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PEOPLES TEMPLE AGRICULTURAL MISSION
P.O. Box 893, Georgetown, Guyana, South America

September 3, 1978

A COMMUNITY LETTER

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To: John Van de Kamp
District Attorney
Los Angeles County
210 W. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA USA 90001

From: Residents at Peoples Temple Agricultural Mission Community, North West Region, Guyana, South America

Dear Mr. Van de Kamp:

As we learn more about the schemes to 'get Peoples Temple' through criminal indictments our of your office, we are increasingly outraged. But we are not naive.

For twenty-five years, Jim Jones and Peoples Temple have worked tirelessly for equality, justice, and humanitarian service. We have organized around issues of civil and human rights, inhuman conditions, and the crying need for world peace and international co-operation. We have a solid record of achievement in drug rehabilitation, in providing opportunities for jobs and education for thousands of young people, in helping untold numbers of people who were destitute, despondent, in need of medical help, counseling, food, clothing, and even shelter. We are all personal witnesses to this staggering achievement, which has been given official recognition all over the United States and even internationally. You can well understand how a man like Rev. Jones will be the subject of malicious gossip, lies, hate-campaigns, and even conspiracies orchestrated inside government institutions and the intelligence establishment. We have been the object of constant, organized harassment, vandalism, violence, smear campaigns, arsonists, racists, and even hired assassins.

ENGLOSURE

Political frame-ups are not unfamiliar to us, and truthfully, we are not surprised that there is an effort to destroy us through the courts. But the reality of it is no less offensive, just because it was anticipated, even expected. We cannot stand idly by and stoically endure this injustice without protest. In fact, Peoples Temple has earned its unpopularity with certain elements in the United States precisely because it has actively fought against injustice for so many years. We do remember history, and we prefer not to repeat it. These efforts that have been mounted against us are indeed part of a shameful heritage of subterfuge that has claimed many victims over the years: individuals and organizations that were pursuing progressive directions in American life, seeking to bring together oppressed people, overcome racism, and work for economic and social justice.

You have been informed that there is an effort to destroy Peoples Temple. Though we have not 'cracked' this conspiracy completely, we are certain of enough facts to arouse any just-minded individuals, and those who wish the democratic system in the United States to survive would surely be alarmed. Some of these facts have been presented to the press; the mass media, however, has been distinguished by its refusal to print any reports that would point to what is really happening. An exception to this is the black press (and some 'Eastern establishment' press) which has been completely supportive of us throughout, since they recognize that attacks on Peoples Temple are attacks on the black community. We refer you to statements made by Dr. Carlton Goodlett, president of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (black press of America), for further clarification.

Additional facts will be brought to light soon. The story began years ago when certain individuals joined Peoples Temple who had prior experience working with the U.S. intelligence establishment and in ultra-right wing organizations. The hard facts came to light beginning in late 1976 when two military officers connected with Senator Stennis were caught trespassing near our church while a black woman mayor from Mississippi was speaking to our congregation about her trip to the Peoples Republic of China (we have no political alignment with any country, and have

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always attempted to keep informed about alternative forms of government and their accomplishments). The very fact that we pursued these agents and published our startling findings about their spying mission no doubt intensified the determination of those out to harm us. Would it have been proper, or moral, to remain silent about it? We think not. Democracy depends upon the people knowing what is happening to them. What happens to Peoples Temple is only an example, in some instances, a harbinger, of what is planned for other minority groups.

We are confident that when you have the full picture of how the current group of people who are specifically organized to harass and persecute Peoples Temple have operated over the past year and a half, first secretly meeting to plot how to push smear and slander articles in the sensationalist press (they even hired a prominent, expensive public relations firm to help), then conspired to pressure and recruit people who would join them in lies and subterfuges, then going further to harm innocent people using government officials, and even threatening to hire mercenaries, you would not allow your office to be used and compromised to further their schemes.

