



Peoples Temple  
P.O. Box 15023  
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OPEN LETTER TO THE MEDIA AND THE COMMUNITY

On Sunday May 28, 1978, the Peoples Temple held a press conference to let the public hear firsthand about Jonestown, Guyana from a widely respected United Methodist minister and his wife who had just returned from visiting their two daughters and grandson at the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project.

Although most of the major media were present at the press conference, only one reported any of the views of Rev. and Mrs. Moore. The Moores' comments resoundingly refuted the allegations against the Temple based on claims of the so-called "Concerned Relatives" group. With all the attention given by the media over the past year to the "charges" levelled against Peoples Temple and Rev. Jim Jones, it is remarkable that there is such disinterest in giving direct refutation any forum at all.

Rather than covering the Moores' glowing reports of the Jonestown community, the media devoted their attention to a new series of "charges" --all entirely false-- relating to the visit of a news reporter, Kathy Hunter, to Guyana. They showed no inclination to search out the facts of the case or even quote the official statement from the Guyanese Minister of Home Affairs, whose comment would have resolved the matter completely. The stories that did appear were so filled with errors and contradictions that the public did not get "news" at all, just more fabrication and speculation.

Any objective observer can conclude that the situation involving Kathy Hunter was a publicity ploy. Examination of the coverage, starting with her claim that the Prime Minister of Guyana had personally invited her to Jonestown (which she later admitted was probably a "hoax"), shows it was nothing but a smear to insinuate that Peoples Temple could possibly be responsible for Kathy Hunter's misadventures.

Peoples Temple wholly denies the recent allegations made by Mrs. Hunter and the various news media. We would like to know who made the alleged invitation over the telephone to Mrs. Hunter, if indeed there was such a call. We would like to know who was responsible for the false fire alarms and the bomb threats and the alleged "bugging" of her phone; and how the stories of "protective custody" and "interrogation" were invented. It might prove the best lead yet to the source behind the continued smear campaign against the Temple, and the conspiracy which attempted to cut off our members' Social Security checks, to interfere with our amateur radio communications between the U.S. and Guyana, the blackmail, payoffs, bribery, electronic surveillance, and attempts to stir up numerous agency investigations based on false charges.

This new "staged event" is reminiscent of the whole campaign against the Temple which was initiated last year by the alleged "break-in" of the New West magazine office. When Rev. Jones demanded a full-scale police investigation, the police found no evidence that any "break-in" had occurred at all.

The following points will recount what actually happened in Guyana, and enumerate all the contradictions and fabrications that were put out to the public as "news":

The entire premise of Mrs. Hunter's visit to Guyana was false: KATHY HUNTER MISREPRESENTED HERSELF TO GAIN ENTRY INTO THE COUNTRY. The Honorable Vibert Mingo, Minister of Home Affairs for the government of Guyana, stated: "We have investigated and found her (Kathy Hunter's) statements to be totally untrue and that she lied to gain entry into our country which is a violation of our law." This statement was released to all the major media. None reported it.

Mrs. Hunter told the Guyanese government that she was a personal friend of the Prime Minister, and that he had invited her to come. Though Mrs. Hunter had been considered a friend by Rev. Jones and the Peoples Temple, she did not inform them of her intended visit until after she had arrived. And though Mrs. Hunter's stated reason for coming to Guyana was to write a story on Jonestown, she refused every invitation to visit the Jonestown project once she was in the country.

Contradictions given out in the press:

1. She went to do a story on Jonestown:

*"Her sole purpose was to write an objective story after visiting Jonestown..." (Ukiah Daily Journal, 5/28/78).*

She went to do a story on Georgetown:

*"She was in that South American country to do a story on the camp in Georgetown..." (KPIX-TV, 5/26/78).*

2. She went "simply to talk" to the people there:

*"According to Mrs. Hunter's husband, George Hunter, Executive Editor of the Ukiah Daily Journal, his wife had gone to Guyana 'simply to talk' to a few relatives of local (Ukiah area) residents serving on the church's 'agricultural outpost' there". (Press Democrat, 5/28/78).*

She went to "investigate":

