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## A Restoration of Women's Power in Peoples Temple

The women and men in the leadership of Peoples Temple shared one thing in common: all had a strong desire to contribute positively and centrally to social change. Steve Rose, theologian and early analyst of Jonestown, named this desire the “Herculean conscience,” which is

an overwhelming desire to do good. . . . [It] defines the attitude of a small portion of the American populace, a group of people whose consciousness is formed by an existential awareness of major destructive forces in the world and by a strong desire to do something to combat them. The concerns of such individuals go far beyond the narrow pockets of self-interest to war and peace, ecological balance, social justice, and human rights. (Rose 1979, 22)

I suggest that there is a difference between how this desire manifested itself in the women and the men in positions of authority in Peoples Temple. For the women, it wasn't until they met Jim Jones and joined Peoples Temple that their personal power and institutional influence matched their desire to make a difference in the world. For the men, it would have been possible eventually to act out this desire in positions of leadership in mainstream society. For the women, this would have been less likely because of the “glass ceiling” within mainstream society that limits the authority women can exercise. Within Peoples Temple there was an opportunity for some women to exercise power and authority beyond what either their

gender or educational training would have allowed in mainstream society.<sup>1</sup>

When reflecting on her personality and character, the people who knew her best described Carolyn Moore Layton as somebody who “had to be involved in changing the world” (Moore 1985, 85). The child of a United Methodist minister and a woman who was devoted to caring for social outcasts, Layton was raised with a commitment to social change and a prophetic interpretation of Christ’s presence in the world. Her sister, Rebecca Moore, who did not join the Temple, although her sisters Carolyn and Annie encouraged her to do so, saw the seeds of her sister’s commitment to Peoples Temple in the liberal Protestant upbringing they had experienced in their family.

Ironically, it was our own religious training that made Carolyn an activist and prepared her for Peoples Temple. The message of the Bible was clear: serve the poor. But the churches she’d known didn’t seem to care about the poor, at least, not enough. The pietism of traditional white Protestantism bored and frustrated her. What did evangelism and prayer have to do with feeding hungry people or caring for the sick? (85)

Layton was highly intelligent with interests in the social sciences, politics, and international affairs. Her family described her as “outgoing, aggressive, ambitious” although this exterior “disguised a basic lack of self-confidence” (Moore 1985, 87). She married Larry Layton in 1967 and began teaching high school in the town neighboring Redwood Valley, where Peoples Temple relocated from Indiana, in 1965. Peoples Temple offered Carolyn Layton a church community committed to the social justice and outreach ministries that most interested her: care for the poor, elderly, and mentally ill; commitment to racial integration; willingness to critique and to challenge unjust and unfair governmental policies.

Shortly after becoming involved in Peoples Temple, Carolyn Layton and Jim Jones began a sexual relationship that culminated in their having a child together, Jim-Jon, in 1975. It was a deeply satisfying

1. Rose argues that there is a dangerous flip-side to the Herculean conscience, which Jim Jones embodied, “the Herculean paranoid style” (Rose 1979, 24). This became the style of many of the women in leadership once the move to Jonestown had been made.

love affair for Layton as she intimated in a letter to her sister Rebecca in 1970:

Our communication is so deep that we can often know the other's emotions. I naturally have no parapsychological power and am very down-to-earth, but I know him so well I often can tell how he will feel about things. He knows more about me than I know myself and always accepts me totally. Total acceptance and communication make our love deeper than I thought possible between two humans. (Moore 1985, 90)

Layton's ability to know how Jones would "feel about things" would become increasingly crucial as drugs and paranoia crippled his ability to manage Peoples Temple once the group had moved to Jonestown.

Carolyn Moore Layton was at the center of the Peoples Temple decision-making apparatus from early in her membership until the very end. At the 8 October 1973 Board of Directors meeting for Peoples Temple, the meeting at which it was decided to establish "an agricultural mission in the tropics" in Guyana, South America, Layton was authorized, along with five others, to withdraw monies for the purchase of equipment, material, and supplies for the mission. (The other five members were Jim Jones, Archie Ijames, Timothy Stoen, Eugene Chaikin, and Marceline Jones.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout 1974 Layton and Timothy Oliver Stoen traded off chairing the monthly meetings until both their terms as directors on the board expired in January 1975. During Layton's time on the board Guyana was set up as a mission project and the first visit to the project by a group of Peoples Temple members were made. This was also the beginning of the time when the leaders of Peoples Temple began to consider the mission in Guyana as a possible retreat from the "hostile and offensive" behavior the community had experienced from residents of Redwood Valley, particularly toward the black members. The 9 September 1974 minutes note that "a number of the members of the Board speculated that if this type of harassment continued, it might be necessary, at some future date, for all the members of the church, for their own protection, to move out of Mendocino area into some other facility."<sup>3</sup> In a résumé written in 1976, Layton described herself

2. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Guyana Evidence Index, 89-4286.