Only a few of the devices that have been used in the attempts to destroy us include the following:

--Government agents who have conspired directly with members of Mr. Stoen's group of 'concerned relatives' that has pushed this campaign, have offered bribes and have attempted to blackmail various people to lie about and denounce Jim Jones and Peoples Temple. American Indian Movement leader Dennis Banks was pressured to do this and was offered help with his own serious legal difficulties as an enticement.

--We have documented efforts to cut off pensions and other payments to elderly members of Peoples Temple residing in Guyana. Checks have been re-routed -- hundreds of them -- with the active complicity of the U.S. Post Office Department.

--Our mail and other communications have been monitored and regularly sabotaged. One large batch of mail, including important legal documents, was doused with a wine-smelling substance. There have been many similar instances.

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been interfered with by U.S. Custors agents. Some have never been delivered.

-The same group of people who are trying to pressure your office into moving against us has also engineered a series of legal maneuvers to force their children to return to the U.S. As you know, the most notorious case involved Jim Jones' own son, whom Mr. Stoen fraudulently claims to be his. Stoen, not surprisingly, is leading the current vendetta.

-News articles, letters, and other communications designed to cast aspersions on our organization and sow confusion have been planted in various publications on the 'left' and circulated everywhere in Guyana in the modus operandi COINTELERO has used against various progressive and civil rights groups in the United States.

--Other 'dirty tricks; have included making phone calls of an harassing nature, impersonating members of Peoples Temple -- some to your own office -- to create hostility against Peoples Temple. Accusations and innuendoes have been made to the effect that we have been guilty of various 'crimes' when it is in fact our accusers who are the guilty parties. In one notable situation, we were cleared by the Los Angeles Coroner after those participating in the attempts to destroy us tried to insinuate that Peoples Temple was involved in foul play concerning the suicide of a young man who was not even in our church. What you are now being asked to participate in is only the latest in a series of trumped-up, fraudulent devices.

The people in the group of 'concerned relatives' formed by Mr. Stoen are only the front line of a conspiracy. They have spent tens of thousands of dollars to pursue their schemes. We are currently investigating the source of their funding. They have brazenly masqueraded as pious, outraged, morally-offended people who are seeking honest redress of grievances. But what lies behind the mask?

Most of the people who have decided to collaborate in these maneuvers (some, evidently, after much pressure), are operating out of personal resentments against Peoples Temple and Jim Jones. They did not want to follow the path of human service except on a very superficial level. While they fancied themselves humanitarians, they were only posturing. Eventually, they could not go on in the contradiction, yet they could not leave goodness alone. They became eager to destroy Jim Jones, who represented to them the kind of human commitment that they were incapable of — and didn't want to

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face that in themselves. This is a familiar syndrome, and made many of these people susceptible to being used by others who were interested in destroying Peoples Temple for many years -- people with strong right-wing, reactionary impulses, who could not stand to see people of all races and backgrounds co-operating and pursuing their fair share of rights and opportunities in life. Another group of individuals, not part of Peoples Temple, were furious that their (grown) relatives chose to spend their lives in service to humanitarian goals and ideals rather than to fulfilling others' expectations of them. They, too, have a personal grudge against Jim Jones and Peoples Temple, and have joined therefforts to harm us. (For example, we have proof being held for court in the form of sworn statements, from a prestigious California businessman and church leader -- not in our church -- that Mr. Stoen freely admitted to him that his efforts against Peoples Temple are in fact a personal vendetta.)

The entire scenario is not unfamiliar to veterans of civil rights struggles and the McCarthy Period. Thousands of people all over California and the nation -- progressive leaders, civil rights and community activists, government officials, private citizens, people who have worked with Jim Jones and Peoples Temple are aware of the fact that we are just another target in a long history of what amounts to a form of treason against ordinary people who are trying to secure a decent life for themselves. We are unusual, perhaps, because we are actively demonstrating a successful alternative for people oppressed by racism, and we sense a deep responsibility to keep alive the hope and opportunity we express for others.

