sociologists and philosophers the characterization of charisma and its meaning. But I was extremely turned off by this dark-haired stranger with his rapid conversation and fast, giggly laugh. I like a man of good humor to chuckle, snort or guffaw.

The word "harbinger" comes to mind. The Harbinger of Death. And yet those who followed him — including a second daughter, Annie, who joined Peoples Temple a few years after Carolyn — felt that he brought new life to them. They were mesmerized by his personality and caught up in what can be described only as astoundingly solid social service projects.

Eventually our dog, Willy, also met Jim Jones. Willy had never bitten or snarled at anyone. An authentic product of the 1960s, Willy was a floppy-eared, large-footed, smiling fellow who chased butterflies and loved the world and its inhabitants. But he growled at Jim upon their first encounter.

If superstition and unease entered my consciousness when I

met Jim, I would also have to admit that the old adage, "Hope springs eternal" competed with it. I told myself that some good things were happening in Peoples Temple, and that it would probably phase out in time as many movements do. But from Carolyn's first descriptions of Peoples Temple, John and I were uneasily aware of what we felt were bizarre activities encouraged by Jim Jones. Here was a leader who was a combination of preacher, financier, political strategist and fraud. Anything could happen.

The followers of Jim Jones, on the other hand, were incredibly idealistic and creative. Peoples Temple had been conceived during the Kennedy/Vietnam era of concern for people of every race and condition. Temple members were deeply religious people in the sense that they were committed to caring for the poor, the disturbed, and the retarded of the land, as well as to changing political institutions that they might better serve the public.

Certainly our daughters entered the Temple with that commitment. My husband, John, is a minister in the United Methodist Church, and we raised our three children to understand the true meaning of compassion, sharing and human responsibility.

The members of Peoples Temple came from many backgrounds. Some were children of southern slaves, some were young adults from the upper-middle class community of Burlingame, California. There were chemists, accountants, mechanics, teachers, lawyers, nurses, carpenters, craftspeople, and artists, as well as ex-prisoners and recovering alcoholics and drug users. They represented a cross-section of the entire U.S. population.

Jonestown, Guyana was a magnificent venture! Set in a thousand acres where dense jungle had once stood, this unusual town had a library of several thousand books, a medical clinic, a dental facility, a nursery school with beautifully-crafted furniture and play equipment. Neat little white fences separated well-tended paths and gardens brimming with flowers and vegetables. Surrounding the settlement were fields of crops, fruit orchards, and a large animal farm. There was evidence of play and education, as well as hard work: Jonestown boasted a basketball team, a rock band, and evenings of laughter and song, in addition to schools offering classes for all ages. Recognizing that its existence was due in part to the graces of a foreign country, the community maintained contacts with the government of Guyana, as well as cultural and university leaders. It was to be a utopian community.

If the people of Jonestown had not had a crazed and power-

hungry leader, the experiment might have worked. The tragedy is that an entire community died in response to the violence of a few in the bloody killings at Port Kaituma.

The first details in news bulletins from Jonestown were sparse. Following the reports of Congressman Leo Ryan's assassination came rumors of 200 deaths in the settlement itself. John and I were worried, but hopeful, as fantasies of their survival ran through my mind. Of course our daughters, being of sound mind and practical sensibilities, were still alive. Perhaps Annie had led Kimo and a group of children through the jungle into Venezuela. What imagery I possessed! I went ahead with Thanksgiving plans at our Reno, Nevada home in a ritualistic manner, even as friends dropped by to express their concern. One friend who had experienced travail in her own life said, "I feel that your daughters are alive." "Of course," I told myself.

"Foolish woman," I told myself later, forever floundering through life.

The truth is, I was all cried out — almost — when the news came. I began crying about six years before the final tragedy. Ours had been a close family, full of jokes and gifts and shared experiences. There was no alienation, even when Carolyn and Annie belonged to Peoples Temple. It was just that they were more separated from what had been and what was and what ordinarily would be. It was a sadness on our part, and a new and exciting adventure on their part.

They were always a part of us that neither time nor space could separate. Letters and calls arrived every two or three weeks. We wrote and sent gifts regularly as well. Still, after they left the U.S. for their jungle life, I told myself, "They're never coming home again." I tried to resist this insight into the future, and tried to focus on Annie's gifts as a nurse and artist, and on Carolyn's talents as the administrative assistant to the world and everything in it that needed organizing and fixing. Others tried to help me with that nagging feeling, too. When I shared my daughters' descriptive letters with a friend, he remarked that of course they would return to the states one of these days.

Within a few days of the tragedy, we heard the news that Carolyn's witty, vivacious friend Sharon Amos, with whom we'd corresponded, had slit the throats of her children and herself in the Temple's Georgetown house. John and I fell sobbing into each other arms. This was reality. If Sharon had killed her own beautiful children, then the rest of it had to be true as well. Jonestown, and our daughters and grandson, were gone as well.

At the time, the event seemed to defy comprehension or satisfactory explanation. Nevertheless, the expressions of support and comfort from relatives, friends and even strangers were overwhelming. Catholic, Jewish, United Methodist, and other religious communities provided unending love and concern. The city of Reno seemed to go through the mourning process with us. People may not have understood the phenomenon of mass suicide at the time, but they offered us incredible understanding and comfort.

In the week following the tragedy, John had decided he would not preach the following Sunday. I'm not certain why I told him he had to speak, but he changed his mind. It was a magnificent sermon! Two years later, it was still surfacing in different places around the country, including a peace vigil at a nuclear missile site. It was a testimony of love for our family and the frailty of the human spirit.

I've carried my shattered psyche as we've moved from city to city since the tragedy of Jonestown, asking myself frequently, "Why, God?", as I dusted our family's faces in their framed photos. At other times I've screamed mentally, shouted and railed against religious cults and charismatic leaders.

John is often asked to speak on the subject of cults and to take an active role in bereavement groups for parents of children who have died violent deaths. We also meet with people who are recovering from years spent in a religious cult. That experience has been fruitful, and they are adjusting to a fulfilling life.

Jonestown and Jim Jones are forever present in our lives. The words leap from newspapers and magazines in unrelated life-stories and incidents. For example: In January, I was called for jury duty in the Yolo County courthouse near our home in Davis, California. There were about 60 of us, and I was the second person questioned by the two attorneys. I answered the usual questions about my work, my marital status, the number of children I had, and, of course, my belief in the jury system and my own ability to render an impartial verdict.

My answers were neither perfunctory nor flippant, although I felt that the lawyers preferred "yes" and "no" answers. At one point, I mentioned that my judgment was fair but not always perfect, and that I would not want to serve on a case involving a capital crime. That didn't disqualify me, as the case was one of theft.

When they asked me the ages of my children, I said that one was 36. After a pause, I added, "Two are dead." Both attorneys were silent for a minute, then accepted me as a juror. I had had other plans for the

week, but understood the plans would have to change. This was going to take a few days.

During the lunch break at a small restaurant nearby, I happened to sit next to another potential juror. She was a jolly, garrulous person, full of stories and experiences. "I really enjoyed your answers to the lawyers' questions," she exclaimed. "Now there's a person who would rather not serve on this jury," I told myself. I don't think they're going to retain you."

"But I've been passed," I told her.

"No," she replied. "I doubt if they'll keep you."

We returned to the courtroom. It was exceedingly quiet. We jurors whispered to each other as though we were in church. The judge finally came into the courtroom, seated himself, looked up and said, "Is there a person in this courtroom whose daughters died in the Jonestown massacre?"

The silence in the room was thick. In a state of shock, I raised my hand.

"You're dismissed," the judge said.

That was the opportune moment for the drama of the day and a question on Jonestown's relevance to the case, but I failed to seize it. Instead, I rose from my chair with as much dignity as I could muster and left the room. As I reached the corridor, the bailiff caught up with me and thanked me for coming.

Although I was in a state of shock, I chided myself for being a big sissy, and decided it wouldn't prevent my driving home and preparing for the next emotional upheaval. I understood then, as I do now, that reminders will occur over and over in my life.

Four months later, I received another letter calling me for jury duty. That time, I marched into the office of jury selection and told the registrar of my previous encounter with the court. I then announced I did not intend to serve on a jury in Yolo County this year, next year, or ever.

For more than 30 years, John and I have been writing letters and demonstrating on behalf of peace and justice issues. Despite the wounds of personal tragedy, we have hoped our zeal would not be diminished. I did not noticeably change my activities following my daughters' deaths, though I began to feel more compulsive about fulfilling the needs of others. Whether this could be termed the "spiritual imperative" or simply the process of middle age, I cannot say. Perhaps it's a little of both. When I mentioned to a young college friend that I would like to do



some writing, he replied, "Gee, you better do it soon. You could be run over by a truck at any time!"

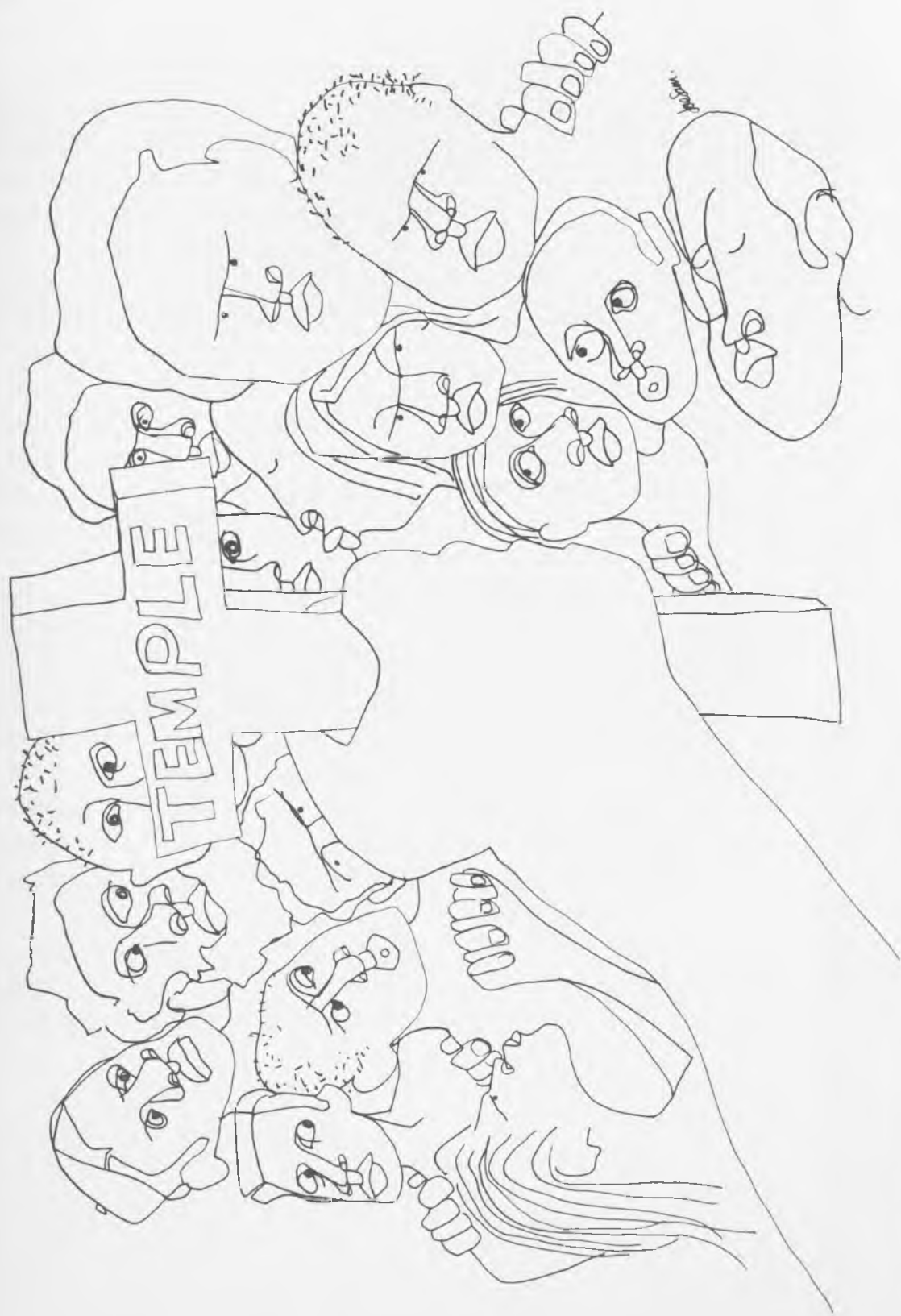
The significance of relating to the dispossessed, the hungry, and the ill through the years has had intense meaning for me. I have worked part-time in a Catholic Worker dining room for poor and homeless people, and I am helping in a local emergency relief organization and a women's rehabilitation cooperative.

The fourth-century desert fathers of whom Thomas Merton wrote admonished one not to seek the easy life, nor vainglory. If a wounded psyche brings on visions of spending one's life as a Mother Teresa, it also enhances an enduring pursuit after pleasure and good times. In fact, I'll accept as much vainglory and hilarity as I can possibly absorb. I voraciously consume good books (and bad books), good food, art, music, the company of our friends and relatives, the pleasure of our surviving daughter and her family, and the humorous, serious, wise and ridiculous experiences of life.