3. FBI, Guyana Evidence Index, 89-4286.

as the “Vice President and Director of the Peoples Temple of the Disciples of Christ, with over 40,000 members in California and outreach missionary programs in many other states and abroad.” And “I was directly assisting the Pastor and President of this church and was involved in helping to structure this large and successful group from its inception in California, with around 75 initial members, to its present growth and size.”

She indicated that her responsibilities included

budget planning and follow-up administration; selection and final approval of Advisory Personnel; opening of new branches, training staff and members to staff and operate branches; travel abroad and dealing with foreign governmental dignitaries on behalf of the church’s foreign missionary programs; Advisory Chairman of church’s financial investments, researching projects and reporting to its President and Pastor, and sharing of administration of the Board of Directors, in its regular and special functions; and Assistant to the President and Pastor. (CHS, L-2, L-5)

It is difficult to determine how much of an influence Carolyn Layton had on the specific decisions that were made by Jim Jones and the inner circle of Peoples Temple. She was, after all, a leader within a self-consciously socialist community, in which heavy-handed or individually aggrandizing authority was not acceptable behavior by anyone except Jim Jones. Jones was given a kind of special dispensation in this regard because of his status as prophet and founder. Her role and influence must be pieced together through reading between the lines of the narrative deconstructed in chapter 3 and through reconstructing her possible influence and authority.

In letters to her parents written from Jonestown Layton indicates that her primary responsibilities at Jonestown were educational and organizational. She had moved to Guyana in the spring of 1977, several months before Jones arrived and the major relocation of people was complete. By the fall of 1977 she was concentrating most of her attention on the Jonestown school system. “I am teaching political science in our high school. I do a lot of teaching of political philosophy which I have always wanted to do as you may recall. This is the first time I have ever been able to teach what I really have wanted. Also I help administrate the high school and train younger teachers” (Moore 1986, 190).

Layton was well qualified for this work, having graduated from the University of California with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science and a teaching credential. Before moving to Jonestown she had been a high school teacher in the Ukiah Unified School District for seven years. The subjects she taught were government, history, economics, geography, French, and physical education. Her letters are filled with information about the agricultural production of the settlement and the planning for eventual self-sufficiency as a community. As she wrote to her parents in November 1977, "we do a lot of planning-production goals, etc. Obviously the more planning we do, the better productivity we get on the farm. As you know, I have always wanted to teach these subjects and this is the first time I have ever been able to teach what I really wanted to teach. So I am really enjoying this" (Moore 1986, 198).

After the suicides, the FBI was concerned that surviving members of the Peoples Temple were organizing a "hit squad" to kill the people who they thought had been involved in a conspiracy to end the movement. Many of the people the FBI interviewed, most of whom were members who had left the group before the move to Jonestown, mentioned Carolyn Layton as an important person for the FBI to be aware of in its search for potential leaders who might be continuing the post-Jonestown work of Peoples Temple.<sup>4</sup> At the time of these FBI interviews conclusive identifications had not yet been made of Layton and the others who had, in fact, died at Jonestown. Within this file of interviews Layton is variously described as one of the "insiders who might have knowledge of some contingency plans"; one of the "confidants and ranking members"; along with twenty-two others as "dangerous and on the personal staff of Peoples Temple"; and as "being knowledgeable of Peoples Temple operations." On a more sinister note Layton is described as "very dangerous"; a member of a group of eleven who "had a pact that if anyone left they would be hunted down and have their throat cut"; and that she had "planned the murders of the Peoples Temple defectors."<sup>5</sup>

All of these interviews must certainly be understood within the

4. Although the reports, which were obtained from the FBI through the Freedom of Information Act, are all anonymous, many of the interviewees provide details about the length of time they were involved in Peoples Temple and the circumstances under which they left the group.