Our work, by the way, has been thoroughly investigated by Guyana, and they have found nothing to change their total, enthusiastic support of Peoples Temple — in fact, it has become even stronger over the past months. As a third world nation, Guyana obviously cannot afford to place itself in an antagonistic relation—ship with the United States, asd we know for a fact they would not back our presence here as resolutely as they have were there anything about Peoples Temple that would be an embarassment to them

or would cause difficulty for them.

The growing body of individuals who we have just alluded to are, with us, infuriated and outraged and profoundly disturbed by what is happening. We are determined to expose the conspiracy against Peoples Temple. We ask that you not co-operate with it.

Mr. Van de Kamp, you may be interested to know that the majority of us signing this letter come from the "Los Angeles area. Many of us were not able to get out of the street- and gang- cultures and dead-end lives that we were involved in, until we were at a remove from that self-destructive environment. Many of us would still be on the swollen welfare rolls in Los Angeles if we did not have this community. Among us there are people who would have been dead, in prison, in street gangs, in organized crime, involved in drugs, prostitution; who would today be swelling the welfare rolls, who would be a drain on an already overburdened economy, who would have been abandoned in their later years in squalid hotel rooms, who would have been victimized by rapists, thieves, and muggers -- had it not been for Peoples Temple and Jim Jones. Many of us were caught in that vicious cycle of poverty, crime, and despair. We want you to know just exactly who it is that your office is being pressured to proceed against: people who have had very little, if anything, of their own; lousy neighborhoods to live in, terrible educational facilities, unsafe working conditions (if jobs were available); people who have had to work hard for just a little bit of hope for a future for their children. And many of us here are children of broken homes, and some of us have even been sold into human slavery, right here in the twentieth century, in the United States. Today, thanks to our people's collective and our community organizations, built on care and concern for people, as exemplified by a most principled and self-sacrificing leader of men, we have been able to achieve a measure of security and well-being that we never before have had, and which we are determined will not be taken away from us. We are of one accord that should this kind of frame-up be pursued through your office, we would be ready to return to Los Angeles to actively join protest actions (and we suppose that the Welfare Department would, in that

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event, be aware of our presence).

Mr. Van de Kamp, we have painstakingly built this community, this movement, and it has not been easy. We have gone through all kinds of harassments, our buildings have been burned, our animals killed, our children's lives threatened. We have carved out of the virgin jungles here a model of human co-operation and love, where people who were once at each others' throats in an environment that fostered violence and gave people no creative outlet for their lives, are now working together peacably, building a solid, secure future for their children. Do you think that, having come so far and having made so many sacrifices, we are going to sit idly by and allow a sleazy, politically-motivated frame-up carried out by individuals on a personal vendetta, take all or even part of what we have worked for away from us?

Yet this is precisely what is intended by the group of people who are trying to use your office to hand down indictments against members of Peoples Temple. There is a sinister dimension to all of this that we think you may grasp. The efforts to frame up a few of our staff members in Los Angeles is actually a device to tie up our finances, to paralyze our church, and effectively cut off the pioneer community here in Guyana from vital assistance. This is no mere attempt to proceed against one or two or a few people who are accused of 'crimes' they have never committed or whould have ever conceived of committing: it is a move against an entire people, Mr. Van de Kamp, an act of violence and violation of the human and inalienable rights of all of us, a despicable attack on our work, our hopes, our achievements, our lives, our future.

It is significant that a person high up in government, in the U. S. Department of State, as well as another top official in the FCC, are fully prepared to state that we are victims of conspiracy. They will be subpoensed for testimony if necessary. Our work on behalf of the poor and underprivileged — especially the building of this interracial co-operative community — has been praised widely by high government officials and many prominent visitors to the project from Guyana, the United States, and other nations. One recent visitor, author-investigator Donald Freed (Executive Action, The Killing of RFK, Glass House Tapes)

said that Jonestown was "the greatest, most compassionate community he has ever seen, a community that Dr. Martin Luther King, had he lived, would have recognized as the next step toward the realization of his dream of human brotherhood." When you contrast such statements — and there have been many of them — with the despicable slanders that have been printed about us in the sensationalist press, it is obvious who is telling the truth and who is lying.