Before his death by execution, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote some final words to his family, the poignancy of which still speaks to me: "I should like to say something to help you in the time of separation that lies ahead... First, nothing can make up for the absence of someone whom we love. We must simply hold out and see it through. That sounds very hard at first, but at the same time, it is a great consolation, for the gap, as long as it remains unfilled, preserves the bonds between us. It is nonsense to say that God fills the gap: he does not fill it, but on the contrary, he keeps it empty and so helps us to keep alive our former communion with each other, even at the cost of pain.

"Secondly: the dearer and richer our memories, the more difficult the separation. But gratitude changes the pangs of memory into a tranquil joy. The beauties of the past are borne, not as a thorn in the flesh, but as a precious gift in themselves."





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## **Jonestown, Guyana 1988**

**Hugh E. Vandeyar**

Flying over the land near Port Kaituma in the North West District of Guyana, where Jonestown once proudly stood, the only indication to the keen observer — and one who had been there before — is a spread of lush green vegetation. The spot is greener there than the surrounding area. Agricultural experts have suggested that this is so because of the permanent crops planted there, such as bananas and plantains, which are in abundance. In addition, supplies of fertilizer and agro-chemicals stored there by Peoples Temple for the community's use have since been washed over all the land by the heavy tropical rainstorms which occur throughout the year.

Guyanese forest dwellers, in particular the Amerindians, are inherently superstitious, so only the bravest of inhabitants of the Matthews Ridge-Arakaka-Port Kaituma area, known as Matarkai, venture into Jonestown. There may be a superstition that the place is haunted by the souls of those poor Americans who cannot find the way back to the United States and are doomed to roam Jonestown forever.

Anything of value, anything abandoned there in 1978 that the residents of the area could have found some use for, has long since been taken away. The people know this. My attempts to get into Jonestown this fall all met with the same response from both government officials and area residents. They said that it was a waste of time and effort. And it was.

It is three miles along a rough road from the Port Kaituma airstrip to the Jonestown area, then another three miles along an even rougher track to the old settlement itself. But that track is now covered with dense bush, and nothing can be seen of Jonestown itself but thick jungle. Guyana Defense Force officers attached to the Matarkai project

**Jonestown, Guyana 1978**

there refer to this type of bush as secondary jungle. Army men said that this secondary jungle has reclaimed Jonestown, the result of the area's previous cultivation with crops left to grow untended. This type of growth is always thicker than original jungle, they point out.

Jonestown was established in 1974 on a 3,000-acre tract of land leased by the Peoples Temple from the Guyana government. The government granted a long-term lease, as it had done in numerous other situations, in keeping with its agricultural development policy. The Temple had applied for 25,000 acres, but was only allotted 3,000. Some 900 acres of this land had been cleared and were in various stages of cultivation at the time the tragedy shook Guyana and the world on November 18, 1978.

At a news conference held November 20 that same year, Guyana's Minister of Information, Ms. Shirley Field-Ridley (now deceased), explained that the government had been pursuing a "very liberal policy of land utilization." Taking into account that the country comprised 83,000 square miles, with a population of under one million, the government had invited several groups and individuals to come in and help develop the hinterland. As a result, people from the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, and the United States had responded.

The minister noted that Peoples Temple had established a reputation of being good farmers and good citizens generally. There had been

no problems with the group before. They had obeyed the laws and regulations of the country, she said. The community grew a variety of crops and reared livestock. The group's attitude enabled individuals to take advantage of the agricultural potential of the area.

Although it's been said that many members wanted to leave Jonestown prior to November 18, this doesn't seem to have been the case. For example, on November 21, John Bushnell, a U.S. State Department spokesman, said that during four visits during 1978 to the settlement, U.S. consular officials had personally interviewed some 75 persons living there. None had complained of anything wrong. In fact, none of those interviewed had shown any interest in wanting to leave, despite offers of assistance being made to them.

One prominent former Guyana government official who was involved in helping to settle the members of Peoples Temple in Jonestown still speaks highly of Jim Jones and what he tried to do. Henry Cameron, retired Chief Community Development Officer and a pioneer in this field, was called out of retirement and sent to the area as Project Manager for the Matarkai Land Development project, in which Jonestown was located. He recalls several meetings, both formal and informal, with Jim Jones and members of the Temple. "When Jim Jones and his people came to the area, I had been instructed by the government to give them all the help they needed. And I did so. Besides, I found them good, hardworking, industrious people."

Cameron, who has been honored with Guyana's "Golden Arrow of Achievement" for outstanding service, described Jones' plans. "He wanted to build a haven for his people who were faced with racial problems... A place where all people could live in peace." He adds that Jones tried to establish a multi-racial community to move his followers away from the pressures and struggles of life in North America. "He wanted to get the blacks in particular away from the exploitation and suffering they were subjected to in America, and resettle them in a model community."

The settlement projections were impressive. Jim Jones wanted to carve a township from raw jungle, and left much evidence of this. Acres of land were cleared, crops grew in the fields, livestock raised for food, buildings erected, various items produced. But, Cameron concluded, "he flattered to deceive." I could feel the genuine regret in the voice of this man who had done so much to help develop the Matarkai area and who had great hopes for the Jonestown project.

"Let me take the liberty of saying," he finished, "that many of us

admired the spirit which motivated the members of the Temple to come to the North West District in Guyana to set up their community... Bishop Jones should be admired for the strong sense of belonging he gave people. He was strong, intelligent and had the personality and gift which enabled him to secure the devotion of many people. His ability cannot be overlooked in any judgment which society would place on him."

One of Guyana's leading trade unionists seconds Cameron's thoughts. Gordon Todd, President of the large and militant Clerical and Commercial Workers Union told me, "The Jonestown project, as advertised, promised a lot of hope for a new type of development in Guyana. One got the impression that here was a well-meaning group seeking to establish a settlement in the Guyana jungle, and making a contribution to the country's development."

Todd observes that the Guyanese are highly religious, be they Hindu, Muslim, or Christian. That fact that Peoples Temple came as a religious group, helped warm Guyanese feeling towards them. Looking at it from ten years' distance, "one finds it startling that officials of the Guyana government wanted to keep their distance from Jonestown. This raises a number of issues in my mind.

"What were the processes which Peoples Temple would have had to go through before Jonestown was established?" Todd asks. "And what contacts were established between the Guyana and the U.S. governments about the populating by American citizens of territory that is under dispute with neighboring Venezuela? The whole catastrophe has left a bitter taste, because this was the largest peace-time tragedy in modern times."

Todd feels Guyana's national leaders should be reviewing the events of a decade ago in our hinterland because many questions are unanswered. It is important to check the bona fides of any foreign groups seeking to establish similar projects here in Guyana. People in the Matarkai region looked at the project as an extension of their own efforts to develop the interior. "They would now regard persons going to that area with a high degree of suspicion," Todd remarks.

In addition, there is "no doubt that the agony of the dead may still be bothering these people — some of whom had relatives involved who also lost their lives. It was a traumatic experience." Todd believes it would be difficult to rehabilitate the region, but admits that something is necessary to counter the effects of Jonestown, and "put it in second place, away from the minds of people, give the depression a lift, and generally develop the area."



**Jim Jones and the pioneers of Jonestown**

Not even the intervening decade can wipe out the memory of Jonestown, though, the settlement built with hands of love and fashioned by a religious courage and determination. These American citizens had nothing to lose and something to prove: that they could create a model township in the South American jungle that would blossom and bear fruit, by the grace of God. For doesn't the Bible say that God helps those who help themselves? And were not the believers in Peoples Temple doing just that?

Perhaps Pastor Jones had regarded himself as a modern day Moses, sent by God to lead his people — the members of the Temple and whoever else would follow, those who were disillusioned with their unhappy lot in America — to a new land. For certainly the tract of virgin territory in which he staked his claim was reminiscent of a biblical Promised Land.

Perhaps Pastor Jones had been influenced by the Persian poet Omar Khayyam who, in one of his more romantically inspired moments, said: "Should thou and I with fate conspire to overthrow this sorry scheme of things entire, would we not shatter it to bits, and then remould it nearer to the heart's desire?!" For the Jonestown community was as much a society patterned on his principles and his desires as much as it represented a paradise for his followers.



History will recall that this modern-day messiah did just that: he built and moulded an entire community of some 1000 souls nearer to his heart's desire. He did it his way, just as he wanted to, totally and completely. And none can deny that Jonestown was a thriving agricultural community made more or less self-sufficient with-in a



**Jonestown resident, 1978**

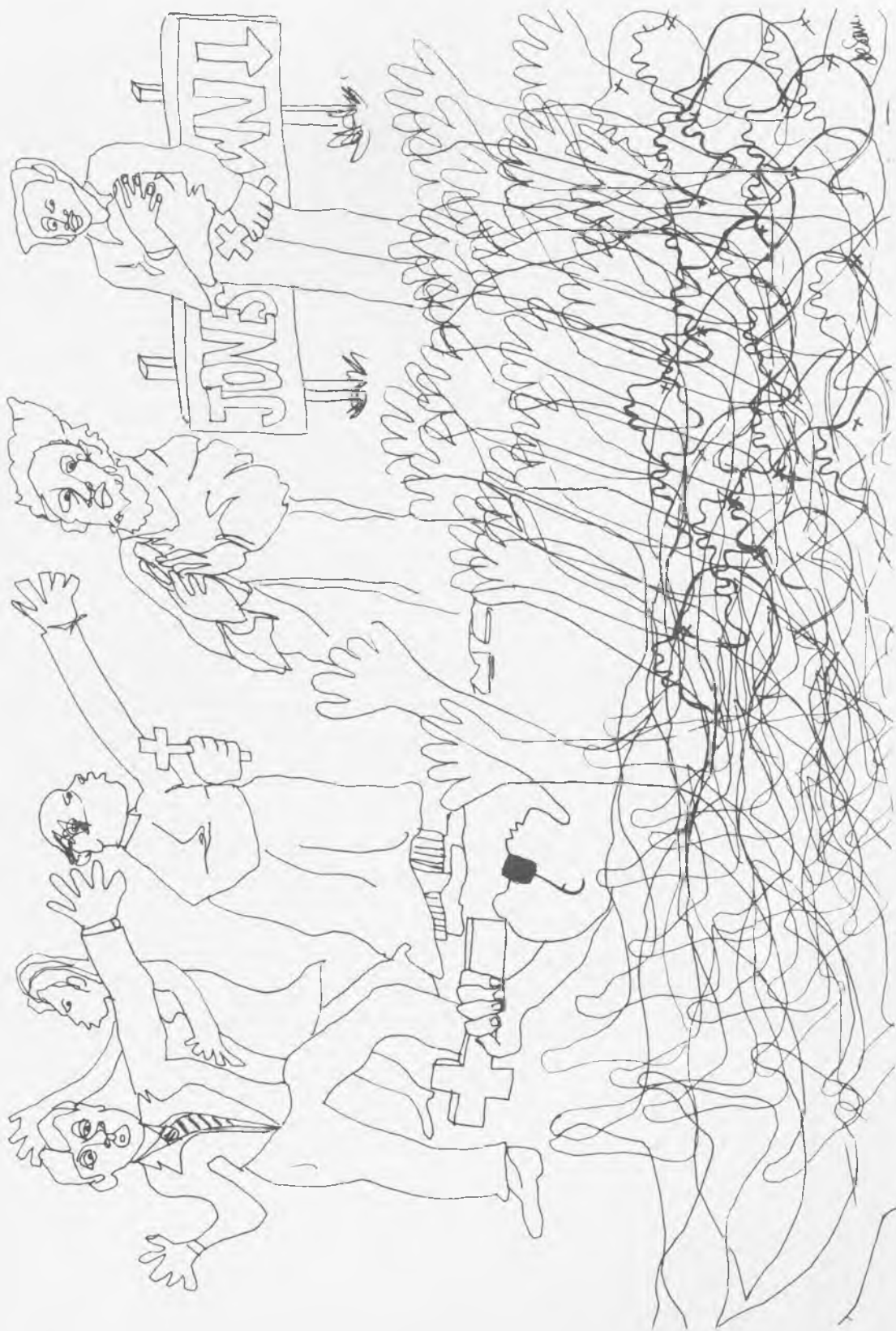
very few years. No, none can deny that it was a model masterpiece of what an agricultural cooperative community should be, in this Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

But then the self-styled messiah went wrong. It is said he became paranoid because of his success with the project and because of his heavy drug use due to a terminal illness. Whatever the reason, he committed several sins against his fellow man and against his God. His sacred settlement became a sorry sight of sinful, sappy servitude.

And as the Lord gaveth, the Lord taketh away. In this case, he took it all away, just as he once destroyed the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

There is hardly any trace of the Jonestown settlement left today. It is all gone. The jungle has reclaimed everything as its own. The community that once thrived has turned into the town that God forgot.





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## Life Ten Years After Jonestown: The Peoples Temple Legacy

Kathy Barbour

I never felt the things Jim Jones was trying to teach us until after Jonestown. They were intellectual concepts with which I agreed and to which I gave my support, but as far as internalized, emotional identification with victims of injustice, that I date from 1978. Before then, pressure came from Jim. After that, events gradually combined to force a return to activism, a process which continues. I didn't plan it this way. In fact, after Jonestown, my only determination was to use nothing but my own observation as a basis for premises and conclusions, even if it meant scrapping cherished beliefs, revising assumptions, changing course.