5. All quotes are from FBI, Guyana Evidence Index, 89-4286.

context of the kinds of “atrocities” stories, reviewed previously, that defectors from religious groups often tell. Certainly a heightened level of fear and anxiety must have been at work for those who had been involved with people who had died so dramatically. Yet, even the interviewee who told of Layton being involved in the group that would hunt down and cut the throats of people, mentions four women—Carolyn Layton, Sandy Bradshaw, Linda Amos, and Karen Layton (Larry Layton’s second wife)—as having “all available inside information to Jones’s operation and were devout followers as well as his mistresses.” One report, from a man who described himself as being very active in Peoples Temple, identified Carolyn Layton as among the “very strong supporters of Peoples Temple” and “very powerful in the organization,” then adds that she could be the “next leader for the Peoples Temple.” Even for those people for whom Peoples Temple represented danger there was an acknowledgment that it was possible for a woman in leadership to both have authority and be sexually involved with Jones simultaneously. The latter did not cancel out the former for people who had been members of Peoples Temple and had experienced the power practiced by Jones and these women.

“When I was in Peoples Temple I had more power than I’ll ever again attain in my life.” These are the words of Grace Stoen Jones some fourteen years after the tragedy at Jonestown that claimed the life of her son and many friends. (Ironically, Grace Stoen married a man whose last name is Jones, so that her name is now Grace Stoen Jones. To avoid confusion, however, I call her Grace Stoen, the name by which she was known during her years of involvement with the Temple.) Grace Stoen was a part of the cadre of young, dynamic white women who were active in the leadership of Peoples Temple during the expansion and optimism that marked the Redwood Valley and early San Francisco years. Although I am critical of women’s status in the Temple being described primarily in terms of their relationships with husbands, lovers, or, particularly, Jim Jones, in the case of Grace Stoen it is an accurate statement (and not merely a reflection of an ideological schema) that her involvement in Peoples Temple was contingent upon her relationship with her husband, Timothy Oliver Stoen. Tim Stoen was already a practicing lawyer and had been attending Peoples Temple for more than one year when he began dating Grace Grech, who was twelve years his junior. Her involvement in the leadership of Peoples Temple had as much to do with her marriage to Tim Stoen as it had to do with any particular skills or talents she

brought to the organization. Nonetheless, she quickly discovered that the administrative skills she had acquired as a secretary before joining the Temple were in high demand in the bureaucratically sophisticated world of Peoples Temple.

When I met Grace Stoen in 1992 at the fourteenth anniversary memorial service at Evergreen Cemetery in Oakland where more than two hundred of the unidentified and unclaimed members of the Jonestown dead are buried, I was impressed by her intense, rapid-fire articulation of her views on what had happened in Peoples Temple during her six years of active membership. During my interviews with her in the weeks that followed the service it was clear that she is a woman who wants her motives for having been involved in Peoples Temple to be understood (interviews with the author 3, 7 Dec. 1992). This desire is more clearly appreciated when one recalls that her son, John Victor Stoen, was at the center of the custody battle that heightened the paranoia of Jonestown and focused the efforts of the Concerned Relatives group. Her grief over the loss of this small boy still deeply moves and haunts her. The 1992 memorial service was the first of those annual services that Grace Stoen attended. Her son's body is buried at Evergreen Cemetery.

Although she lost her son and many friends at Jonestown and might, therefore, have been expected to speak with uniform negativity of her experience in Peoples Temple, she spoke of those six years of involvement with a kind of nostalgia. Despite Stoen's active involvement in Concerned Relatives and her role as occasional spokesperson for the anticult movement her straightforward narrative included both negative and, surprisingly, positive judgments on Peoples Temple activities and members. My overall impression was that Stoen wanted to give me all the information she had in the hope that I might sort it out and help her to make sense of the experience. When asked about the role of women in the Temple, she stated that women were given "all the respect, all the power" within the inner circle of leaders. There was a feeling of power and influence that the young women in leadership, including herself, had never experienced before. She spoke of how exhilarating it was to be actively involved in offering care and respect to black people, the elderly, and children; how important she felt in offering protection to people who were "in danger" in society. She talked about what an incredible educational experience it was to be involved in Peoples Temple during the Redwood Valley days. No sooner was a social problem identified than the Temple set about



contributing its energy and resources toward solving it. She can remember thinking at the time, "No where else is this happening."

A special concern of the Temple that attracted Stoen was the plight of the elderly. Jim Jones often preached about how the elderly lacked the financial resources to care for themselves physically, but even more damaging to their self-esteem was how the American capitalist society that values money and youth strips individuals of their dignity as they grow older. Grace Stoen learned that she had a gift for empathizing with people, especially the elderly. She could see what a difference it made in the life of an elderly person to be respected and taken seriously. During her time in Peoples Temple she first worked in a convalescent hospital, later became engaged in the organizational administration of Peoples Temple in Redwood Valley, and later still worked in the counseling program of the Temple. Eventually, she became head counselor, a job she held from 1973 to 1976.

