

## Section 13

### *Letters to the President from...*

13. People who lost loved ones in Jonestown
  - 13.1. Rev. John and Barbara Moore
  - 13.2. Dr. Rebecca Moore
  - 13.3. Robert B. Moore
  - 13.4. Fielding McGehee III
  - 13.5. Lea Tow
  - 13.6. Steven Katsaris
  - 13.7. Marilyn Pursley
  - 13.8. Ezra Schacht
  - 13.9. Zoanna Kille

*These families have different beliefs about what happened in Peoples Temple and the extent of personal responsibility. Nonetheless, they all accept his penitence for his actions, feel that Larry has paid his debt, and believe that no useful purpose is served by keeping him imprisoned.*

The Honorable Bill Clinton  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: Laurence John Layton

Dear President Clinton:

We join with the family of Laurence John Layton, and a host of others, in urging you to exercise your clemency authority to commute Larry Layton's sentence.

In the light of Larry's role in Peoples Temple, his two years in the Georgetown, Guyana jail and twelve years in federal prison, Judge Peckham's sentencing recommendation, and Larry's exemplary conduct while in prison, we believe that justice has been served. Further incarceration of Larry will deter no one from a similar act. Larry is more than ready to assume a productive role in society.

At John's Stanford class reunion in October, 1991 we talked with Judge Robert Peckham about Larry. Judge Peckham was clearly disturbed that his sentencing recommendation had been ignored by the Parole Board. He assured us that he had recently written to the Board requesting that they reconsider their decision. Sadly, Judge Peckham died suddenly three or four months later.

If all members of Peoples Temple who carried any community responsibility had survived and had been tried, Larry would have been judged to be the least among them. He bears responsibility for his actions, but not for the actions of Jim Jones and the others. Larry has been punished far beyond the recommendations of the pre-sentencing officer, the judge, some of the jury members and even some survivors.

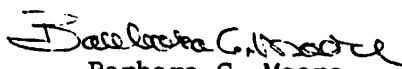
It is painful for us to think about what was going on in the minds of our children and friends and Larry during those fateful days in Jonestown, but we know one thing for certain. Paranoia had been growing like a cancer in Jim Jones and Peoples Temple throughout the ten years we knew Jim and the group. Jim was always convinced that someone or some group was conspiring to destroy him and the Temple. Their isolation in the jungle became an incubator for the destruction of others and themselves. There can be no understanding of Larry's actions that day apart from Jim's megalomania and the community's paranoia.

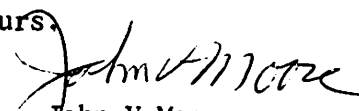
We never believed that Larry had any leadership role in Peoples Temple. Larry and Carolyn, our oldest daughter, were married for two years in the late Sixties. We saw Larry from time to time, including during our visit to Jonestown in Mary, 1978. John visited him in the Georgetown Jail in December, 1979. We talked with him at his trial and have corresponded ever since.

We knew Larry as a pleasant and quiet young man. During his student days at the University of California at Davis he never exercised leadership. It was clear from our conversations with Carolyn and Jim Jones that Larry held no responsible position in Peoples Temple.

Three of our family members died in Jonestown. From November 18, 1978, we have looked upon Jonestown as a tragedy with many actors. The steps we took, and the steps of others, were like streams converging into a raging river which led to destruction. For eighteen years we have tried to bring whatever good we could from the tragedy. We now appeal to you to grant clemency and to commute the sentence of Laurence John Layton.

Cordially yours,

  
Barbara C. Moore

  
John V Moore

1700 Astoria Street, Davis, CA 95616

8 January 1997

The Honorable Bill Clinton  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Clinton:

I am writing in support of commuting the prison sentence of Larry Layton to the time that he has served.

Larry was married to my older sister Carolyn. They joined Peoples Temple together and remained with it until the last day. Carolyn, her son Jim-Jon, and my younger sister Annie all died in Jonestown, as did many of our friends and acquaintances.

I do not think that keeping Larry in prison serves the cause of justice any longer. For one thing, he was not responsible for the deaths which occurred in Jonestown. For another, he has served more than enough time for the crimes of which he was convicted. He has been forgiven by the two innocent people whom he injured. The judge in his case, and the federal probation officer, both recommended and expected Larry to be out of prison in five years. That was in 1991, six years ago.

But Larry has been incarcerated for about 14 years over the past 18. Considering that he is a gentle person, not given to violence either before or since the events of November 18, 1978, this length of incarceration seems unduly harsh.