I soon became what's now called a news junkie. At one time or another, I have seen public disclosure of all the injustices which drove Jim — and by extension, us. His concern about stockpiles of nuclear weapons, the accumulation of environmental toxins, use of harmful chemicals, food additives and the like, is increasingly being matched by that of society at large. His fears of government repression of blacks have not been realized, but neither were they unfounded, as disclosures by *The Miami Herald* and the *Nation* on the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the King Albert plan have shown. The International Monetary Fund, Interpol, the now-disbanded Trilateral Commission, all entered the realm of public knowledge. U.S. government complicity in the fall of Allende and support of repression in Central and South America has been acknowledged. The case of the Christic Institute alleges a forty-year history of intelligence and military abuses. Jacob Holdt, in his book *American Pictures* (Copenhagen, 1985) has documented the modern-day slavery of southern farmworkers and the

pervasive corporate and social reinforcements of racism, sexism, classism and economic disparity in U.S. society. Many of the political objectives of Peoples Temple were addressed in the campaigns of Jesse Jackson, who awakened hope across the country. In light of the last ten years, Jim Jones now seems to have been just ahead of his time.

I set three basic goals for myself following November 18, 1978. First, not to ever go back to being "white" and accepting the privileges and favors of society, until poverty and racism became dim memories. The second was to vindicate those who died in Jonestown by validating their ideals. The third was to do my part, whatever it may be, to bring the world to the point where universal brotherhood and equality are attainable goals, not just dreams.

Reflecting on my eight years with the Temple in Redwood Valley and San Francisco — I never went to Guyana — I tried to understand what weaknesses, both structural and ideological, brought such a good thing to such a bad end. The irony was that we, the ultimate rationalists, had committed the ultimate irrationality; that, having exposed and derided the contradictions, shortcomings and inadequacies of every religious belief, we were then either convinced or coerced to believe to the point of extinction.

One thing seemed obvious: the isolation we had wanted so much had done us in. So it was with conscious intent that I transferred my identification to American society, and to the world. Its people became my larger family. This was easy, as everyone I met after November 18 reminded me of someone who died: the Temple membership had been that inclusive in ages, races, backgrounds and personalities. I wanted no part of the group mentality which holds the insider superior to the outsider, that mental line between "us" and "them" without which no war or act of oppression can occur. I determined that my only membership would be in the human race. It seemed the only way to preclude the possibility of another group mentality.

How I wish the frantic efforts of those who tried to drag Jim out of Jonestown had succeeded! It would have been the best thing that could have happened to us. Fighting it out in public, under the glare of public scrutiny and judgment, would only have strengthened those who were committed, discouraged those who weren't, and would in the end have succeeded, at least as well as the suicides have failed, to realize our stated goals.

We had taken great pains to isolate ourselves in the U.S., the better to allow our alternative society to function, to reinforce our disci-

pline, and to protect us from invasions and intrusions by the CIA, the National Guard, the press, the local welfare office, the school board. When I think about the practices that reinforced this, dating back to 1970, a chicken-and-egg question keeps returning: Had secrecy about this or that been so necessary, or had further isolation been the real intent? Had mass suicide been the goal all along, and did Jim make the decision when he feared he would soon be too weak to supervise, knowing that without his command, it would never happen? Had he been convinced that suicide was the only way to etch forever onto the mind of humanity, this model he had labored over at its highest point of development? For thriving we were. It seemed everything had been going better than ever. Had some of the money been put back into food and conveniences for the people in Jonestown, they could have even been comfortable. No one knew there was all that money.

In early 1979, I learned that Jim had once been on the payroll of the CIA. This was not too surprising, and explained his treasure trove of state secrets, which were imparted to us with all due caution. Again I wondered, was this information really so dangerous, or was it our belief in the danger that mattered?

Marshalling all my memories, the case began anew. Could hatred have masqueraded as love? I found that hard to believe. Could Jim have been sent, like the Pied Piper, to take us out? That theory was actually advanced within months of the deaths, on a two-minute recorded message, alleging Jonestown had been the subject of a CIA nerve gas experiment, Jones had been the victim of hypnotic suggestion, etc.

If that were true, though, who had been taken out? We were an eclectic bunch, mostly alike in our devotion to Jim and the principles he espoused. During our time of greatest presence in San Francisco, we routinely refused white radicals admittance to our services. To the city's black population, however, we were quite open and attractive, and our programs created a serious drain on established black churches. Young blacks especially felt their churches had not addressed the social and political issues of the time, and it seemed the best and brightest of them joined us in the years between 1970 and 1977. But radical? Those who were drawn to the Temple usually had no political background; they learned as they went. Though we revered communism and tearfully sang "United Forever," the national anthem of the Soviet Union, we understood these through Jim's perspective. When we welcomed speakers or groups from the USSR, or American radical groups, we showed them the same public relations face we wore for the Disciples of Christ, our

umbrella denomination. There would have been panic, had a local communist desired membership!

Conversely, I know of only one person who, shortly after Jonestown, sought membership in the Communist Party. They immediately rebuffed her overtures.

We were aware of ourselves as a unique package, practicing a new religion — “JIM-ism” — although we would have cringed to call it that. And our “communism” and its trappings, was that another tool for isolation? It was certainly cited as the reason for most of it.

Within the bubble, there were so many rewards that returning to life on the outside seemed inconceivable. Through a reversal of the “top-down” philosophy which characterizes traditional thinking, we issued a clean slate to every person who came in. Every sin and shortcoming were laid at the feet of society, and a rush of acceptance, love, security and lifetime support were offered. It set the stage for change in people, and there were transformations. Fulltime activity for the cause, the levying of disciplinary measures, all helped peel off the outer layer of habits, activities and commitments which had previously defined us. Everything, in comparison to the Temple, seemed to have been a trivial pursuit.

We experienced great joy. I remember reading on a scrap of paper in Tim Stoen’s kitchen in 1971, “The highest sensual perception is the feeling of truth.” That is the closest I can express in words, the emotional bond we shared in our three weekly services. Racial, educational, age and other cosmetic differences dimmed, blurred and disappeared altogether, as our attention centered on character. Whether the focus of a service was on an international issue or an individual event, Jim had a way of making it terribly, personally, relevant.

As an example: a senior citizen told Jim of an incident with her employer. She brought a bushel of ironed clothes, walking miles with the heavy load. The employer, a young white woman, threw the bushel on the ground, flinging clothes into the mud. “It’s not clean,” she shrieked. “Take it back and do it again!” This episode became part of our catechism, to be relived again and again.

Jim then asked the senior to stand. My initial reaction — she was very dark, square of build, ugly — returned to hit me full force, so that I had to struggle for control. I had never *seen* her. Jim must have been bellowing exactly that: “She has been coming to services for a year, and some of you have never spoken to her!” He vented his fury over this

injustice. We screamed and applauded our appreciation. Forever after, I treated this woman as a queen.

Through a thousand incidents like this one, we reached near-absolute unity and harmony at the end of every service. Processing of society's injury through judgment, resolution and action was at once our primary worship and our therapy. We affirmed our commitment to each other. At the most emotional moments, we swore to die for each other.

The chicken or the egg?

These were my thoughts and questions shortly after the tragedy. They are the same today. They await a larger discussion, with other insights, that can only take place in the suspension of judgment, at least the kind of judgment that seized on Jonestown as the embodiment of ultimate evil.

Immediately following the suicides, I began wondering how such a community could be built again, openly, on a voluntary basis. It preoccupies me today, because it seems so clear, ten years later, that so much we had to give is now, more than ever, urgently needed.

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It's 1979. I register with a temporary service and start working for the management consulting department of a posh accounting firm. "Start with the belly of the beast," I think, and find to my satisfaction that my self-taught typing and office experience from the Temple have prepared me well for the job. I find the businesspeople nice and professional, and the bosses admirable men, easygoing and considerate. I also begin to sense the many pressures that combine to give businesses and industries a life of their own, with "interests" that must be served, even at the expense of thousands of people.

I think of the senior secretary at the other end of the hall as a slave. She's emaciated, frenetic, a chain-smoker. She shows off the diamond bracelet she got from some Vice President. Her every story is about one of her superiors. She knows everything, and hopes her knowledge will enable her to keep her job when she gets older. Before my three-month assignment ends, I too have started smoking again.

The reunion with my large family in Warren, Ohio in March 1979 is emotional. I experience an intensity of feeling — unconditional love and the thrill of similarity — that is unlike any I've felt for a long time. My little brothers and sisters, pre-adolescent when last we met, are



grown, beautiful, confident, intelligent. They love each other so much. They love me. I had not expected anything like this. For some reason, I had not expected anything.

I am so grateful we were separated during my years in the Temple. *I would have wanted them to come. They would have wanted to be there.* Suddenly I cannot stop crying, thinking of all those who had lost sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, realizing anew that this has hurt some much, much more than it had me.

I had lost a way of life I loved, and still see as an ideal form of social organization: communalism. Sharing. The extended family. I had thought of it as my family, but now I knew there were differences in degree. I had lost friends, but I was not terribly close to anybody. I had joined the Temple with a companion, Dick Tropp, and Jim had pretended to marry us, but relationships were discouraged, and ours was effectively snuffed by church policy many years before the suicides.

For good reasons I had no real friends in the Temple. I was the prototypical "organization man," and in that environment, laden as it was with swift collective judgment, I played it safe. In an atmosphere where any form of competition was a no-no, there was nonetheless a mad scramble to be noticed by Jim and, by extension, those close to him. I participated in this wholeheartedly, and remember both ingratiating behavior to some and abuses of power, when it was mine to wield.

Threads of the past re-emerge in Ohio, forgotten landmarks from an earlier consciousness which let me see my experience in the Temple as a continuation of a course that started long before 1970. My disgust and hatred for the role intended for me as a woman; my first love, which broke all the rules; how proud I was to consider myself an outlaw when, in 1965, I boarded a bus to New York City, intending to leave behind forever a middle-class existence with all its trappings.

So the Temple had not made me, but rather built on what was already there, burned away dross, disciplined and educated me, and placed my rebellion in a comprehensive perspective.

On November 19, 1979, a year and a day after the deaths, I marry Cordell Barbour in an informal ceremony at San Francisco City Hall. Archie and Rosie Ijames beam on as the judge stammers through the ceremony. Cordell is from Trinidad and is a street musician, playing the steel drums he makes on Fisherman's Wharf. I discover an integrity of character in Cordell, a nobility unlike anything I have seen in American men. I fall in love with him just about at first sight, and it is clinched when, leafing through the book *Reggae Bloodlines*, he sees a locksmith

praying and bursts out: "Black mon ha' no business with his hands together! Ain't done him no good yet!"

He shows me a picture of his house in Trinidad. The large shack, perched on a steep hillside, crowded by others, is covered with slogans. I read each sign, asking questions when the meaning is not clear. One says: "In T'dad, bandits survive while the poor are taught contentment."

His was the poorest neighborhood in Port-of-Spain, and hunger is a vivid memory for him. I never tire of his stories about his childhood. His Christmas: each year for about six years, he got the same toy, a little butterfly on a string, with wings that clicked up and down when he pulled it. For two weeks, it was his. Then it went back on the shelf until the next Christmas. This chokes me up whenever I think about it, and I despise the sentimentality that makes this more real for me than his hunger.

He used to hang around the "pan-yard" as a child, watching the men practice on the steel drums. It was right there the instrument had been invented about the time of his birth — the only musical instrument invented in this century — but its ghetto origins earned it the rigid opposition of the police. In true colonial fashion, the government of Trinidad did not recognize the value of the steel drum until the British noticed it and showed keen interest, a process which took about 15 years. To this day, though, the steel drum remains much the province of fiercely proud and independent men who could be described as a cross between a band of warriors and an order of monks.

Cordell plays the pan like an angel, long intricate passages of classical music — Chopin, Beethoven, Bach — from memory. He taught himself what he knows about music from books at the library, and won a Trinidad-wide competition with a pan solo. He is a hit on the street in San Francisco.

These are some of my happiest days, walking on my lunch hour from the office where I work in San Francisco's financial district, to where Cordell is playing now on Geary in front of Macy's. I buy him a cup of hot chocolate, and watch him play and talk to the people who pause before him. About once a week, Cordell says, someone tells him, "Bach should be alive to hear this." I finally hear it for myself, from an old man with what I believe is an Eastern European accent.

Cordell and I join my family for the annual summer vacation in Ohio that year. My Italian mother enfolds him in her warmest hug, and a rapport is born that lasts to this day. She, like him, is a person of rocklike character. Those kind of people must recognize each other, I guess.

He is popular with everyone who matters, my younger siblings, nieces and nephews, some of the older members of the family. They talk with him about Trinidad, about his philosophy. I'm in high heaven, for the second time, visiting my family in Ohio.

The next morning, my Dad, the inveterate racist, is brought from the rest home to be with us. He and Cordell meet in the middle of the sunny front room. Cordell gamely proffers his hand — I have warned him — and says, "Hi, Dad."

My Dad's hands both clutch his walking cane. He chuckles, his head bobbing from Cordell to me. He mutters, "What's his name, or does he have a name?"

I'm doing the honors. I say firmly, three times, "His name is Cordell, Dad."

"Hello, Cordell," my father says finally, and they shake hands. All is well.

My father is infinitely more likeable after his stroke. Lapsing in and out of senility, his face crumples in mid-sentence as if some volcanic emotional chord had been stirred. Sobs shake him before he finds his place in his thoughts again. My medical-professional brother has a fancy name for that, and dismisses it as being without meaning. I think it happens when thought jars the memory of an opportunity not taken, to show love. I am a lot like my Dad, I begin to realize.