While Grace Stoen was speaking about the people of Peoples Temple, especially Jim Jones, her face was clouded with sadness as she looked down at her hands, rarely making eye contact. When she did so, her eyes were often brimming with tears. What a striking contrast in her self-presentation when, during the same interview, she began speaking about the actual work she did at the Redwood Valley office of the Temple. She became animated, and her voice took on a strength I had not heard before. Her enthusiasm for the work itself—what she was able to accomplish and the authority she exercised—was clear not just in what she said but in the way she said it. From 1974 to 1976 Stoen managed the office in Redwood Valley and was in charge of acquiring passports for all the members of the Peoples Temple who emigrated to Guyana. Having spent many hours at the California Historical Society, Peoples Temple Archives, looking through these passport applications, I have a sense of the magnitude of this job. Many of the people who moved to Jonestown were born in the southern United States near the turn of the twentieth century and had no record of their births. Some knew little more than the state they had been born in. Stoen had to acquire the documentation for each individual, if available, and to obtain legal waivers for documents, if not. Grace Stoen was in the office answering the phone and working on the passport project routinely from 8:00 in the morning until the early hours of the following morning. She also worked on the accounts payable for the publishing arm of the Temple and oversaw the maintenance of the fleet of buses that the church had acquired for its trips to

San Francisco and Los Angeles. The heart of the Temple before its move to San Francisco in 1975 was the office that Grace Stoen managed in Redwood Valley.

As the political and mission emphasis of the Temple shifted to the urban environment of San Francisco, Stoen's activities focused increasingly on counseling, rather than administration. When a person in the Temple had a problem of any kind—emotional, interpersonal, financial, drug-related, sexual, even spiritual—Stoen's job was to get the "complaint" in writing (or write it herself), then to pass these letters along to the staff of counselors who would work with the person or family, often on the same day. It was not rare for Stoen to be handling fifty such counseling needs at any given time. Often she would simply work with the person herself although her job as head counselor was to be a resource manager, not a counselor. Debbie Layton Blakey, who worked with Grace Stoen during this period, described Stoen as having the "personal qualities of generosity and compassion [that] made her very popular with the membership" (Rose 1979, 170).

Stoen spoke in great detail about how her position as head counselor affected her relationship with Jim Jones and with the larger Peoples Temple community. She understood that her "job" was to be a "buffer to keep people from Jim Jones." Because many of the people involved in the community had first been attracted to it because of the charismatic authority of Jones, when they had a problem they wanted him to address it personally. Stoen's admittedly difficult task was to keep people away from Jones while conveying to them that Jones in fact cared (and cared deeply) about them personally and would have been happy to have counseled them if that had been possible. At the same time she felt that she had to be careful not to "flaunt" the access that she had to Jones in front of the other members, especially the other women, in the leadership circle. Stoen spoke of her head counseling job as "the most power I will ever have in my life" because she could decide who saw Jim Jones and who did not, whose problems were a priority and whose were not. Certainly, Stoen was fulfilling a very important "gatekeeping" function for Jones, filtering and distilling importing information about the community for the leader's consumption and working as a "communications officer," transmitting information from the leader in an informal way back into the community. Both organizational functions were explored in the "sex and power" schema developed in chapter 3. She was intimate

with Jones emotionally but whether the intimacy included sex only Grace Stoen knows. Perhaps the fact of sex is not as important in this analysis as is the *belief* that a sexual relationship was taking place. That belief would have initiated the “sex and power” organizational dynamic and put Stoen in a position to serve as gatekeeper and communications officer. Certainly, the members of Peoples Temple assumed sexual intimacy between Jones and Stoen, an assumption confirmed by Tim Stoen’s affidavit about the paternity of John Victor. Shortly after the birth of John Victor Stoen, Timothy Oliver Stoen signed a statement, along with Marceline Jones, claiming that Jim Jones was the father of John Victor and that he had asked Jones to have a child with Grace Stoen so that his child would be fathered by “the most compassionate, honest, and courageous human being the world contains” (Reiterman 1982), 131).