For these reasons, I urge you to commute his sentence. In this way some of the wounds of Jonestown might finally be healed.

Sincerely,

*Rebecca Moore*

Rebecca Moore  
Department of Philosophy and Religion  
University of North Dakota  
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202

1300 College Avenue  
Redlands, Ca. 92374-3809  
January 27, 1997

President Bill Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Clinton:

I am writing to you on behalf of Larry Layton, who is a prisoner at the Federal Correctional Institute at Lompoc, California. Larry is in prison because of his involvement in the Jonestown, Guyana, violence of November 18, 1978.

I am requesting executive clemency for Larry Layton.

My wife, Doris, and I were aunt and uncle to Carolyn and Annie Moore who died at Jonestown, and grand-aunt and uncle to Carolyn's young son, Jim Jon ("Kimo"). As you can imagine, our grief has been great over these unspeakable losses.

Because of Larry's involvement in the violence, I have felt that Larry should be held accountable--which included prison time.

However, I have come to believe that no worthwhile purpose is to be served by Larry's remaining in prison, and certainly not to his parole date of 2004.

I recently learned that the presiding and sentencing trial judge (who died several years ago) felt that a five-year sentence would be appropriate. We are far beyond that now.

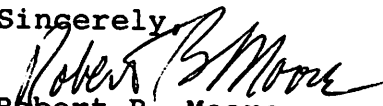
I believe that the responsible authorities have never adequately examined the record of Larry's involvement in this complex case. I believe it is time to do so.

I believe that Larry's time in prison has served its purpose--that rehabilitation has taken place, and that upon his release, Larry Layton will prove to be a constructive member of society.

I urge you to consider this case seriously and trust that you will feel that executive clemency would be appropriate in the name of fairness and justice.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
Robert B. Moore

503 Hamline St.  
Grand Forks, ND 58203  
701/746-0298

January 10, 1997

The Hon. Bill Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Clinton;

I urge you to exercise your powers of executive clemency and commute the sentence of Larry Layton to the time he has served in federal prison. By any measure of justice, in my opinion, Larry has been punished more than enough for the crimes of which he was convicted.

Larry has been in prison far longer than anyone who is familiar with his case intended him to be. The two people whom Larry wounded at the Port Kaituma airstrip in November 1978 forgave him long ago, and urged leniency in his sentencing following his conviction in 1986. Four members of the jury which convicted him wrote to the judge, also asking for leniency. The judge who presided over both of Larry's trials gave him the mandatory sentence, but recommended that he be released after five years – a time period which lapsed in 1991, six years ago. Even the people who were directly affected by the events in Jonestown and who once favored a long sentence now believe the time has come for his release.

Indeed, I believe the only reason Larry is still in jail is that the Parole Board considered only the crime for which he was convicted and did not take the time to read the voluminous material submitted in support of his release.

There is one additional factor I'd like to ask you to consider before reaching your decision. I remember vividly the only times I met my wife's former brother-in-law, Rebecca Moore and I traveled to Guyana in the spring of 1979 – six months after Congressman Leo Ryan's assassination and the deaths in Jonestown – to visit Larry in the Georgetown jail. The conditions of his incarceration were appalling by American standards: the cells were filthy and stifling, there was little to do either in terms of recreation or rehabilitation, and his contacts with friends and family were extremely limited. Yet none of the official tallies of Larry's time in prison include the two hardest years – those he spent in Guyana before his acquittal there and his return to the U.S.

Thank you for your consideration of my views in this matter.

Sincerely,



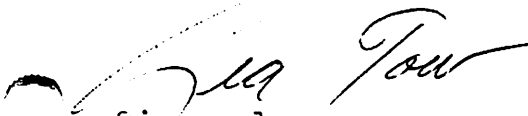
Fielding M. McGhee III

February 14, 1997

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Washington DC 10500

Dear Sir:

I am a still grieving mother who lost her beautiful 31 year old daughter in the Jonestown massacre. She was the most precious person in my life. She was an idealist who first joined Peoples Temple because she wanted to help oppressed people (remember the 60's). She later became disillusioned and wanted to leave, but by then it was too late. She was married to Larry Layton (ordered by Jones), who is now in a federal prison for conspiracy. This is such a travesty, that I still can't believe it happened. Larry was another idealist whose intentions were honorable and filled with love for his fellow man. Also the guilt of the affluent young white person for the black treatment. By the time this massacre took place, Jim Jones was paranoid - insane, but these young people were so thoroughly brainwashed and under his control, that they would not have dared to disobey his orders. Jim Jones ruled absolute. What he said is what was done. Larry is the only person to be punished for the crimes Jim Jones ordered. Most of the others are dead. I feel that Larry has suffered enough. His family has suffered enough. Nothing can be served by keeping Larry locked up. He should never have been convicted. One person alone is most responsible for his conviction. She is Jackie Speir, who was the aide to Rep. Leo Ryan. She was responsible for bringing in a slew of journalists and television reporters into what she knew to be a highly volatile situation. They were certainly warned how dangerous Jim Jones was at that time. Perhaps publicity for Rep. Ryan was what caused Jim to go completely crazy. His paranoia was contagious and his power absolute. Larry was a victim as well as my daughter who was beaten and injected with poison. I beseech you in your democratic compassion to free this man at last and let him live what is left of his life in peace. I am sorry I am not more eloquent (or a better typist) but please, if it is in your power, release Larry Layton.

  
Sincerely

Lea Tow  
235 Redbud Drive  
Paradise Ca 95969

916-872-8247

January 10, 1997

President Bill Clinton  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 10500

Dear President Clinton:

In early 1978 I made two unsuccessful trips to Guyana attempting to effect the release of my daughter Maria from the Peoples Temple compound in that country. Because of my concern for her life and the opposition I encountered trying to bring her home, I became one of the organizers of the group of concerned relatives that asked Congressman Leo Ryan to accompany us to Guyana in November of that year.

The Congressman's death at the Kaituma airstrip and the tragic events that ensued are a sad part of the history of those times. For me the tragedy was deeply personal. My daughter died along with the others at the compound and my twenty-three year old son Anthony, who had gone with me to Guyana to help release his sister, was seriously wounded at the airstrip. He survived only after being flown to our Naval Base at Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico for emergency surgery.

I recount these events to tell you of my own grief and loss which is as deeply felt today as it was eighteen years ago when it all happened.

However, life goes on as it must for everyone who survived. Though it has been difficult to overcome my bitterness I have learned it is better to forgive those who in any way might have been responsible for Maria's death and Anthony's wounds.

It is not lightly that I urge you to show clemency to Larry Layton. He has suffered enough and more than paid for his actions. He, like Maria, originally became involved with Peoples Temple in a belief that they were helping create a better America. It is time now for him to go home. Please make that possible, for you are the one now that can help us all put closure on this issue. I beg you to do so.

Respectfully,

*Steven A. Katsaris*

Steven A. Katsaris  
493 Little Beaver Creek  
Trout Creek, Montana 59874

406 827-4028

January 23, 1997

President Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 10500

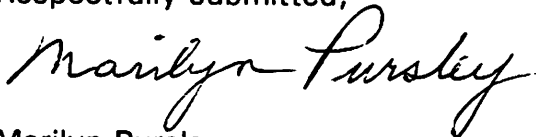
Dear President Clinton:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Larry Layton.

I lost two daughters and my only two grandchildren at Jonestown in 1978. I believe that Larry was caught up in the evil manipulations of Jim Jones, and was as much a victim as my children were.

I know Larry Layton to be a gentle and caring person. Because of the circumstances and the many years Larry has spent in prison, I urge you to exercise your powers of executive clemency on his behalf.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marilyn Pursley". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Marilyn Pursley

555 Pierce Street #703  
Albany, California 94706



My dear President Clinton,

Your love of governing, and of the American People collectively, continues to shine in your speeches and legislation.

As the New York Times writer said, as though in wonderment, "Clinton has run and won, but continues to run."

May I ask you to give consideration to this request for Presidential pardon from prison for Larry Layton, a member of the Jonestown commune in Guyana, who was involved in the violence at the Port Kaituma airport, but who did not kill or seriously hurt anyone.

Unfortunately, the terrible tragedy at Jonestown, in which many of us lost family members, caused all of us to lose sight of the great social experiment that People's Temple and Jonestown represented.

People's Temple still has a lesson to teach the United States, as you lead us toward a revitalized program to replace the inadequacies of welfare today.

Larry Layton has had many years in prison to think about these problems, and I know, if pardoned, could play a constructive role, as a sensitive and resourceful citizen, in improving conditions for his fellow Americans.

Keep on running, Mr. President,



Ezra L. Schacht, P.E.