We share Mom's two-bedroom cabin, and tonight Dad is badgering her. He accuses her of everything under the sun. She patiently wards him off, tolerating him. When I visited over a year ago, he was still living at home. The decision to commit him was based on his need for constant professional care, but was eased by the fact that he divided his remaining energy and capacity for independent action between this unrelenting hostility towards my mother, and trying to escape when the path to the door was unguarded. He hasn't resigned himself to his life in the rest home. It is painful to hear, under the words he is saying, how badly he wants her to love him now. But he killed the chance for that long ago.

Cordell holds a 40-minute recital on the steel drum the next night. My father calls me over afterward and soberly tells me, "Kathy, I'm impressed. He has to be an engineer to make one of those, and a genius to play it like that." Dad is unusually lucid. I start to tell him how Cordell taught himself music. His face contorts in a soundless, weeping spasm. We go on talking. Dad and I are tight from then on.

When the British departed Trinidad, the population left behind was sophisticated, but economically disparate — black on black oppres-

sion. So Cordell is not racist. In fact, like most West Indians, he is comparatively free of the emotional albatross that weighs on both blacks and whites in the U.S. There is no truer statement than this: Slavery cripples both master and slave. Seemingly unaware of racism around him, unaffected by it when he meets it, he doesn't make it his problem. This helps my family to welcome him, to make that week a time of incredible richness, and, I mistakenly think, an indicator of things to come.

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I enjoy my work with the small consulting company, drawing graphs and charts, but I am disturbed by what I occasionally have to do. Presented with an opportunity by a young consultant foolish enough to ask my opinion about a client company based in San Salvador, I reply that, if it were up to me, I'd make sure none of the client's plans ever got off the ground. Taken aback, the consultant says, "But you're doing nice charts for them." "That's my job," I say flatly, glad that my supervisor is in the room to hear.

I come to consider prostitution — activity performed for money that is at odds with one's conscience — as an inevitable part of any profession. At the same time, the more I learn about the business ethic as a foundation, the more I am impressed with its capabilities for accommodating freedom of expression, for arriving at a compromise, for anticipating and responding to change. It is, after all, our system, hence a vehicle, waiting to be used.

The firm where I work has a history of spinning off entrepreneurs. In 1982, at the height of inflation and with the threat of recession haunting everyone, I decide to make it on my own as a free-lance graphic artist and illustrator.

On my own, a personality free of subordination takes over. Selling my talents is unexpectedly easy. Indeed, the danger I face is appearing fully capable to take on jobs I have no idea how to do. Having learned these skills, too, in the Peoples Temple print shop, I have only an amorphous idea of what a graphic artist is. Luckily, the graphics field is also amorphous, unwieldy from rapid growth, deluged by a rising flood of new technology — most recently computerized — into the printing industry.

Over time, I find I compare favorably with others in my field, and business improves steadily for the next two years. When I need inspira-

tion, I wander across the street to Precita Park and gaze at the mural on the school.

It is the most beautiful painting I have ever seen. Its twin motifs tower over the schoolyard, spiral patterns adorned with birds and butterflies in vibrating astral colors. On one side a giant man and woman face each other, eye to eye, mouth to mouth. She is blonde, dressed in a flowing, sparkling green robe. He is black and wears what look like Aztec garments. Behind them, a massive tree spreads.

On the other side is pictured a great gathering. I learn later that the artist, Susan Cervantes, brought all of the people of the neighborhood into the park for the painting. There are people playing, children running, dogs frolicking, musicians, hippies, seniors in every color of the rainbow.

And between the two halves of the painting, this Aztec poem:

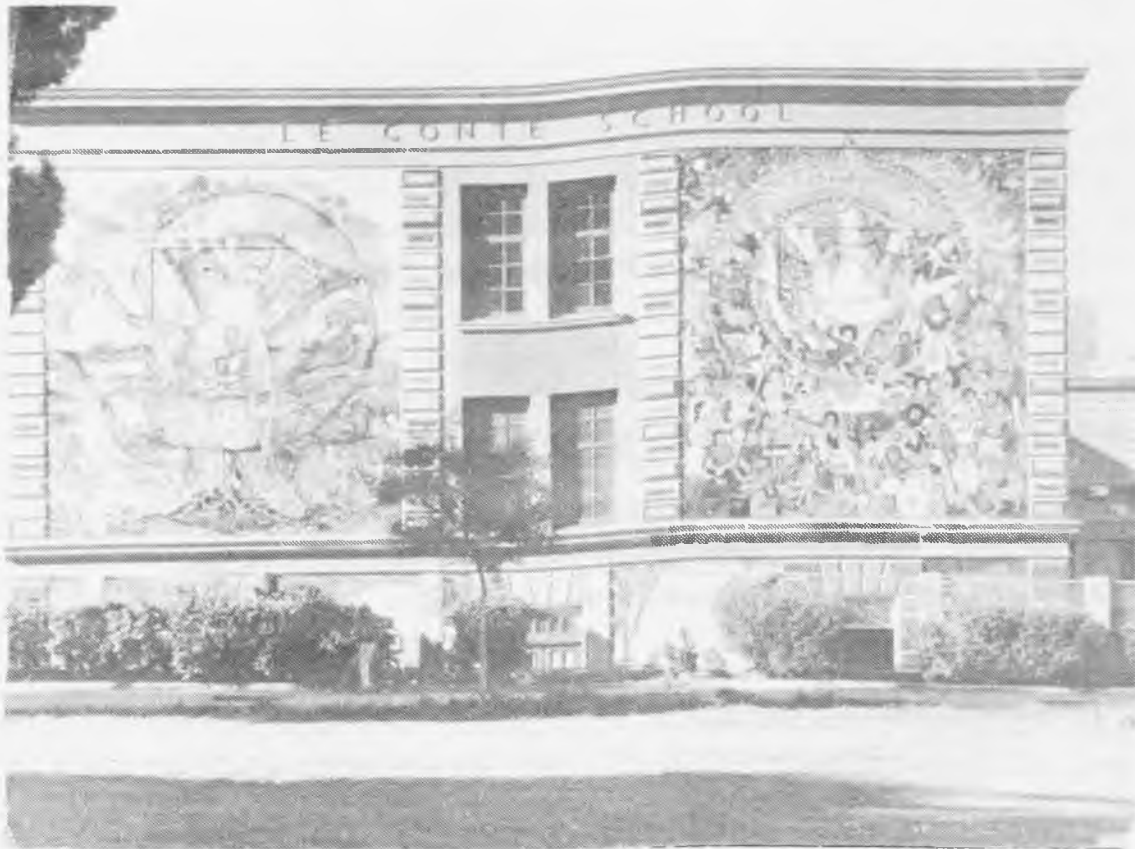
Wind rising, wind falling  
 Sun rising, sun falling  
 Clouds rising, lightning falling  
 Life rising, death falling  
 Tide rising, tide falling  
 Man rising, man falling  
 Tree of Life rising, rising, rising

My sister comes to visit, and I show her the mural. "I don't believe they painted this on an elementary school." She says it twice. I am slightly disturbed by it, but I don't say anything. "Only in San Francisco," she adds. So I am forewarned.

I am so incredibly naive.

Cordell and I are already talking about moving to Ohio. Our landlord has put the house up for sale, and rents skyrocket. Finding another place in San Francisco where Cordell can work seems hopeless. Angrily, I think: "If they're going to make it so expensive to live here, they'll just lose us!"

For months, there has been intermittent word about renewed black resistance in South Africa. Since 1976, when *Peoples Forum*, the Peoples Temple newspaper, ran a full page of photographs of the Soweto massacre — and was the only paper in the Bay Area to do so — the issue of South Africa has burned in my gut. Over the intervening years, it has been hard to find any news about this country where good and evil stand more clearly delineated than anywhere on earth. I know news is being



*Courtesy of Precita Eyes Mural Arts Center*

suppressed. I am so sure that if word just gets through, if people in this country can understand what is happening there, they will rise as one and demand — and somehow accomplish — the end to apartheid. Of this I am certain.

The word “yuppie” has just been coined, and I find everything I hate in a word: the relentless race for status, middle-class lifestyle, empty and wasteful materialism. I blame it for the current ignorance and apathy of my generation, allowing savagery in El Salvador, financial and military support for South Africa. They couldn’t care less, I think bitterly, as long as someone else’s blood is being spilled.

It’s a week after the bombing of the Marine compound in Lebanon. Our troops are invading Grenada, and the newscaster gleefully announces the number of Cubans killed. I am sick. When did we declare war on Cuba? And who in hell are the Rangers, anyway?

Up until then, I’d written letters for Amnesty International and fired off occasional tirades to newspaper editors or TV shows. Since 1978, I’d listened to newscasts, documentaries, and talk shows, all day and into the night. My one obsession is to accurately gauge the state of mind of the

people. So I fume over the assumption that people in front of the tube just want to be glutted with sensation. Working at home, I watch Donohue every day, and I *know* that if it were on prime time, it would shut down its competition. There are too many things on which people agree: environmental poisoning; South Africa; nuclear annihilation; giving the homeless a home; women's wages; child care. As polarization over abortion grows, I see the pro-life forces being used to prevent all women from joining together to work for pay equity and other all-encompassing concerns.

The Pope sets a timetable for nuclear destruction, unless the current course is changed. Pondering the effect this will have on the people of the world, I am seized by a desire to plunge into the arena of human affairs.

The Pope's pronouncement seems to be the first ripple on the placid surface of public discussion. The calm is artificial, masking the silent throes of a society in the process of polarization, stratification, militarization. With this ripple I anticipate the opening of a floodgate. Contradictions will be bared, and for the first time, I can envision mounting public concern, armed by available information, exercising its prerogative to change what is seen to be a disastrous course.

This little inspiration will motivate all my activist efforts over the next five years. I see the curve of rising human awareness racing to an intersection with the curve of irrevocable consequences — nuclear, environmental, biological, social. We must change, or we will die. Awareness or apocalypse, it's our choice. We now have a universal language: English. We have an electronic communications industry which can reach every corner of the earth. These are the ingredients for a world awakening.

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Jesse Jackson declares his candidacy in the 1984 presidential race, and founds the Rainbow Coalition. There is hope. A white Republican woman confides to me, "There'd be no question if he were white." So she sees it too.

From the beginning, I believe that Jackson can win. My first concern is how well his campaign will reach out to white voters. My second is, will the communications experts allow others to believe he can win? Jesse gets a lot of TV coverage. Every time the camera focuses on him, he says something about South Africa. I am so grateful for that.



I attend my first Rainbow Coalition meeting at Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco in April 1984. I halfway expect to see all the former members of Peoples Temple there. Of course, I am the only one.

I am right about something else I thought I'd find: the leadership does not know the potential of its movement. The pastor of Glide, Cecil Williams, conducts the meeting. He's fine, as reverends go, but a bit of a bullshitter. I later learn he was for Mondale at the time of the meeting, and had just provided some interim "titular" leadership. There is an impatient expectancy on the floor, matched by irritation at the podium. I've come to recognize this as the usual "Response to the Grassroots Response."

I paint signs for Jesse, canvass my neighborhood, go to rallies. The campaign, now under inspired congressional district leadership, moves rapidly, invigorated by a rich infusion of racial groups: Asians, Filipinos, blacks, Hispanics, seniors. And when Jesse comes to town, the *San Francisco Chronicle* writes that he "found his rainbow coalition" there.

For years afterward, I cannot tell this simple story without breaking down. I experience some very high points, reminiscent of my life in the Temple, working for the campaign. The 1984 convention is disappointing, but then, I had never expected anything from the Democratic Party. I know Jesse's strength lies in his appeal to the people. As the convention closes, I go home to pack. We are moving to Ohio.

I have a dream before we go. I am living on a bridge, in a little room built into one of the pillars. In the gray morning, I watch cars come and go as if somehow all that movement is my responsibility. I am tending the bridge.

I know before we go to Ohio that the state has a depressed economy, that there will be pressures, and that people in suffering are not always the most pleasant. But, I figure, we can help out there. I am so incredibly naive.

We settle in Cleveland in September. It's a disaster from the start. Searching for a place to live, we discover a geographic Johannesburg, without the signs. There is a despondency about the city that eludes me. Following the cheap rent, we get a roomy first-floor flat on the west side. I spend a month painting and patching outside shingles so I can open my business at home. As a final touch, I paint the front porch in camouflage. This is a hit with the neighborhood kids!

The people of Cleveland have a hard time dealing with an interracial couple, which is our first and foremost identification to them. We



get zombie stares in stores and on the street. We stop shopping together. "You knew you were coming to the trenches," I remind myself. The result is that, while in Cleveland, I am On Duty. It is absolutely inescapable, as I find out more and more what we are faced with.

Cordell tells me that whenever he goes to the Sears store, the buzzer sounds to call security. I believe he must be imagining things, so we go to Sears together. We look at electric razors. The buzzer sounds, three loud blasts, like a school fire drill alarm. It sounds again after an interval of silence, and then again. Ten minutes later, with the buzzer still sounding, a circle of men rings Cordell. I ask one of the managers about the buzzer. He says it's a "staff bell."

When I relate this incident to others and try to convince them it is a store tactic to harass black customers, no one believes me, either. I cheer when the store closes.

Cordell plays his pan on the front porch one warm night in November. The cars never slow down. When drivers stop for the light, few notice the curiosity above the blare of their radios. I watch from inside the house. The darkness beyond the porch seems thick enough to swallow anything. I wonder if Cordell realizes as well as I do, just how much ignorance surrounds us. A thought keeps coming; I keep pushing it away. It says, "This is the last time they'll hear him play."