One of the primary group building tools that Jim Jones used was inclusion-exclusion. Stoen was ambiguous about whether Jones manipulated people consciously with a desire to control their behavior for his own aggrandizement or if he simply had a gift for understanding what motivated people—especially women, Stoen pointed out—and was able to channel those motivations toward the ministries of Peoples Temple. (She made both arguments at various times in interviews with me.) Stoen described the inclusion-exclusion dynamic as “nobody wanted to be left out or left behind.” According to Stoen, the women in leadership were particularly willing to sacrifice—sleep, money, or sex—to demonstrate their loyalty to Peoples Temple and the causes to which it was committed. The worst possible charge was to be accused of elitism in this self-consciously socialist group. She remembers Jones saying repeatedly in the Planning Commission and to chosen individuals that the “real religious work harder.” Thus, in a manner not unlike the dynamic that Max Weber (1958) identified as being central to the motivation of seventeenth century Protestants in America, the people (particularly the women) within the leadership of Peoples Temple were at pains to prove they were the “real religious” and not merely going through the motions. Thus, loyalty to apostolic socialism, the blend of Christianity and Marxism upon which Peoples Temple theology was based (see chapter 1), became a kind of litmus test for how deeply and genuinely these women in leadership had forsaken their elitist upbringing, education, and social orientation.

The Planning Commission was the official leadership body of Peoples Temple. The “inner circle” or “leadership circle” referred to

here was a more informal group of Peoples Temple leaders. All of them, including Carolyn Layton, were in the Planning Commission but held more authority with Jones and in the movement than membership in the Planning Commission conferred. Hall (1987) indicates that Jones was surrounded by three tiers of leaders: confidants, administrators, and the Planning Commission. All served the "client population," or the rank and file Peoples Temple members (see also Weightman 1983, chap. 3).

Because Peoples Temple was charismatically led, loyalty to the group's ideals became entwined with loyalty to Jim Jones himself. According to Stephan Jones, his father knew that he could manipulate the people around him precisely because of their commitment to the Peoples Temple ministry. Jones believed that the end justified the means, which meant that he was continually asking people in his movement to override the boundaries of what they felt was appropriate because it was "good for Peoples Temple." Even outrageous behavior on the part of Jones was interpreted as a lesson, and the people around him would ask "what is he [Jones] trying to show us?" (S. G. Jones interview, 7 Dec. 1992).

Stoen stated that women worked harder in Peoples Temple because they knew that dedication and commitment would be rewarded with influence and power. Although she called Peoples Temple a "racist organization," she nonetheless asserted that "any person could have power in Peoples Temple." Peoples Temple was a two-tiered organization: the majority of members were black and had only minimal formal education; those in leadership were almost exclusively white and well-educated.<sup>6</sup> It was almost impossible for black persons to make their way into positions of influence in the Temple, and in that sense Peoples Temple was both racist and institutionally inflexible. Yet if individuals got into the leadership circle (being young, white, educated, and female increased one's chances) only the limits of individual loyalty and commitment stood in the way of achieving authority in the organization. Thus, it was Grace Stoen's impression that "in society men were in power, but in Peoples Temple women were given the honor and power." Further, she pointed out that over the years of her involvement this power differential between men and women in-

6. In chapter 5 I address this split and suggest that Peoples Temple was actually three groups in one organization and that the tension these fissures produced contributed to the decision to commit suicide.

creased until by the time she left in July 1976 men were routinely “put down and cut down” in casual conversation and women were spoken of as “stronger both physically and emotionally, with longer lives to prove it.”

Stoen pointed out that one thing Jones did especially well in his relationships with women in leadership was to make them feel “valued and beautiful.” This approach was particularly effective with women who were intelligent and well educated, but who doubted themselves as sexually attractive women. Stoen named Carolyn Moore Layton as someone who fit this description. According to Stoen, Jones used sex to draw people in and make them feel special, which had the effect (although she was ambiguous about whether this was Jones’s intention) of increasing their commitment to the movement and loyalty to him personally. She described Layton as someone for whom “power didn’t mean much. Love was what motivated her” (G. S. Jones interview, 3 Dec. 1992).

Stephan Jones believes that his father knew full well that his having sex with the women in leadership had the effect of “hooking them in.” He witnessed his father use this strategy with most of the women in leadership although with one notable exception. Jones refused to have a sexually intimate relationship with Sharon (Linda) Amos because her “unrequited desire” would fuel more loyalty than if he slept with her. Stephan Jones expressed admiration for the commitment of Carolyn Layton, Maria Katsaris, and Sharon Amos but pointed out that they became dangerous people when that “commitment was coupled with a high degree of self-deception.” They did not believe that “they were enough in themselves,” nor did they have enough “self-confidence and inner security” to recognize that Jones needed them as much as they needed Jones (S. G. Jones interview, 19 Dec. 1992).<sup>7</sup>