1620 West Main Street  
Houston, Texas 77006

24 February 1997

Telephone: 713-523-0515  
Fax: 713-523-0530

PRESIDENT CLINTON  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVE. N.W.  
WASHINGTON, DC 20500

1-4-79,

DEAR PRESIDENT CLINTON,

I'VE WRITTEN TO CHELSEA THANKING HER FOR SHARING BOTH OF YOU WHEN YOU TRIED TO CHANGE THE MEDICAL SYSTEM; SUPPORTING MRS. CLINTON WHEN SHE WAS BEING RIDICULED FOR SPEAKING TO "NEW AGE" PERSONS; ADVISING YOU TO NOT GO DOWN THAT NEGATIVE ROAD, SO THE MUCK WOULD NOT STICK TO YOUR FEET, AND I'M PLEASED TO SAY, I NEVER HEARD YOU BEING NEGATIVE ONCE, DURING THE WHOLE CAMPAIGN. AND DDUBLY PLEASED THAT YOU WERE RE-ELECTED!

NOW I'M ASKING YOU FOR PRESIDENTIAL CLEMENCY AND THE RELEASE OF LARRY LAYTON FROM THE FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTE IN CALIF.

I REALIZE THERE IS A STRONG "GET TOUGH" ATTITUDE ABOUT PRISONERS AND MORE CONCERN FOR THE VICTIMS OF CRIME AND REPEAT OFFENDERS, BUT I TRULY DO BELIEVE, LARRY LAYTON IS NOT A THREAT TO SOCIETY. HIS IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCE.

MY FORMER HUSBAND WAS IN PEOPLES TEMPLE AND 3 OF OUR 5 CHILDREN WERE, TOO, FOR SEVEN YEARS AND THEY WENT IN FOR THE SAME ALTRUISTIC REASONS LARRY DID. WE WERE ALWAYS ACTIVE IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. MERT, <sup>THEN</sup> MY HUSBAND) WENT TO SELMA, ALABAMA TO MARCH WITH MARTIN LUTHER KING. WE SOLD OUR HOME TO A BLACK FAMILY IN A WHITE NEIGHBOR

GOOD. LOCALLY WE ENCOURAGED BLACK AND WHITE CHURCHES TO EXCHANGE MINISTERS AND TO WORSHIP WITH EACH-OTHERS CONGREGATIONS, ETC. SINCE THE 50'S & 60'S IT IS HARD TO TELL IF MUCH PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN THE UNITED STATES?

MERT WAS SO IMPRESSED BY THE WARM, CARING, CROSS-CULTURAL ATMOSPHERE HE AND HIS SECOND WIFE OBSERVED WHEN THEY VISITED THE PEOPLES TEMPLE IN 1968/69 THAT HE QUIT HIS JOB WITH STANDARD OIL, AFTER 20 YEARS, AND THEY WERE IMMEDIATELY IMMERSED IN ALL THE ACTIVITIES AT THE TEMPLE WHEN THEY MOVED TO UKIAH, CALIF, AND REDWOOD VALLEY, CALIF. IT'S A LONG STORY AND SIMILAR TO LARRY'S, BUT THEY DIDN'T GO TO GUYANA, AND THEY WERE NOT FORCED TO LISTEN TO JIM JONES 24 HOUR LOUD SPEAKER RAMBLINGS, AS HE BECAME MORE PHYSICALLY & EMOTIONALLY ILL, AND THE PEOPLE IN GUYANA WERE SO ISOLATED AND CONTROLLED, IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE ANY OF THEM ESCAPED, BUT A FEW DID, AMONG THEM LARRY'S SISTER, DEBBIE, YOU SHOULD HEAR HER STORY SOMETIME.

SHE TRIED TO GET PEOPLE TO BELIEVE THE TERROR, OPPRESSION, PRACTICES OF MASS SUICIDES THAT WERE GOING ON IN GUYANA, BUT WHO COULD POSSIBLY BELIEVE SUCH A TALE, BEFORE IT BECAME A REALITY?

3.

HOW LARRY LAYTON HAS HANDLED HIS LIFE SINCE THAT TERRIBLE DAY AND HIS YEARS IN PRISON IS JUST A SMALL INDICATION OF HOW PRODUCTIVE HE WOULD BE OUT IN SOCIETY AS A FREE MAN.

I AM CONVINCED THE WHOLE HORROR OF JIM JONES MADNESS WAS HEAPED ON LARRY LAYTON'S HEAD BECAUSE WE AS A SOCIETY COULD NOT PUNISH JIM JONES.

FROM MY EXPERIENCES AS A PARENT OF FORMER TEMPLE MEMBERS, AND THEIR DIFFICULT TIME RECOVERING FROM THE PROGRAMMING OF JONES' CULT, (AND THEY GOT OUT BEFORE THE GUYANA MOVE AND MADNESS), I AM IMPRESSED BY MY CHILDREN'S STRENGTH OF CHARACTER AND THE CLOSE AND BEAUTIFUL FAMILY WE HAVE BECOME,

I'M SURE LARRY'S FAMILY IS EQUALLY CLOSE AND SUPPORTIVE, AND HE WOULD NEVER BE A THREAT TO SOCIETY.