I work temporary jobs downtown, to make some money and to get a feel for another part of the city. When I hear the word "vivacious" as a requirement for some of the jobs, I hasten to object. "Oh," says the counselor, "that just means 'friendly.'"

Still, I see a high level of sexism in the downtown offices, both practiced and tolerated. Pink collar wages are low, and the concept of female office worker as bait seems unquestioned, especially by women.

All my dreams are of fighting my way through tangled woods, slogging through muddy, oily swamps, wandering through deserted campgrounds. I start letters and don't finish them. It is too depressing to write about.

Leaving the temporary jobs to start my own business, I find the anti-apartheid movement instead, and through it, Orange Blossom Press, a worker-owned cooperative print shop. They need a bindery person; I learned to run a folder in the Temple print shop. Once again, I launch a career based on skills I learned there.

Orange Blossom Press is a haven for me. I at least have put down roots. I pour all my enthusiasm and experience in cooperation into the

job. The nicest part about it is being able to talk with my co-workers about news and political developments. They are all intelligent and aware. They advise me to move to Cleveland Heights.

I become much more confrontational in Cleveland, as I find myself compelled again and again to butt heads with rigid beliefs, intransigent positions. I assail resignation, acceptance, the feeling that things will never change. I see red when I hear, "It's the same everywhere." There is some truth in this, but they'll know it over my dead body. It's the only leverage I have. I get mad when they say I should move to Cleveland Heights. "That's why the west side is such a miserable hole!" I say. "All you intelligentsia deserted the hillbillies, and look what you've got now."

Like the four-star hotels in South Africa, the integrated suburbs of Cleveland are expensive.

I begin to understand Cleveland's image problem. Anyone who can afford to leave, does. The adventurous, the open-minded, the talented, the beautiful all go. Students do their time and split. Over 20 years this drain has continued, until the streets are mostly empty, or peopled with those who can't go, or fear they won't be able to make it anyplace else.

A rigid cult of normality prevails, over the city, over the neighborhoods, over the suburbs, a mask under which the usual perversions seethe. Storms of contention rage over the landscape. Everyone is angry about something here, and at someone. In that, I do join them.

Cordell sells no drums here. He withdraws completely, going out only to play the lottery. He cooks and takes care of us. My father has died, and we don't see the family much anymore, only my mother from time to time. Our landlord refuses to enter the premises to do the repairs while Cordell is there. When Cordell complains to his councilman and city agencies, he is told, "Why don't you move?"

Finally, after two years, we do move, from our house in what I now call "lower Appalachia" to East Cleveland, a mostly black suburb. There I discover the city's large black middle class. Now living in the 21st Congressional District, I begin to appreciate the enviable power base built by and for the black community. I would forgive the power brokers of the black machine — probably the only visible machine in Cleveland — but for their relentless opposition to progressive black candidates, especially women. One woman candidate is subjected to a hate campaign, because she is married to a white man! In spite of their power, the

leaders appear to have accepted the limits of their turf, and don't take issue with racist violence outside their base. In fact, I begin to suspect, it is actually useful to them.

After hearing one black activist college professor boast on a talk show that he oppresses the whites in his class, I realize that blacks have become the whitest people in town. Whereas on the west side, whites either entirely shunned us or, in a few cases, were genuinely friendly, on the east side Cordell gets hostile stares from young black women, and they don't even look at me. When he is out on his own, it's fine. So we continue our pattern of separate movements.

I had seen how vicious and accepted white-on-white prejudice was on the west side. Other whites sneer at hillbillies, curse them to their faces, won't rent to them. Poor whites, many of Appalachian descent, are harder on their spouses and children than on anyone else. With the auto factories and steel mills closed, they straddle an ever-widening gap, with one foot on the minimum wage job, the other in the underground economy. Their children contribute heavily to a school dropout rate of 50%.

I see an opportunity: I know that if these people hear a kind word from another Clevelander, it has to be from someone of color. Can the cycle be broken? I begin to think of poor whites as "the white niggers of Cleveland." But can they be told that?

Plaguing me is my silly tendency to think of these quintessentially social, economic and political problems as business views problems, as opportunities for improvement. But there is a usefulness to this, too. It presumes that human effort, coordinated and directed, can solve the problem; it presumes that all those actively involved desire that the problem be solved. Seen in this perspective, the existing blocks that society has evolved — legal, cultural, social, political — stand clearly outlined like so many spiderwebs in a tunnel, against the light at the end.

Oh yes. One last presumption for this formula: it assumes the possibility of change.

So it seems obvious. The homeless, mostly white, many women and children, flood shelters while empty buildings rot across the landscape. The kids, far from being dumb, see what awaits them here. There are so many minimum wage jobs, and so many more people clamoring for them, that employment agencies scoop them up by the truckload each day and distribute them to the warehouses, assembly plants, and factories where they are used in place of paid labor, and charged their first week's wages for the privilege.

And this in one of the last bastions of trade unionism! But the unions, terrified of losing ground, cling for dear life to their bread-and-butter contracts, striving to keep the dues coming in to maintain their staffs and support the retirees. They cannot possibly reach a hand out to the youth, and the kids know that.

Older women, never imagining how necessary they are, labor at cash registers and lunch counters across the city, presided over by smart young men in suits. Neither the labor movement nor the women's movement will touch them. They are one of many "invisible groups," both to each other, and to those who could help them.

There's a reason. The movements here — and they are many and active — do not want to rock the boat either. They have their prescribed exercise area, and they are grateful for it.

Orange Blossom Press gives me a unique window on the human side of Cleveland. West 25th Street is a miraculous exception, a spoonful from the melting pot, somehow undisturbed. The children from the projects come to the back door of the print shop for free paper and to beg for work. They are the most beautiful children I will meet in Cleveland.

Out on the street, black and white, Middle Eastern, Asian, Latin and Caribbean cultures mingle harmoniously, although one sees terrible suffering here, too. I'm pleased to see many instances of camaraderie between poor whites and blacks, something I had missed in activist circles.

By 1987, I know I should be happy. Society is coming around to my way of thinking. Television talk shows proliferate and inch their way towards prime time. The media are less frightened about airing the Reagan Administration's latest outrages and embarrassments. Still, in the midst of a decision to move back to the West Coast with Cordell, I can't shake the thought that something must be *done* here, *some* improvement made in the midst of all these opportunities.

A Rainbow Coalition starts, and I attend a meeting. I like the mix and think we have the seeds for success. In reality, I am just beginning to learn about divisions in Cleveland.

The Jackson campaign comes to town in February 1988. Suddenly I see what I have been waiting for. Jesse's program will be irresistible to black and white alike. I anticipate the shattering of stereotypes, a revolution in racial relations. I see the example of cross-racial cooperation over common issues amazing the nation, and Cleveland stumbling onto the shining path of real renovation and revitalization, as its stirring example inspires a wave of support for Jackson that

will eventually carry him to the White House. I throw myself into the campaign, divesting myself of job, husband and personal life.

The people of Cleveland don't disappoint me. White liberals by the score come from Cleveland Heights to canvass the west side every weekend. When Jesse wins Michigan, the phones go crazy. Children volunteer and bring their parents. As I'd almost feared to hope, the grassroots response among working women is loud and clear. A high school teacher campaigning for Albert Gore won't conduct voter registration with his class of poor, white youth because, he says, "They're all for Jackson."

Smack up against the assumption of racism, echoes of confrontation come into the office every day. There are incidents, not in poor, white west Cleveland, but from further out in the all-white suburbs. A volunteer's truck is vandalized, a neighbor angrily confronts a woman for putting up a window sign, another woman must stop her volunteer work because of her husband. Racists pick on people who had never given any hint of being political.

The intimidation of our supporters infuriates me. A handful of racists must not dominate public perception. I call for something to raise our profile, to speak specifically to these groups of supporters, to reassure and encourage them, to show them what great company they're in.

Our campaign coordinator is a capable and intense young man from Cleveland's "Little Italy." He patiently hears me out, but has other worries. He's cautious about high profile, and with good reason. He's getting death threats; but much worse, the Jackson campaign on the east side, run by the black machine, is losing no opportunity to stomp, squeeze, insult, and ignore him. He's made it look bad, by putting his campaign in full gear two months before the east side office opens. He's uppity, they complain. I refuse to believe this until its fallout is inescapable — it's costing Jesse votes!

But it's election time, and a well-rehearsed melee is in progress, which everyone but me seems to know about. It's a leadership game, a man's game, wherein territories are fiercely outlined, and all of Cleveland hauled onto the chopping block to reinforce age-old boundaries and antagonisms. The Jackson campaign staff is all men; they are working overtime, unraveling antagonisms, making the "important" contacts. There will be no time to reach out to the sectors I see as the key, the people who are neither organized nor represented. Before the primary, I am saying I will never work with another campaign.

In the wake of it all, I'm a wreck. Leaving the months' chaos piled in the apartment, I drive to the West Coast for two weeks in San Francisco. There I see that the split between the Rainbow Coalition and the Jackson Campaign, which I'd thought was another Cleveland perversity, has become a movement-wide fault, with the black community in the campaign and the undesirables of American society — the gays, the radicals, the women's libbers, the dispossessed — in the Rainbow Coalition. So our happy family of 1984 had been a fleeting occurrence, made possible by the innocence of those days.

Returning to Cleveland to clean up, pack, and write this retrospective, I am determined to end this compulsive activism, this identification with everybody and nobody. Why am I so damned sure I'm right? Why can't I leave it alone? For four years, when someone asked about my political affiliations, I've said "I'm a loose cannon on deck." So the loose cannon has finally shot its load.

Of the ex-Temple members with whom I've kept in touch, I am the only one to be so compulsively disturbed, I'm happy to say. It's an irritating quality, not one conducive to love or friendship, but hopefully part of a larger pattern.

And now, this emotional obsession is all I have left here in Cleveland. I want to kick its ass again and again. Here's why.

Face-to-face, individually, the people of Cleveland are fine. Sincere, hard-working, skilled, idealistic, good. Cleveland's social quilt has patches from all over the world, as well as pieces from every region in the U.S. How many cities can make that claim? To think of society as "black" and "white" is archaic; there are many black societies, and many white ones. The poor must be considered another society, since they are so well separated from the rest. The alienated youth are yet another. Cleveland is a microcosm of the U.S., a rainbow waiting to arise.

It could have happened in the Jackson campaign. In a minute. It was only a simple matter of naming a place and time. We discussed this in the campaign. We all agreed. But planned citywide benefits were frustrated and sabotaged — by leaders of competing movements.

Why do I continue to believe that the recognition and awareness which will save us is just around the corner? No group carries this banner. Radical groups are insignificant, walled in ivory towers, waiting for the system to change before they can do anything. I accuse them of being more comfortable in the habitual posture of opposition than in taking real responsibility for change. Change occurs nonetheless: The strongest forces for revolution in our society today are drugs, rock music

and network TV. So what is this revolution, then?

I'll leave you with one last dream, a waking dream.

Traveling alongside the Cuyahoga River, under the groaning bridges and past the rusted monoliths, remnants of a once-thriving steel industry, I find Cleveland's Yosemite. In this, the true middle ground, no one lives. It is inhabited only by the occasional brick warehouse, empty windows staring out at lush fields and green hillsides that climb up on either side.

I see another Cleveland when I go here. The poor and homeless have taken over this unwanted paradise, assisted by anyone who wants to help. Goats graze, chickens scratch, gardens grow in terraced plots. Skylights pop up on the old brick buildings. Solar water heaters and windmills sprout. Domes and other creative building forms abound. Waste is recycled, potentials realized. Lemonade stand entrepreneurship flourishes, for *this* is a tourist attraction!

Moving out of the city, I see the countryside dotted with these alternative communities, with farms shifting toward labor-intensive organic agriculture.

These communities are not free-form. They share a guiding ethic, simply to give everyone an opportunity to be useful and part of the whole. They are not isolated, but enjoy exchanges, travel, and involvement with the rest of society. They are not racist or homogeneous, but comprised of a predetermined mix of races, ages, and levels of skill. All will sustain a percentage of non-productive members. A central facility will provide child care, meals and other services, as well as making recreational and educational facilities — TV, VCR, computer — available to all. Three bed-and-breakfast suites established for extra income are constantly occupied. Organization is loose enough to ensure privacy, tight enough to mitigate against wife, child, or other abuse.

It's the only sensible thing. Society has become good at passing rules and regulations, piling up on us like pick-up sticks, preventing movement. Our building codes have created traps for indoor pollution. Our plastic culture produces garbage faster than we can find places to dump it. And who has better achieved isolation than the members of the rich and free society, regarding all strangers with suspicion, their fears fanned by the news and embedded in them by their entertainment? Society has become very good at destroying communities. Why can't it help rebuild them?

It is true that, for this dream to work, incomes will have to be

pooled. Resources will have to be shared. Opportunities will have to be made available for all.

This is a patriotic dream. It depends on a simple assertion for its success: that all are created equal, and share a common right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As the U.S. moves into the fast lane, the bottom rung of the ladder, and therefore these rights, are being snatched away and placed out of reach for more and more. Concurrently, well-being, simple trust, and natural surroundings are eluding most of us. There is a connection.