Chris Hatcher, chair of the Join Federal/State/Local Task Force on the Peoples Temple/Jonestown mass suicide/murder and clinical professor of psychology at the University of California, San Francisco, clarifies how complex the connections between love and power were for the women of Peoples Temple. In his work with survivors of Jonestown he found that both men and women in the leadership shared

7. Stephan Jones survived the suicides because he and some of the other young men from Jonestown were in Georgetown playing in a basketball tournament during Congressman Ryan’s visit.

a “rush” as they successfully addressed seemingly intractable social problems, such as racism and poverty. This rush was not unlike the heart-expanding sensation one experiences when falling deeply and suddenly in love. Hatcher described this feeling as “enormously intoxicating,” especially for women because “Jim Jones offered women more responsibility and power than they would have had in the outside world” (Hatcher interview, 1 Dec. 1992). Within Peoples Temple, the women in leadership had the authority to influence the social problems about which they were most concerned.

Eileen MacDonald, a journalist who conducted a series of person-to-person interviews with women engaged as terrorists in revolutionary struggles, confirmed the words of Grace Stoen and Hatcher about the energy and commitment that women bring to the causes they love. She observed that there was a large difference between what she had read about the participation of women in terrorist organizations and her experience of the role they played.

I read that women usually only played support roles in such groups, probably as girlfriends to the men. However, it quickly became clear that while the men did a lot of talking and planning, it was the women who met up late at night to carry out the actions. They seemed to have more energy and commitment than the men, and were prepared to risk more. (MacDonald 1991, 1)

Indeed, the title of the book from which the passage above is quoted, *Shoot the Women First*, comes from the advice given to new recruits in antiterrorist forces.

Once inside the group, MacDonald discovered that “not only were women members in the majority, they were also, in effect, its leaders.” She began to wonder why there was so little recognition outside anti-terrorism circles of the leadership positions that women held in these groups. She concluded “if the male members of a movement committed to violence are seen as mad, bad and evil, how much more the females? In taking up arms they commit a double atrocity: using violence, and in the process destroying our safe, traditional view of women” (MacDonald 1991, 4).

This latter “atrocity” is by far the worst, for it creates a feeling of ambivalence in nonrevolutionary society. On the one hand, society hates these women for destroying its hopes that women will redeem the world through their role as “protectors and givers of life,” while,

on the other hand, it is attracted to a woman who scorns all the norms of society and risks her life in a seemingly hopeless cause because she believes so passionately in its justness. As MacDonald points out, "Such figures appeal to the rebel in all of us—just because they are dangerous, have stepped out of bounds" (MacDonald 1991, 8). It is their danger, both as potential role models for young women and as destroyers of an illusion about the essential moral superiority of women, which has caused their role in these organizations—and, I argue, in Peoples Temple as well—to be filtered out of the narratives about these groups.

MacDonald observed that women in these revolutionary groups had this increased level of commitment and potential for violence because they were forced to be "doubly tough" due to the gender stereotyped assumptions of men in their movement. The women had to be "constantly on their guard against any emotion that might be construed as 'feminine weakness,'" and this might further explain why they are on occasion more ruthless. Newly acquired power and status, especially if vulnerable and on trial, is heady and exciting in itself, and may induce overreaction in a crisis" (MacDonald 1991, 237).

In addition, the women were in a position from which it was less likely, or even possible, for them to return to mainstream society and to resume "normal" lives. Losing the cause was not an option for them because they had committed the "double deviance" of being perceived both as "brutal animals" and "unnatural women" (MacDonald 1991, 238). A woman is more loyal to the cause to which she has committed and more extreme in demonstrating that loyalty because of the greater sacrifice she has made in joining the group combined with a need to prove she is not less willing to be violent or to suffer deprivation because she is female.

The loyalty which the women in leadership in Peoples Temple felt was made infinitely more complex, both emotionally and organizationally, by the fact that their commitment to the cause was directly associated with the person Jim Jones. The desire to change the world and the attraction for the individuals involved in that enterprise became entwined and confused within the leadership. To love God's justice here on earth was to love Jim Jones; to be loyal to socialist values was to be loyal to Jim Jones. Any betrayal of Jones thus became a betrayal of the community and all it stood for.<sup>8</sup> Stephan Jones de-

8. For the significance of this loyalty/betrayal dynamic see chapter 7.

scribed Carolyn Moore Layton, for example, as having two primary motivations that were inextricably connected, "She loved Jim Jones and she wanted to change the world" (S. G. Jones interview, 7 Dec., 1992). Layton herself, in a letter to her sister Rebecca, clarified these two motivations when she wrote about Jones, "He has given my life meaning and purpose and most importantly love" (Moore 1986, 69).