Mr. Donald Freed, incidentally, is an expert in the exposing of government conspiracies, along with author-attorney Mark Iane (Rush to Judgement): both are convinced that Peoples Temple is the victim of a vast conspiracy that is now trying to operate right out of your office. Mr. Freed -- who spent a week in Jonestown very recently -- is prepared to offer testimony and is engaged with Mark Lane in a special investigation of what is going on. We now have a publisher who has offered to go ahead with a book in preparation on this conspiracy. It will help illustrate graphically how first the press, then government agencies, are used (and indeed, prostituted) in well-orchestrated, well-financed campaigns to destroy progressive groups and church leaders in the United States. Our story -- and it is an explosive one -- will be told to in international audience which is deeply interested in how a poor peoples organization like Peoples Terple, and a principled, humanitarian leader like Jim Jones, are made the victim of subversion and government frame-ups, and violations of human rights. We have not brought the Los Angeles District Attorney's office into the story yet, because, despite what we have heard, we are not prepared to believe that you are or would become a party to these efforts. However, we are quite serious and deeply committed to our cause, and are certainly prepared -- and capable -- (and indeed, anxious) to go to the limit to make the public fully aware of what is happening. And we now have every reason to believe that the public -- both in the U.S. and in many other nations - is most interested to know the anatomy of this sort of high treason against innocent people that is allowed to take place, and is given every sanction, within institutions of a supposedly free society.

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Again, we intend to publicize our story to the world, and we are already assured that it will be written about and widely spoken of by many around the United States and in many nations of the world who have taken a profound interest in what Peoples Temple is doing for international co-operation in Guyana in setting up a model, multiracial community, and in what is happening to wipe out perhaps the most successful and active peoples organization in the United States.

Our only and basic desire is to be left in peace. However, if this political frame-up is seriously pursued, we will be accepting support from all groups in the Los Angeles area as well as all over California and elsewhere who have offered to protest on a broad front in our defense. Many have recognized the campaigns against Peoples Temple as an attack on all poor and oppressed people (urban blacks in particular, who make up the majority of those of us signing this letter), and all people who are trying to work for social and economic justice in America. It will be considered a serious matter for your office to try to make a civil rights church that has been in the forefront for racial justice for twenty five years look like it preys upon elderly blacks by dignifying this cruel plot. Many of us know the couple concerned in the case that is being prepared, and were present when their property was discussed. The fact of the matter is that there was no coercion or any sort of 'deal' made: indeed, the position taken by Rev. Jones on the only occasion he referred to the matter was that Peoples Temple did not want the property in question. Many of us were present and can testify in support of this. The plot being hatched is a tangle of lies.

Make no mistake about our resolve. We are pledged to defend our integrity, our community, and the justice of our cause. We are not afraid, and have been through battles before. We are an embattled people, with a heritage of struggle. We have no antagonism towards you at all — we have no reason to believe that you are not a highly principled person. But we want to make it clear that we have been pushed to the wall, that we have gone very far in this cause, which for us is identified with our very

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lives, and which represents a hope for our children didn't have in the mean streets of Watts and other I the city -- and we will very actively, dramatically, resist any attempts, from whatever quarter, to put I organization in jail, or other schemes to hurt our v

For that reason we have come together to compose you this letter, which we hope will move you to rever perhaps more completely comprehend our situation, as of frame-up that is being prepared against us.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Signed

RESIDENTS OF THE PEOPLES TEMPLE AGRICULTUR!

NORTH WEST REGION, GUYANA, SOUTH AMER]

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A Community Letter to John Van de Kamp

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