I'm not the first to say this: Our history as a nation has been a series of halting steps towards the realization of the ideals set forth by our founders in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution. And now, when we are closer than we have ever been, now, by some cruel coincidence, we have never been so ready to harden our hearts and ensure our own survival, leaving those in difficulty to fend for themselves, whether or not they can. And we are not suffering. Not yet.





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## **Jonestown: Catalyst for Social Change**

**Robert B. Moore**

On Saturday evening, November 18, 1978, my wife Doris and I sat watching "Lifeline," a medical series which that evening showed the birth of a baby. I had never witnessed such an event.

About ten minutes to eleven, the preview of the up-coming news told of dramatic happenings in Guyana, on the northern coast of South America. There were unconfirmed reports that a U.S. Congressman from the San Francisco area, Leo Ryan, had been shot, and possibly killed by members of a religious commune. Doris and I looked at each other, knowing of our nieces' involvement in the Peoples Temple there.

We were not worried for Carolyn's and Annie's safety. There was no reason to be. In any group of any size there may be a fanatical fringe. Those responsible for the tragedy would be apprehended.

The next afternoon came word over the car radio about stories of mass suicide in Jonestown. My response was pure disbelief. Irresponsible rumors! They persisted into the late evening news, however, and I went to bed worried, worried especially about my brother John and his wife Barbara. Their daughters were the ones living in Guyana.

By Monday the rumors had been confirmed. Although anxious, Doris and I were sure Carolyn and Annie would be in the jungle, having fled the madness. Doris called the White House in Washington, D.C., to encourage the search for survivors. I remember worrying about snakes. Perhaps our nieces were safe in a friendly Indian village.

As the week went along, and the body count increased, our worries deepened. I decided to fly to be with John and Barbara in Reno the day after Thanksgiving. By that Friday, I had come to believe the worst. Too much time had passed without news of survivors. About noon that day word came that several hundred more bodies had been found.

It was clear that almost no one survived. The worst fears were now fact. John and I were in the kitchen getting something to eat. I recall standing at the refrigerator with the door open, looking inside at the food, fighting back tears. I had been dismayed thinking about some problems in the raising of our family. What hope is there if something like this can happen to people like John and Barbara, people who have lived their lives trying to serve God and God's people who were victims of suffering and injustice in life. How could such a family deserve this?

I said to my brother, through my tears, "There are no guarantees in life, are there, John?"

"No," he said, "There aren't."

Understanding undeserved suffering was a problem for me, as for so many others. The problem was God. How could He allow such cataclysmic things to happen?

We were not prepared for Jonestown. In addition to shock, horror, and disbelief, there followed tremendous grief and empathy for John and Barbara and their surviving daughter Becky. I experienced anger, too, as to how Carolyn and Annie could hurt these people.

I also experienced guilt. Carolyn had lived with my parents — her grandparents — and myself for a few months in Long Beach, California, when she was a tiny girl. I still have a snapshot of her peering over the dining room table at home. Now I wonder what was going on behind those eyes even at that early age. Had I said or done something to hurt her at that formative stage?

When she was about five or six, there was a family dinner at Barbara's folks' home in Alhambra. I remember putting a collapsible fork at Carolyn's place, something a loving uncle would do as a tease. Sure enough, she fell for it. Everyone laughed. The joke turned sour, though, when Carolyn fled the room in tears. So now I have to wonder if I am responsible, in part, for what happened so many years later?

We were upheld and strengthened after the tragedy by countless friends and loved ones, as were John and Barbara. A number of letters came: "There are no words to express our feelings as we received news of the sad events in November. We have been praying that the Lord would provide peace and understanding and help you to sustain. We shared with our [spiritual] growth group and all have been praying daily for John and Barbara and the whole family."

Most struggled for words at "a tragedy so profound." Some had insights: "We do have a long way to go on the road to human tenderness,

for there is still hunger and war and tragedy all around." And another, "It was such a horrible mess it is almost too painful to mention."

Our relatives had mixed reactions. One, at a distance from California, wrote that she objected to the newspapers naming names. She was relieved that "no association with the incident has been made with the family here." Another wrote that "We are surely shocked and horrified... We talk of it constantly, just between ourselves...but not to anyone else."

I can well understand the reluctance to have it known that one was connected with this incredible event and "insane" group of people. However, Doris and I decided to share the news with family and friends across the country in our annual Christmas letter. A Canadian friend from seminary days wrote in response, "I appreciate your openness in sharing this burden with us."

On Tuesday, November 21, 1978 — with the news from Guyana still sketchy and the shock wave still building — I attended my weekly Kiwanis Club meeting in Redlands. Walking from the parking lot to the meeting hall, I struggled within myself: "Should I share this with them? No, it's too shocking and embarrassing. Yes, they should know these people were human beings, much like ourselves."

I asked the president if I might have a minute at the beginning of the meeting. I explained to the men our family relationship and asked for their prayers. There was universal shock and bewilderment. There were also expressions of sympathy, then and later.

The decision made so quickly that day opened doors that I had not anticipated. Because of what followed, I have never regretted making the choice to be open about our connection to the tragedy. It would not necessarily be the right decision for everyone, but it was for us. I believe many people were helped in problems they faced because of hearing about Peoples Temple and the catastrophe on a deeper level.

Our local newspaper sent a reporter to interview Doris and myself. Jan Michaels Englebreton visited with us in our living room for two hours, took no notes, and wrote an excellent, accurate, and sensitive account. She wrote a high-quality follow-up story on the first anniversary as well. *The Daily Facts* also published an understanding editorial on December 4, 1978 entitled "Father Pays Tribute." It contained excerpts from a sermon John preached which had been made available to the paper.

As the community became aware of our willingness to discuss

Jonestown, invitations to speak came from churches, area ministers' councils, a local college and other groups. I was interviewed and questioned by callers on Carol Hemingway's talk show on *KABC* in Los Angeles one Sunday evening.

The sharing was therapeutic. However, the inner turmoil was very deep. The problems of evil and undeserved suffering wouldn't go away. The hell that was Jonestown was overwhelming.

When the family met in Reno in early December for the memorial service, we gathered around the dining room table at John and Barbara's for our evening meal together. The table was filled with food from wounded and caring friends. In a talk I was asked to give at the Redlands Kiwanis Club a few weeks later, I said: "You who have been visited by death, heartache, tragedies of sorts, know this power of love as loved ones gather around — as we did in Reno at the time of the memorial service. At grace before dinner, standing around the table holding hands that evening, John offered the prayer, thanking God for the lives of Carolyn, Annie, and Carolyn's four year-old son Kimo. He spoke through his short sobs, and he wasn't alone in the tears. But in the ashes of those moments we powerfully felt the gift of divine and eternal love."

Both at that time, and ever since, while wrestling with the problem of evil's victories in this life, I have had the profound conviction of the greater and eternal power of God's mysterious, but real, love. That moment that evening will always be remembered as a moment of grace.

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I have shared the story of our family's involvement in Jonestown with my "Religion in America" classes at Valley College in San Bernardino, California, every semester since the tragedy. Students almost universally have been kind and sympathetic. Unintended, there has been personal therapy for me as well. Several students have also had family or friends who died in Jonestown. One gave me a program of the memorial service for her beloved granddaughter Dee Dee, an electrocardiogram technician in the Jonestown community.

Two U.S. Air Force personnel told of their involvement in the bodylift from Guyana to the United States. As pictures were shown in class, one recognized his helicopter. He was uncomfortable in talking about his experience. He did say that what he saw there made him physically ill. In particular, he said, he could not get over the deaths of all the children.

The other airman was stationed in Korea and received orders to go on an unknown mission in November 1978. He and the others were not told the nature of the mission. They arrived at the compound and were horrified at what they saw. They thought there must have been a disastrous chemical or nuclear accident. Traumatized by his experience, he later read all he could, to try and understand these people.

As we were talking about how intelligent, well-meaning people could follow a leader so blindly, one student said, "Oh, I can understand that. Millions of us followed Adolph Hitler." She was a German-American immigrant who came to this country in the 1950s. Born in the 1920s, she was in the Hitler Youth movement and later served in the German Navy during the war. She spoke movingly of all Hitler had done for her people and her country in a time of great personal and national suffering. She, and they, worshipped him, even to the time of his death. I asked her what her reaction was when she learned he had died. She said, "Disbelief and grief. I prayed for him."

Other students demonstrated great insight into the Temple. They were "so far down in worry and pain..." "Some never knew freedom, others forgot what it meant..." The Temple was "sort of a sanctuary away from the stifling hopelessness that can overwhelm a people of meager means..." "This could have happened to tell the world to wake up and do something about the problems we have..."

And one student wrote the following letter: "...The first thing that came to my mind when I read and saw what had happen, what could I do that I hadn't done to help more people in our society? Have I fail God, my fellowman in any way to cause some harm? Have I not took a stand when I should have? Is there more I can do now to help this not happening again?

"The next thoughts that came to me were: my daughters, my sons and also my husband could have been killed in Jonestown. In fact our whole family (including me) could have been part of the horror that took place.

"May I say to you now that your family don't need to ever dwell on what happen to Annie, Carolyn and Jim-Jon because your family were and is a good stronge family. You have to be to handle the situations you had to deal with.

"You can be proud of Annie and Carolyn because they were doing what they thought would help people who were in need. They gave of themselves the way Jesus would have done and *they did a lot of good*. I think you can be proud even though I understand how you feel

of the way those lovely daughters and rest of the people that lost their lives, was a waste. I do believe we can learn and make progress from what did happen..."

It took the Jonestown tragedy to lead me into peace activism, and in a strange way, the Redlands Peace Group is the product of that incredible disaster. In his anguish, John included these thoughts in his sermon the Sunday following the tragedy:

"The forces of life and death, building and destroying were present in Peoples Temple. Death reigned when there was no one free enough, nor strong enough, nor filled with rage enough to run and throw his body against a vat of cyanide, spilling it on the ground. Are there people free enough and strong enough who will throw themselves against the vats of nuclear stockpiles for the sake of the world? Without such people, hundreds of millions of human beings will consume the nuclear cyanide, and it will be murder. Our acquiescence in our own death will make it suicide."

John's words ate at my heart and conscience for a year. Already concerned about the suicidal arms race, but wondering what one person could do, a verse from the Bible spoke to me: "What is required of a servant but that he (she) be found faithful." Not successful, not effective, but faithful.

In November 1979, Doris and I invited interested persons to our home, persons who wanted to try and do something to stop the arms race. About 20 came. We were startled at the turnout, since we had expected perhaps four or five persons.

We met again in January 1980, and regularly after that. We called ourselves the Redlands Peace Group. Eight years later, RPG continues to meet and to work for peace in our community and in our world.

Our principal activities have focused on the educational. Speakers at the monthly meetings, which have averaged 25 to 30 people in attendance, address such issues as the arms race, the threat of nuclear war, Soviet-American relations, domestic military spending, problems in the Middle East and Latin America, and so on. We have also arranged several community-wide meetings. At a May 1980 forum on "Peace and National Defense" at our Redlands retirement community, Plymouth Village, speakers came from the University of Redlands, Norton Air Force Base near San Bernardino, and the TRW company.

The most successful conference in terms of numbers was the "Southern California Peace Conference" held at the University of Red-

lands in February 1981. About 275 persons attended workshops and heard speakers, including William Sloane Coffin, minister of the Riverside Church in New York City.

The Peace Group encourages public witnesses. Several times information booths have been set up at the Redlands Mall. For several months, and joining a national witness, the RPG participated in one-hour "silent vigils" on Sundays following church on the steps of City Hall. In protest of a congressional vote for further Contra aid in Nicaragua, an outdoor worship service was held one afternoon in the small city park on the main street of the business district. The local theater was reserved, and the public invited, for a special screening of "Testament," an anti-nuclear war film starring Jane Alexander. Afterwards, several of the people in attendance went to a nearby church to discuss the movie. We have joined with other peace activists in vigils at Norton Air Force Base and TRW, ten miles away in San Bernardino. One featured the release of red, white and blue balloons coordinated with the air base in order not to interfere with incoming planes.

RPG has sought to make information available to people in the community. Draft information, prepared by the Cantor of the San Bernardino synagogue, was sent to over 200 clergy. There have been gifts of books and magazines to local libraries.

We also set up a Peace Resources Library at the First United Methodist Church of Redlands. It contains books, journals, tapes and poster displays available on loan to area schools, churches and other interested groups. Items that the Redlands Public Library feels it could not fund nor house can be found in the RPG Library: specialized journals such as *Fellowship* by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, *The Friends Journal*, *Nuclear Times* and *Soviet Life*. A gift subscription for the last publication was offered to the public library, but was rejected as being propaganda which might be misinterpreted by young people.

The RPG encourages "networking" with other peace groups, such as the FOR, World Federalists, United Nations Association, WAND, Amnesty International, Bread for the World, the Quakers, and Beyond War. We also made attempts to arrange a sister city relationship between Redlands and a Soviet city, but met with no success. With glasnost prevalent, we may try again.

While involvement in the peace movement is often heavy and serious, it can, and should, be fun as well. We have set up a booth at our local park at the time of the city's traditional July 4th festivities. It's a



joyful time; we have emphasized the celebration of life and freedom, with themes like "Patriots for Peace." We make literature, buttons, bumper stickers, and UNICEF gifts available, and provide children with paper and crayons to draw pictures with peace themes. It's upbeat and happy.