Hatcher points out that this love and loyalty for the movement and for individual(s) involved did not flow only from the women in leadership to Jim Jones but from Jones to the women as well. According to Hatcher, Jones knew how important the women were to Peoples Temple. In fact, it "could not have existed without the women" (Hatcher interview, 1 Dec. 1992). As a result, it is possible to speculate that not only were these women "falling in love" with the movement/Jones but also that Jones was "in love" with the movement/women. Especially this must have been the case with Carolyn Moore Layton, who was central to Peoples Temple and, later, to Jonestown's management.

Stephan Jones was aware that Carolyn Layton behaved as "a wife" to his father as early as 1969 when Stephan was only 10 years old. He grew up aware of Layton's central role in his father's life. She was Jim Jones's "favorite," and that position was never challenged, no matter how much philandering his father engaged in. Stephan Jones resented and disliked her because of how her presence in their lives hurt his mother. As the stress mounted at Jonestown, however, he grew to appreciate the amount of pressure she was under and how well she kept her fear and despair "under wraps." He also knew that she felt guilty about the affair but was utterly committed to her relationship with Jim Jones. Stephan recalled that Layton preferred to work "behind the scenes" and was generally "passive" in public meetings of the Temple. At the same time, he remembered her impatience that "all previous methods of achieving social justice, for example, passive resistance, had not worked." His father was a "charismatic and dynamic man" who "swept Carolyn Layton off her feet" (S. G. Jones interview, 7 Dec. 1992).

Within the field of new religious movements charismatic authority as a characteristic of the management style of these groups has gotten the lion's share of attention, in part because it is a visible difference between new religions and mainstream religious organizations that rely on bureaucratic authority. Max Weber has been particularly in-



fluent in identifying the sociological dynamics of charismatic authority. Three aspects of Weber's understanding of charisma are relevant to understanding the relationship between Jones and his inner circle. First, charisma only translates into power when it is recognized by others.

Charisma is self-determined and sets its own limits. Its bearer seizes the task for which he is destined and demands that others obey and follow him by virtue of his mission. *If those to whom he feels sent do not recognize him, his claim collapses*; if they recognize it, he is their master as long as he "proves" himself. (Weber 1978, 1112–13, italics added)

Weber is suggesting a two-way flow of power between the charismatic leader and his followers. The leader is only able to influence the movement he has founded as long as the followers were willing to acknowledge the special status of the leader's authority. This authority is unique to the leader and is highly personal. "The bearer of charisma enjoys loyalty and authority by virtue of a mission believed to be embodied in him" (Weber 1978, 1117). Therefore, proximity to the charismatic leader becomes a highly coveted position within the group.

This desire to be close to the source of power is invested with a kind of urgency because of another characteristic: "charismatic authority is naturally unstable" (Weber 1978, 1114). There is constant pressure on the leader to confirm the follower's faith in him and to use his unique authority to provide well-being and safety for the community. Because it is always possible for the followers to withdraw their support, and the threat of this hangs over the leader's head like Damocles's sword, charismatic authority is always, from its genesis, in the process of routinizing. The charismatic leader himself may be of two minds about this drift toward bureaucratization. On the one hand, it takes the pressure off having to perform miracles and provide well-being for the community single-handedly. On the other hand, it means relinquishing status in the community.

Third, Weber indicates that it is the inner circle, or "disciples," of the charismatic leader and his followers who have the most to gain by "the routinization of charisma."

Thus the pure type of charismatic rulership is in a very specific sense unstable, and all its modifications have basically one and the same

cause: The desire to transform charisma and charismatic blessing from a unique, transitory gift of grace of extraordinary times and persons into a permanent possession of everyday life. This is desired usually by the master, *always by his disciples*, and most of all by his charismatic subjects. (Weber 1978, 1121, italics added)

Weber does not precisely spell out why this routinization is desirable for the charismatic leader's followers, other than noting the desire to make charisma universally available. (As Weber points out, this is the beginning of the end for charismatic authority in any event.) There is a kind of intrinsic unfairness to charismatic authority: the leader cannot always ensure the instant delivery of what is needed by the group, a fact that his most intimate followers must attempt to interpret to the rank and file. One way to avoid this uncomfortable position is to make the "delivery" of what is needed by the rank and file members more predictable and universal. Certainly, this was the case with Jim Jones's waning ability to provide "divine healings" for his followers. At first, in the early California years, he was aided in these healings by loyal followers who helped fabricate the healings (Weightman 1983, 130–32). The justification for this deception was that a faked healing might inspire a real one and that once people became members of Peoples Temple they would realize that socialism was the priority, not healings. Basically, it was a transfer of power from Jones himself to his inner circle, who were providing these "healings," such as they were, and knew that Jones had not performed them himself. Later, there was a shift away from Jones and his healings to the scientific medical care that Peoples Temple nurses and doctor could provide, predictably and universally, without depending at all on Jones.