*"...a reporter who is in Guyana investigating the controversial Peoples Temple church..." (KCBS radio news, 5/26/78).*

3. She was invited by the Guyanese government:

*"Raymond (managing editor of the UDJ) said Mrs. Hunter was invited to Guyana by the government there to view Peoples Temple operations in its country." (UDJ, 5/26/78).*

She wasn't invited by the Guyanese government:

*"She (Mrs. Hunter) ... learned that she had been hoaxed into believing that Guyana's premier, Forbes Burnham.. had invited her to the South American country." (San Francisco Examiner, 5/30/78)*

4. She had the right to be there:

*"The reporter had every right to go to Jonestown." (UDJ Editorial, 5/28/78).*

She didn't have the right to be there:

*"...she (Mrs. Hunter) says she was ordered to leave the country because she was told she had lied to the immigration officials." (Ex. 5/30/78).*

5. The Guyanese government asked Mrs. Hunter to report on Jonestown. She was also on assignment for the Ukiah Daily Journal:

*"...Mrs. Hunter was invited by the Guyana government to report on the activities of Peoples Temple in the South American country... Mrs. Hunter, who frequently works on assignment for the newspaper (Ukiah Daily Journal) sought to investigate the Temple... and to follow up local angles as a result of temple activities at its church in nearby Redwood Valley." (Los Angeles Times, 5/27/78, as per managing editor of the Ukiah Daily Journal).*

Mrs. Hunter was not on assignment for the Ukiah Daily Journal. She is not even employed by them:

"Mrs. Hunter, who formerly worked for the Daily Journal, but is not employed by the paper on this time and was not on assignment..." (UDJ, 5/29/78).

6. The Peoples Temple interrogated and threatened Mrs. Hunter, to keep her away from Jonestown so she wouldn't be able to write a bad article:

"Mrs. Hunter has... spent the last seven days in Georgetown's Pegasus Hotel following intensive 'interrogation' by members of Rev. Jim Jones' church... There was apparently a threat, direct or implied, over whether her story would come out pro-Jones or anti-church..." (UDJ, 5/28/78).

Mrs. Hunter claims she ran into no problems at all until Temple members invited her to Jonestown and she refused:

"Recounting her troubles, Mrs. Hunter said everything was 'sweetness and light' until she turned down an invitation by the church to be its guest at Jonestown..." (Press Democrat, 5/28/78).

7. Mrs. Hunter was placed in "protective custody" to keep the Peoples Temple away from her:

"The Guyanese National Police... quickly posted a guard outside her hotel door... a police escort to the airport... which would indicate the authorities believed Jones' followers were not above additional harassment..." (UDJ, 5/28/78).

Temple members visited her after she was confined to her room in "protective custody":

"...she (Mrs. Hunter) was approached.. by temple members who offered to allow her to visit the mission, but she had remained in protective custody". (Ex. 5/26/78)

Falsifications given out in the press:

1. "PROTECTIVE CUSTODY": Kathy Hunter was never held in protective custody. The Guyanese government found that Mrs. Hunter had entered the country on false pretenses and falsified her papers on entry. They checked out her story, found she had entered the country in violation of Guyanese law, and also international law which is supposed to be respected in all countries. Finally they asked her to leave. She was never in "protective custody". Temple members had very cordially invited her to visit the Project.

The following media carried the false report about "protective custody":

Ukiah Daily Journal; Press Democrat; S.F. Examiner; L.A. Times; KGO radio news; KCBS radio news; KTVU-TV; KPIX-TV; KGO-TV; KDIA; KKHI; KUKI Ukiah; and doubtless other sources of which the Peoples Temple is not aware, as UPI carried this false report.

The many "shocking details" --all entirely false-- include:

She was "seized". (UDJ, 5/26/78);  
"She was placed under armed guard" (Ex. 5/26/78);  
"Police state tactics" were used against Mrs. Hunter (KGO-TV, 5/28/78);  
She was "locked in her hotel for a week" (Press Democrat, 5/28/78);  
"A guard was posted outside her hotel door" (UDJ, 5/28/78);  
She was guaranteed "an armed guard to the airport" (UDJ, 5/28/78).