A major service of the Redlands Peace Group is the publication of the monthly newsletter, *Peace Action*, of which I serve as editor. In 1988 its circulation reached 400. It contains information about local and national resources and activities. Emphasis is placed upon answers to the question, "What can I do?" Most who read *Peace Action* do not attend the RPG monthly meetings. Its purpose is not to promote attendance, nor to solicit donations. Rather, it is designed to provide information and inspiration to enable the reader to respond in his or her own way to the needs of peace.

Time and again, the "ripple effect" has become apparent. Drop a pebble in the water, and the results move far beyond what might be expected. A Christian minister from Ohio read in the Disciples of Christ Peace Fellowship newsletter about a *Peace Action* item I had written critiquing a *Reader's Digest* article which charged that the peace movement was "orchestrated by the KGB." The minister requested a copy of *Peace Action* to make available for his congregation. The Universities of Kansas and Wisconsin, which have research collections on public issues and grass roots organizations, are now regular subscribers to *Peace Action*.

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When Bill Somers, one of the most faithful RPG supporters, died, a scholarship fund was established in his honor at Redlands High School. The fund was set up with the following stipulations: "A \$100 per year scholarship will be awarded a college-bound senior high school student, with an acceptable G.P.A., who is motivated and qualified to consider seriously a career in peace studies or international relations. Economic need shall not be a consideration."

The first recipient in 1987 was a young black woman who began her college career that fall at Tufts University in Boston. She plans to major in international law. Bill would have been pleased.

The Somers Scholarship was especially important because, of all the scores of scholarships, not one recognized the value of international relations as a future career. The fund will be replenished by other

donors and will not only help specific students thus honored, but will continue to be a reminder that we are all a part of one world.

From time to time people write and tell us of their appreciation for the work of Redlands Peace Group. A college English teacher wrote "Thank you as you sustain your pro-peace efforts from month to month despite discouraging odds."

\*

If RPG has come out of Jonestown, then it is also true that our 1985 trip on the Volga Peace Cruise in the Soviet Union came out of our work with RPG. But Jonestown provided us with a more direct link to our understanding of the Russian people, to their government, and, by extension, to ourselves. We do not believe in the communist system; we believe that the USSR does evil things. But we do not believe that the Russians are essentially any more evil than we are. Those who took their lives in Jonestown did an evil thing. But they were basically decent people of our common mold.

Prior to our trip I wrote in *Peace Action* that Doris and I would like to take a quilt to Russia as a gift for a church or peace group there. A long-time friend, the Rev. Percy Walley, of Harcourt, Iowa, responded. He located a group of women who were willing to take on the project.

Eighteen persons met to discuss it. They defined their purposes as: "(1) to make concrete our concern over the escalating arms race and predictions of global nuclear war; (2) to make concrete our determination as ordinary people, to extend the hand of friendship to ordinary people in the Soviet Union; and (3) to have a good time doing a community project together." Ultimately 35 people volunteered to make a pieced or appliqued or embroidered one-by-one foot square. Once the blocks were finished, Evelyn Lathrop assembled them and stitched them together for quilting. Fifteen persons were involved in the quilting process. The women's groups of the Burnside Baptist and Lutheran churches, and of the United Methodist Churches of Lehigh, Lundgren, and Otho contributed funds to buy materials for the quilt.

We were excited to hear from Percy Walley when the quilt was finished. "We have been so pleased with the response to the project. There have been fifty persons directly involved in making it. There are others who have taken pictures, written news stories, and still others

who furnished snacks and drinks during the quilting sessions. There will be others involved when the community dedication service is held this spring."

In May of 1985 the quilt arrived in our home in Redlands. As we opened the package in our living room that afternoon, Doris and I were overwhelmed by its beauty. The creativity of the blocks represented Iowa, and a world at peace. It was a sacred moment when we realized what these ordinary people had done.

Doris packed it carefully for the trip. Two months later, while traveling on the Volga River through Soviet farmlands at dusk one July evening on the cruise ship Alexander Pushkin, we displayed the quilt and told its story to our fellow Americans and our Russian hosts. They were greatly moved. One Intourist guide who had doubtless seen just about everything by now, had tears in her eyes.

The quilt was presented to the Peace Committee in Volgograd, the former heroic city of Stalingrad. It now hangs on a wall in the Friendship House, a symbol of the potential unity of the common people of both countries.

There were many other valuable experiences we had in the Soviet Union. It has been good to share them with individuals and groups here at home, as well as with my classes at Valley College. Perhaps my recollections helped some people call some of their stereotypes into question. For example, one Sunday morning at the annual international breakfast at our Baptist Church, I wore my black rabbit fur hat from Russia as I served small Russian pancakes. A 10-year-old ate some pancakes, liked them, and came back for more. As we talked she learned that Doris and I — her big-people friends — had been to Russia. She looked dumbfounded. She remarked, "I thought they killed everyone who went there." We spoke at a nearby intermediate school, and showed our slides. Some of the children wrote back. One said, "I learned a lot about Russia that I didn't know. I thought that Russia was out to kill!"

\*

I have one final story to tell that comes from our trip to the Soviet Union. It relates in an unusual way to the tragedy at Jonestown, and to the hopes and dreams for the world which Carolyn and Annie had.

Ludmila, a member of the official Soviet Peace Committee, was with us for ten days on the Volga Peace Cruise. She is a professor of history at Moscow State University. She is about 50, short, neatly

groomed, intelligent, with a quick wit, sparkling eyes and a contagious smile.

That summer she became our friend. She is a Russian Communist but, as far as Doris and I are concerned, not our enemy. In fact, we believers think in some strange way that God was very present in our encounter with this non-believer. Not only in the encounter, but in Ludmila herself.

Kazan, the ancient Tatar capital several hundred miles east of Moscow, was the termination point of our Volga Peace Cruise and the last stop for our cruise ship, "Alexander Pushkin." Our Intourist buses gave us a tour of the city, highlighted by a walk through the Kazan Kremlin fortress which dated back centuries. It was here Ivan the Terrible drove out the Tatar conquerors.

Our last stop before returning to the ship was at a monument in a city park. It was simple, a sheer stainless steel column, perhaps 100 feet tall, dedicated to the memory of Lenin. As I approached it, I noticed Ludmila by my side.

As we watched the changing of the young honor guard at the obelisk together, she said to me in her soft voice, "I understand some of you Americans do not like to see that." My first reply was, "Well, you have more military honor guards at your many memorials than we have back home. I've traveled a good deal in America and have seen them only at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington, D.C." Later I remembered the guard at the "Arizona" at Pearl Harbor.

Then I realized that wasn't really what she had in mind. Rather, it was the manner of their walking — the goosestep — as they changed the guard. Russians did it everywhere: at Lenin's Tomb in Moscow, at the inspiring memorial in Stalingrad, and now here in Kazan.

So, I added to Ludmila, "I hate it." Then, not wanting to sound rude, I explained why. "To most of us older Americans, it immediately reminds us of Hitler and his Nazi goose-steppers. We hated them."

She nodded in understanding. I said I didn't hate the people we saw doing it here. I had come to learn that it was an old European custom. But, "Yes, many of us really don't like it."

As I reflected on the incident later, two thoughts came to me. First, I believe it was good for Ludmila to hear me say that. Many Russians think that we Americans did not hate Hitler and would have been glad if he had conquered their country because of our animosity towards communism. They note the great American prosperity result-

ing from the war, and contrast it with the utter chaos and horror the war visited upon their country: 20 million dead, many of their cities devastated. For every American male who was killed, 60 Russians — men, women and children — died. So it was good for Ludmila to hear that we too despised Hitler and all he represented.

Second, I believe Ludmila accepted my spontaneous response as an honest one.

The Russians are a very proud, patriotic and sensitive people. When you think about it, Ludmila's question about the goosetep was opening the door to criticism of a common practice of her people. I believe Russians in general to be very reluctant to accept much criticism, often for understandable reasons. What made Ludmila open to criticism, and what made her non-defensive as I talked with her? It was an attitude I regard as healthy. I think it was a consequence of our developing friendship over the preceding days. She would ask that only of someone whom she could trust, someone who was not hostile to her and the country she loved.

How had our relationship developed to this point of mutual respect and trust in such a short time?

Some ten days before, shortly before our arrival in Moscow, Doris and I and 107 other Americans participating in the Volga Peace Cruise trip had met Ludmila for the first time. We went to the Moscow Friendship House to meet the nine Russian leaders, all members of the official Russian Peace Committee, who were to accompany us on the river. As we entered the building, children greeted us with flowers and smiles. We were ushered to a small auditorium where the Russian leaders and our leaders sat on the platform and, one by one, spoke to us. Ludmila was one of two Soviet women who spoke. Her remarks came near the end of the presentation, by which time I was tired and bored and genuinely struggling with a problem of animosity towards our hosts. They spoke in platitudes, it seemed to me, only confirming my suspicions that this was what we would get from them the whole trip.

Doris was impressed with what Ludmila said. I mildly wished I had paid more attention. In addition to my problem of attitude, I was struck by the fact that several Russian men who had already had their turn were whispering to each other as Ludmila spoke. "How rude," I thought. Also, it seemed a clear example of male chauvinism, which we later came to feel is a fact of life in the Soviet Union, moreso than in our country.

The meeting adjourned. We didn't see Ludmila again until we reassembled on the "Alexander Pushkin" for the peace cruise. Once on ship, we gathered together to hear our panelists, of which Ludmila was one. She was articulate, friendly, non-abrasive, and unapologetic in expressing her views on controversial issues. She was a real asset to our serious dialogue about every imaginable topic on the trip.

One evening we happened to sit with her at dinner, became acquainted, and enjoyed her company in friendly conversation.

At some point during the meal, Doris asked a question about the beginning of the Russian Revolution. We asked many questions of many people on the trip, but that was perhaps the most important one. It opened the door to the most unique and meaningful relationship we had with any Russian on our three-week visit.

Ludmila answered the question, and that led to more. As we left the table, she asked if we'd like to continue the conversation. We were eager, so we gathered in a corner of the ship and talked about Russian-Soviet history. Ludmila gave us a detailed account, and the crash course went on for four or five hours, long past midnight. Her history contained not just facts, but human feelings as well. A day or two later, Doris and I met with Ludmila again and she continued with the story of her country.

We told Ludmila about the peace quilt and the Redlands Peace Group, and explained how it was founded because of the Jonestown tragedy. She was deeply shocked, but later asked if I would be willing to talk about my nieces and the Jonestown tragedy.

As she and I met that late evening in the corner of a lounge area, I told her of Peoples Temple, our nieces' motivations in joining, and what was right, and what was wrong, about the group. She was sympathetic.

We talked about related matters: morality, religion, atheism, God, Jesus Christ, the church. At about one in the morning, I had to call it quits. Ludmila seemed indefatigable; I was exhausted.

Later, after the trip had become a series of wonderful memories, I thought about Ludmila and our conversations with new insight. In his valuable book, *The Russians*, Hedrick Smith tells of his experiences while living in the Soviet Union for several years. Smith notes that when a Russian learns that another person has experienced tragedy in his or her life, the barriers break down and sharing takes place. Tragedy has been a familiar companion of the Russians through the centuries.

This is indeed what happened between Ludmila, Doris, and myself. World War II for her, and Jonestown for us, were common bonds. Our bonds were forged in pain and sorrow.

Time and again I have thought of the Biblical passage, "When I was weak, then I was strong." If only we Americans could understand the tragedies, as well as the weaknesses, of the Russians. If only they could know of our weaknesses as a people. Instead, we do our utmost to parade our strengths and superiorities. This always, and inevitably, gives birth to one-upmanship. What if we Americans had the courage to reveal our weaknesses, our needs as brothers and sisters? Is it foolishness, or wisdom?

I mentioned my conversation with Ludmila at the Lenin monument. That evening on the ship there was music, dancing, general celebrating of our time together as Russians and Americans. The next day we would part. Americans would fly on to Leningrad for another week of sightseeing. Our Soviet Peace Group friends would return to Moscow. The Volga Peace Cruise was over.

It was raining in the morning. We had had great weather along the 800 mile cruise. Now, when we needed to get our luggage and bags full of souvenirs to the buses, it was pouring.

Four buses lined up abreast of the ship, twenty-five yards away. Doris and I slogged to the last bus in the row. We boarded, with Doris on the side away from the ship, and I on the near side. Through the gloom of the morning and the rain-streaked windows, I watched the ship's comboplay. Our Russian hosts and hostesses, and some of the crew, lined the rails. They chatted among themselves, some danced to the music. From time to time they would wave at us.

The bus engines started. We were about to leave. Ludmila was waving her arms and hands in broad gestures to all of us. As the buses started to pull out, she spotted me in the last bus. Instantly her waving changed to hands clasped, held high over the head. I had been in Russia long enough to learn that this was a gesture of warm, personal friendship. I was moved. Then, at the last moment when we could see, she blew us a big kiss. I did the same. As we drove off through the streets of Kazan, tears as well as rain blurred my eyes.

This has been the story of Ludmila. Her relationship with Doris and me has been a gift. We believe that God was also present. We are thankful. We also believe that such a relationship may be the privilege of more and more Americans and Russians in the years to come. We hope so.

\*

In 1978 Doris and I presented a gift of money in memory of Carolyn and Annie and Carolyn's son Jim Jon, to the American Friends Service Committee. It was earmarked for refugees in the Gaza Strip in Israel, as well as for the rehabilitation of Vietnamese victims of war. Long ago this memorial was expended.

We would hope that some measure of our lives might be a living memorial.