Jones's management style flowed from and supported his "charisma" and the love/power dynamic that existed between himself and his most intimate female followers. According to Hatcher, Peoples Temple was a "task-oriented" rather than a "role-oriented" organization. This orientation contributed to the degree of flexibility that Jones and his top staff exercised within the organization (Hatcher interview, 1 Dec. 1992). This is how, for example, Grace Stoen could move from administration to counseling in the space of one day. Because one's authority and responsibilities could be changed in an instant, without any reasons being offered, a kind of anxiety and instability was associated with being in leadership. One way of ensur-

ing (as much as was possible) that one would continue to be assigned important tasks was to reaffirm one's loyalty by dedicating more time and financial resources to the movement. Another way to solidify one's authority was to have sex with Jim Jones. The incentive for having authority within Peoples Temple was the rush intrinsic in completing tasks successfully, especially tasks that met the needs of people, such as the elderly and poor and urban blacks who were the central focus of the Peoples Temple ministry. These people had become accustomed to being neglected and mistreated and their gratitude for the attention and help they received from Peoples Temple was often overwhelming to those who provided it, according to both Grace Stoen and Stephan Jones.

Task-oriented organizations provide an emotional high for those involved in a way that role-oriented organizations never can. The duties of a more bureaucratically organized group with job descriptions and role expectations are more uniformly spread out and more predictable; therefore, the institutional rewards are less frequent and more mundane. By contrast, being in leadership in Peoples Temple was a bit like gambling. Much was at stake, and the winnings, when they came, were large. Hatcher pointed out that Jones had consistently, from Indiana up to the final days of Jonestown, "flown by the seat of his pants" as leader of Peoples Temple. He became accustomed to voicing ideas, many of them not well thought out, then having the women in leadership figure out a way for them to be done. This encouraged creativity on the part of those in the inner circle and caused Jones to depend utterly on the women in leadership for getting anything done (Hatcher interview, 1 Dec. 1992). Is it possible, then, to argue that Jones was as much in thrall to the women in leadership as they were to him?

There was a time in 1977 when, according to David Chidester, Jim Jones decided that the Jonestown community should abstain from sex. Chidester, without documenting any evidence, suggests that this period lasted for three to four months. He quotes Jones as saying, "What we ought to be at this revolutionary stage is no sex, including the leader" (Chidester 1988b, 102). This is a tantalizing scenario, given what I have suggested. Perhaps Jones was feeling vulnerable about the kind of power that the women he was having sex with were holding in the community, so decided to place a moratorium on sexual relations.

Over the years Jones had developed a philosophy about sexuality

for the Peoples Temple community. He suggested that there were three reasons to have sex: to prevent treason, to facilitate growth, and to experience pleasure. Chidester comments,

His self-proclaimed sexual prowess had been responsible, he occasionally pointed out, for solidifying the loyalties of many of the members of the inner leadership circle of the Peoples Temple. And when some of those trusted associates betrayed him by defecting from the Temple, Jones tended to explain their treason as a result of his refusal to have sex with them. (Chidester 1988b, 103)

What Chidester and the people I interviewed suggest is a situation in Peoples Temple that was just the opposite from the all too frequently used "sex in cults" schema. Rather than love/sex erasing the power of the women involved, the presence of these, in fact (within the context of the group), enhanced both their power and that of Jim Jones. The ideological assumptions that undergird the "sex in cults" view of Jonestown are that the women in the leadership of Peoples Temple were first and foremost sexual beings and their institutional authority was not centrally relevant to the success (or, later, the failure) of the movement and that Jones's power was not at all dependent upon his sexual involvement with the women in leadership, which was merely an expression of his "natural" male desires or the intrinsic depravity of charismatic leadership. I suggest that sexuality and love in the Peoples Temple were expressions of loyalty and commitment between the women in leadership and Jones, who represented Peoples Temple and the hope for a just world, *and* were the foundation for Jones's authority in the movement through the power these women exercised as conduits, information officers, and managers of the various tasks in which Peoples Temple was engaged.