PLEASE CONSIDER HIS CIRCUMSTANCES CAREFULLY AND GRANT HIM A PARDON.

SINCERELY,

ZOANNA KILLE

205 E. RICHMOND AVE.

POINT RICHMOND, CALIF. 94801

PHONE 510-232-1756

(print because  
my handwriting  
is nearly  
illegible)  
Zoanna Kille

4.

P.S. ON A MORE PERSONAL NOTE:

IF HARD TIMES EITHER KILL YOU OR MAKE YOU STRONGER, YOU 3 MUST BE BECOMING "HERCULEAN"!

3o Kille

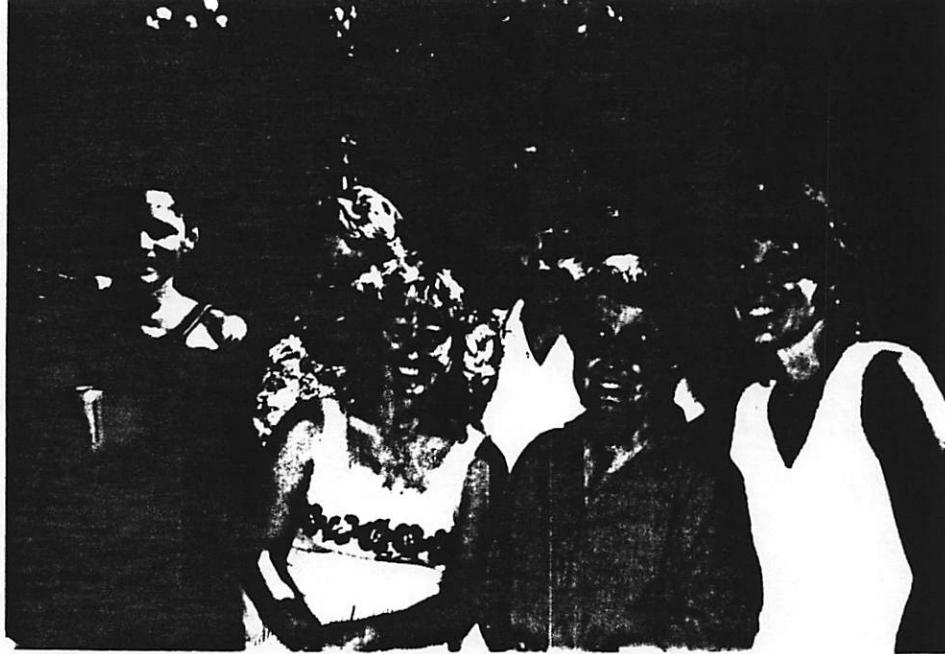
P.P.S. I ALSO WROTE SEVERAL TIMES TO THE JUDGE IN BOTH OF LARRY'S TRIALS IN HOPES OF HIS RELEASE. EVEN 4 OF THE JURORS DID, ASKING FOR LENIENCY.

3o Kille

P.P.S. COUNT THIS AS 3 LETTERS, BECAUSE I KNOW MY EX-HUSBAND AND HIS WIFE WOULD BE WRITING TO YOU, ALSO.

THEY WERE BOTH MURDERED EXECUTION STYLE IN FEB. OF 1980 AFTER RECEIVING MANY DEATH THREATS FROM MANY OTHER CULTS BECAUSE THEY HAD GONE ON MAN, RADIO TALK SHOWS TO TRY TO ALERT PEOPLE THAT JUST BECAUSE JONES WAS DEAD, DIDN'T MEAN THE OTHER CULTS WERE NOT STILL OUT THERE, BUT THEY HAD JUST BECOME LESS FLAMBOYANT, MORE SUBTLE, AND HAD LEARNED FROM JONES MISTAKES.

3o Kille



5.

THIS IS ME AND MY "HERCULEAN" KIDS.

PLEASE DON'T LET THE "SPIN DOCTORS"  
CONVINCE YOU YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO SHOW  
COURTESY AS PART OF YOUR LEGACY. I'VE  
SEEN YOU GO AGAINST THE FLOW BEFORE  
WHEN WHAT'S RIGHT IS UNPOPULAR, AND THIS  
MAY BE ONE OF THOSE TIMES.

THANKS AGAIN,

Joanna Kille