After our nieces' death, we asked John and Barbara for a physical reminder of their daughters. A plaque that Annie made hangs on a wall in our home. It is a multi-colored sunburst, a celebration of light and life, and joy in the morning. It is a reminder of young lives committed to a love of people in need of love.

And the words of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, recited at the memorial service, speak to the need for greater love among all peoples:

Someday, after we have mastered  
the winds, the waves, the tides  
and gravity,  
We will harness for God  
the energies of Love...

And then, for the second time  
in the history of the world,

Man will have discovered fire.





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## The Contributors

**Kathy Barbour** was a member of Peoples Temple living in California at the time of the suicides in Jonestown. Her biography is part of her story, and is included in her essay beginning on page 197.



**Carlton Goodlett** was awarded a Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of California in 1938, when he was 23, and earned his M.D. six years later. In 1948, he became editor and publisher of the *Sun-Reporter* in San Francisco. He has also been involved as a community leader in a wide variety of fields, including civil rights, equal employment, housing, peace and disarmament, and international relations.

Dr. Goodlett is Chairman of the Board of the *New Journal & Guide* in Norfolk, Virginia and the *Big Red Newspaper* in New York City, and the founder of the Reporter Publishing Com-



pany, which runs nine publications. He was elected four times as President of the National Newspaper Publishers Association — Black Press of America.

Dr. Goodlett is also President of the National Black United Fund, Trustee of Historic Third Baptist Church, San Francisco, and a member of the Board of Overseers for the Medical School of Morehouse College.

**Chris Hatcher, Ph.D.**, is Clinical Professor of Psychology, University of California, San Francisco and Director, Center for the Study of Trauma. His area of expertise is in the management of violent behavior, with a particular interest in violent religious groups. In 1978, he was named Chair of the Joint Federal/State/Local Task Force on the Peoples Temple/Jonestown mass suicide/murder. This task force was designed to coordinate government responses to Peoples Temple survivors and to relatives of survivors. Dr. Hatcher has also assisted in trauma response teams for mass murders, aircraft crashes, and aircraft hijackings. He is presently the Principal Investigator in the first nationwide study of the effects of abductions upon children and their families.



**Donnetter E. Lane** was Executive Director of the San Francisco Council of Churches when Peoples Temple applied for membership to the Council. A longtime resident of San Francisco, Mrs. Lane has also developed curriculum programs for elementary and community education in her work with San Francisco State University and the San Francisco Unified School District. As coordinator of the Booker T. Washington Community Center in San Francisco, she established a pilot program to deliver services to black senior citizens throughout the city.

Mrs. Lane is on the board of directors of numerous community organizations, including San Francisco Catholic Social Services, the San Francisco Education Fund, the Housing Conservation and Development Corporation, and Bayview-Hunter Point Ecumenical Council.

Mrs. Lane has an M.A. in Education from San Francisco State University and has done post-graduate study in Theology.

**John H. Lane** is the pastor of the Grace Baptist Church in San Francisco, which he incorporated. He was also instrumental in the creation of the Cosmopolitan Baptist Church in San Francisco, the Northern California Ecumenical Council, and the San Francisco Negro Historical and Cultural Society. He is a director of several boards, including the California Afro-American Museum in Los Angeles, the Western Addition Senior Citizens in San Francisco, and the Fifth District Agricultural Association in San Francisco.



Rev. Lane received his ministerial training at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley and the San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo.



**Thomas MacMillan** teaches English and Philosophy at Mendocino College in Ukiah, California, where he has also served as founding Dean of Students and Acting Dean of Instruction.

Mr. MacMillan was also the Research Director for a two-year study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health on staff burnout in mental health agencies. He continues as a member of the Board of Directors with the Center for Education and Manpower Resources in Ukiah, which cooperated in the NIMH study.

Mr. MacMillan has also served as Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Lucerne, California, and chaired the North Coastal Area Planning Board of the American Baptist Churches of the West.

Mr. MacMillan married Leota MacDonald in 1960. They have four children.



**Barbara Moore**, the wife of a United Methodist minister, serves as a community volunteer for a number of nonprofit organizations. She works in a Sacramento, California soup kitchen and helps with Emergency Services in Yolo County, in addition to working extensively with the Davis United Methodist Church.

Mrs. Moore has cared for over twenty foster children in her home, in addition to providing a residence for college students and foreign students. She traveled to Paris, France to encourage a negotiated settlement to the end of the Vietnam War, and participated in civil rights and anti-war demonstrations throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Mrs. Moore lost two daughters, Carolyn and Annie, in Jonestown, as well as a grandson named Kimo.

**Robert Buxton Moore** is an associate professor of history at San Bernardino Valley College in San Bernardino, California, where he has taught American history for over twenty years. Prior to teaching, Mr. Moore served as the youth and campus minister at the First Baptist Church in Redlands, California, and as pastor to Gateway Baptist Church in Phoenix, Arizona.

Mr. Moore has a B.A. in history from Stanford University, a Bachelor of Divinity from Berkeley Baptist Divinity School, and an M.A. in U.S. History from Arizona State University.



Mr. Moore and his wife, Doris, live in Redlands, California and have two children.

Mr. Moore lost two nieces in the Jonestown tragedy.



**Jynona Norwood** is founder and president of Family Christian Cathedral in Los Angeles. An evangelist for more than 17 years, Ms. Norwood has held many youth crusades and substance abuse seminars across America encouraging and counseling youths to come off drugs. She has also done gang counseling in Los Angeles to help young people stay out of—and get out of—youth gangs. She also sponsors annual food and clothing giveaways at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Ms. Norwood lost her mother and 26 other relatives in the Jonestown tragedy. In the years since the deaths, she has lectured extensively on the factors within Peoples Temple which contributed to the tragedy. As part of her personal ministry, Ms. Norwood has organized the Jonestown Memorial Services at Evergreen Cemetery in Oakland every year for the last ten years.

**Rev. John J. O'Connor** is Pastor of Mission Dolores Basilica in San Francisco, California. A native of that city, he was ordained for the Archdiocese of San Francisco and assigned to St. Stephen's in 1960. He has served as Director of Catholic Services in Marin County and in San Francisco, and was Director of Catholic Charities until his present assignment.

Fr. O'Connor holds advanced degrees in Psychiatric Social Work from Catholic University and a D.Min. from the GTU Jesuit School.



**B. Alethia Orsot** belonged to Peoples Temple for eight and one-half years. She escaped the deaths in Jonestown because she was in Georgetown, Guyana for a dental appointment at the time. Her biography is part of her story, and is included in her essay beginning on page 91.



photo by Bruce Cook

**Fran Peavey**, formerly an assistant professor at San Francisco State College and Holy Names College, is presently a consultant on international social change. She is the author of *Heart Politics* (New Society Publishers, 1986) and a new book on deep ecology for young people, *Beginning to Remember*. She is also known as the Atomic Comic, specializing in comedy about global issues. As a long-time resident of San Francisco, she has worked in many progressive campaigns in the Bay Area and has been arrested eighteen times for civil disobedience demonstrations involving civil rights and anti-nuclear power and weapons. She

lectures on a wide variety of subjects and is presently collaborating with an international television production company on news from around the world. Ms. Peavey's doctoral work is in technological forecasting and innovation theory.

**Joe Sam.**, a black artist working in San Francisco, was highly influenced by his Harlem roots. Born in poverty, Joe Sam. says of his childhood home, "I vividly remember looking at hues of color and the texture of peeling paint. It was the old lead base paint and that stuff used

to peel periodically. We always had these incredible designs in our walls."

Joe Sam. is well known for his "Black West" series, chronicling the life and times of the black cowboy whose place in American history has been omitted from most textbooks. His other works include his recently-completed Jazz series and his Black Bible series, in which he interpreted 53 scenarios from the Bible and made the figures all black.

The series done for this book are pen and ink. Of his figurative work, Joe Sam. says, "All the people in my works look like me. People say, 'Damn, Joe, that looks like you!' Perhaps it's because I had no formal art training, and the only model I ever had was me. But you know, it's a good face."

Among the many awards Joe Sam. has received are a National Endowment for the Arts award and the Coretta Scott King Honor Award for the illustrations in his first book.



**Garry L. Scarff**, a Portland, Oregon businessman, is a former member of Peoples Temple. He has a B.S. degree in Law Enforcement/ Pre-Law, an M.A. in Public Administration and Finance, and is currently a law student. He is a former member of the Cult Awareness Network, a national non-profit organization that educates the public about the harmful effects of coercive persuasion and other abuses in destructive cults. He has traveled extensively throughout the U.S. and Canada, making presentations about Peoples Temple and Jonestown to families, cult members, and other concerned individuals.

In 1987 the Cult Awareness Network published Scarff's story. It was read before the U.S. House of Representatives and inserted into the Congressional Record by Representative Tom Lantos. Mr. Lantos repre-



sents the district once held by the late Leo J. Ryan, who was assassinated at the Port Kaituma, Guyana airstrip on November 18, shortly before the Jonestown suicides began.



**Malcolm Sparer** is the President of the Northern California Board of Rabbis, the Chairman of the Department of World Affairs and International Politics at the Community College of San Francisco, and the chaplain of the Veterans Administration Hospital in San Francisco. He was also instrumental in establishing such organizations as Black & Jewish Clergy, the Jewish Emergency Assistance Network (JEAN), and the American Egyptian Cooperation Foundation.

Rabbi Sparer is a frequent lecturer on college campuses and before church groups, and the author of numerous articles on Judaica and World Affairs.

Following the Jonestown tragedy in 1978, Rabbi Sparer joined with Donnetter Lane and Fr. John O'Connor in forming the Emergency Relief Committee, which was instrumental in returning the bodies of the Jonestown victims to San Francisco.

**Lowell Streiker** is a counselor and consultant with a private practice in Foster City, California. He has also been the Executive Director of the Freedom Counseling Center in Burlingame, which provided counseling services to individuals and families whose lives were disrupted by cults. Founded by Dr. Streiker, the Center was an outgrowth of his work with Peoples Temple survivors at the Human Freedom Center.

Dr. Streiker is the author, co-author, or editor of 13 books. He is also an ordained minister in the United Church



of Christ and serves as staff associate at the Island United Church. He is currently chairman of the Spiritual Development Network of the United Church of Christ. He and his wife, Connie, live in Foster City.

**Hugh Vandeyar** worked for 26 years as a newspaperman in Guyana, including two years at the *Graphic* and 24 years at the *Guyana Chronicle*. Although his fields of coverage included Parliament, labor, and crime, his primary responsibilities were the courts and religion.

Mr. Vandeyar left the *Chronicle* in 1980 to become Public Relations Officer for the Guyana National Trading Corporation. He more recently became Communications Manager of the Guyana Sugar Company.

Mr. Vandeyar has also served as Public Relations Officer for several religious organizations, representing them at overseas conferences. He is Vice-President of the Public Relations Association of Guyana, General Secretary of the Guyana-Venezuela Friendship Society, and a supervisor of the Clerical and Commercial Workers Credit Union.



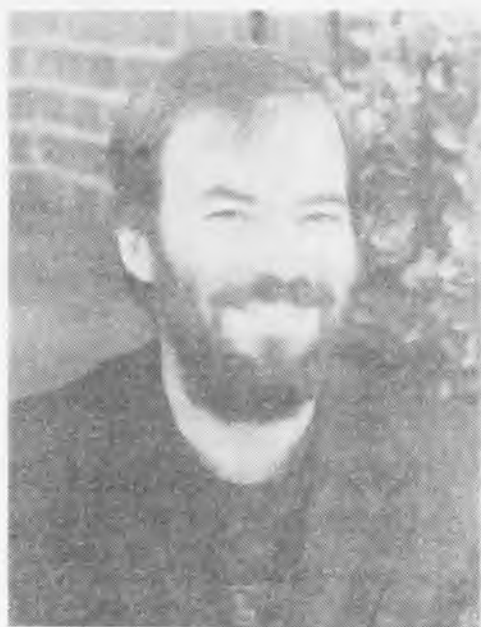
## The Editors

**Rebecca Moore**, who earned her Master's Degree in Film from American University in Washington, D.C., is a professional journalist with over fifteen years' experience writing for the print and broadcast media. Ms. Moore has also produced numerous television documentaries for instruction and entertainment. She currently serves as Community Relations Director for United Way for Northern Nevada and the Sierra.

Following the deaths of two sisters and a nephew in the Jonestown tragedy, Ms. Moore began to research the



lives of Temple leaders and members, as well as the role of the U.S. government, both before and after the suicides. Her research has led to the writing of three books on Peoples Temple — *A Sympathetic History of Jonestown*, *The Jonestown Letters*, and *In Defense of Peoples Temple* — all published by Edwin Mellen Press.



**Fielding M. McGehee III**, who graduated from Antioch College with a combined degree in Political Science and Journalism, has worked as a writer and editor for twenty years. Much of his work in that time has been in producing publications for public interest organizations, including the National Council to Repeal the Draft, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, the Military Audit Project, and the Friends Committee on Legislation.

Mr. McGehee's freelance work has been published in many national publications and newspapers. He also established a press service to report California legislative news for the state's rural weekly papers.

Much of Mr. McGehee's work has involved extensive use of the Freedom of Information Act, and he has been involved in several lawsuits to force government agency compliance to the law and release of information.

Mr. McGehee has also worked on numerous political campaigns for passage of initiative issues, and created advertising themes for several candidates.

Mr. McGehee currently edits and produces three publications in northern Nevada.

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