Not only is every one of these reports fictional, but what is she claiming to need protection from? We don't carry knives or guns, or anything lethal at all. We voluntarily offered to people concerned to undergo a search, because we are non-violent and carry no kind of weapon.

2. "INTERROGATION": Mrs. Hunter was never interrogated. It is an unmitigated lie that the Temple made anything but the friendliest of overtures to her. Mrs. Hunter was invi-



ted to the Project twice, and refused to go. She was invited to a Temple cultural presentation in Georgetown, accepted the tickets, and never came. When she complained the hotel rates were too high, Temple members volunteered to assist her in moving.

3. "HARASSMENT": The Peoples Temple did not harass Mrs. Hunter in any way. Several media reports insinuated that the Peoples Temple was responsible for the "hoax call" bringing Mrs. Hunter to Guyana, the "mysterious fires in the storerooms and hallways of her hotel", the "five false fire alarms", and the "bomb threats". Mrs. Hunter directly accused the Temple (Ex. 5/30/78) of keeping her under constant surveillance and bugging her telephone.

What is remarkable about all these claimed "harassments" however, is that they are anonymous in character. It would appear that someone was very intent on giving Mrs. Hunter a hard time, and having it falsely blamed on the Peoples Temple.

4. "THREATS": The Peoples Temple did not threaten Mrs. Hunter about a possible story; or threaten her at all.

The truth is the reverse: MRS. HUNTER THREATENED THE TEMPLE WITH BAD PRESS COVERAGE, ALONG WITH HER REFUSAL TO EVEN SEE THE PROJECT. Mr. Mike Prokes and other Temple members met with her for lunch at her invitation May 20th. She told them she wanted to go to the Project and meet with Rev. Jones. Temple members expressed surprise that Mrs. Hunter did not make any advance confirmation of her visit, but even though they had been given no way to make advance preparations for her, she was welcome to come to Jonestown. By her own admission in the Press Democrat, 6/8/78, she was coming to "judge for herself", with the expectation of interviewing select individuals privately, apparently on demand. She states she went so far as to say she would "make my own arrangements through the Guyanese government to visit Jonestown" after acknowledging that the day before, she discovered she was not in Guyana at the invitation of the Guyanese government at all. Although she was the unexpected visitor from 5,000 miles away, no accomodation or hospitality the community of over 1,000 residents in Jonestown could offer was good enough or quick enough for this woman, and she made a "not even veiled threat" to Mr. Prokes and the other Temple members: that if she did not get what she wanted, it would go very badly for the Peoples Temple. She refused to visit the Project at all, and left the table.

Later the same day, Mrs. Hunter apologized for threatening the Temple with her statement. She was invited to Jonestown again several days later, but was hostile and refused to even discuss the matter.

MOREOVER, IT IS HARDLY LIKELY THAT MRS. HUNTER CAME TO GUYANA AS AN INDEPENDENT, FREE-LANCE JOURNALIST TRAVELLING ON HER OWN, AS THE MEDIA HAS PORTRAYED. SHE HERSELF TOLD TEMPLE MEMBERS "SEVERAL TIMES" THAT SHE HAD COME TO GUYANA TO WRITE FOR THE PRESS DEMOCRAT AND SEVERAL OTHER NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES.

NO NEWS SERVICE WAS IN GUYANA COVERING THE "STORY", YET HER TRIP TO GUYANA PROVOKED AN INSTANT MEDIA BLITZ OF FALSE PUBLICITY AND SMEARS.

Mr. Prokes summed up the feelings of the Peoples Temple in the following statement:

"We now believe even more segments of the media are involved with this monstrous conspiracy. This was another attempt to make us the prey for sensational news to destroy us because we are a non-violent socialist church with belief in brotherhood and equality.

"We have a story that is really sensational in terms of building good will between nations and a model community to live in. We will not be bullied or threatened into giving a story to anyone. We will choose those to give the opportunity to see a glimpse into what everyone who has visited has either called a model community or a paradise. If the media wants a story from us, they will have to be objective and separate themselves from this smear campaign which is entirely based on politics."