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3/6/79

To: SAC, San Francisco

From: Director, FBI

RYMUR

12/9/92 1048 DKM/mcl
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Enclosed for San Francisco is the original of a letter and its enclosures addressed to the Bureau from John V. Moore, father of Annie Moore and Carolyn Layton. (U)

Enclosures furnished San Francisco for appropriate action. (U)

Enclosures (5)

DES/jap (4)

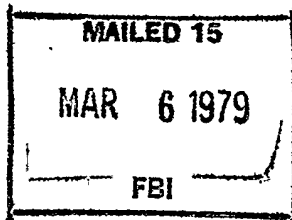
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ENCLOSURE



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Reno's First Church — Organized in 1868

First Street at West
Phone: (702) 322-4564

P.O. Box 789
Reno, Nevada 89504

John V. Moore Douglas M. McCoy
Ministers

March 2, 1979

Mr. Louis Stephens
Room 4058
FBIHQ
10th and Penn. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20535

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DATE 12/9/92 BY 1048 DKM/ndm

Dear Mr. Stephens:

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you about the autopsies. We appreciate your help throughout this difficult and painful process.

I gave some material which I had written to the local FBI agents. The enclosed material will help you understand something of how I see and feel about the tragedy.

With good wishes.

Cordially yours,


John V Moore

enc.

November 26, 1978
Last Sunday of Pentecost
Exodus 20:1-6
Matthew 25:31-46

John V Moore
First United Methodist Church
Reno, Nevada

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DATE 12/9/92 BY 1048 DCM/KDM

A Witness to Tragedy and Resurrection

Barbara and I were on a retreat last Sunday when I was called out of a meeting. I returned my sister's phone call and was told of the assassination of Congressman Ryan and the others. Mike and Foofie Faulstich brought us home. On the way Mike said: "John, this is your calling." I knew what he was talking about.

We have been called to bear witness to the word God speaks to us now. I say "We," because you are as much a part of this as I am. There is no witness to the Word apart from the hearing of it.

Barbara and I are here by the love and strength of God which we have received through your caring and your prayers. I never imagined such a personal blow, but neither could I have imagined the strength that has come to us. We are being given strength now to be faithful to our calling.

I am a sponge. If my voice breaks or there is a long pause, I want you to know that it's all right. I am preaching this morning, because we alone can make our unique witness, and today is the day to make it.

Following the sermon we shall join in prayers of intercession for all of the people involved in this tragedy, from those first shot down to all who died, and all who grieve.

During these past days we have been asked frequently: "How did your children become involved in Peoples Temple?"

There is no simple answer. We are given our genetic ancestry. We are given our families. We are all on our personal journeys. All of these, along with the history of the race, converge upon the present wherein we make choices. Through all of this providence is working silently and unceasingly to bring creation to wholeness.

I will talk only of our children's personal histories. The only way you can understand our children is to know something of our family. In our family you can see the relationship between the events of the sixties and this tragedy, just as there is a relationship between the self-imolation of some Americans during those years and the mass murder-suicide of last week.

Our children learned that mothering is caring for more than kin. Dad talked about it from the pulpit. Mother acted it out. More than fifteen teenagers and young adults shared our home with our children. Some were normal, but others had problems. One did not say a word for three months. At least two others were suicidal. One young man had come from a home where his father had refused to speak to him for more than a year. From childhood our girls saw their mother respond to people in need from unwed mothers to psychotic adults and the poor.

Carolyn loved to play, but as president of the MYF she pushed the group to deal with serious issues. She had a world vision. She traveled to Mexico with her high school Spanish class. Four years later she spent a year studying in France. At UCD she majored in international relations. As a member of Peoples Temple she stood with the poor as they prepared for and stood in court. She expressed her caring both in one-to-one relationships and as a political activist.

From 1963 until 1972 when Annie left home, Annie and Becky walked with us in civil rights and anti-Vietnam War marches. We were together in supporting the farm workers struggle to organize. They stood in silent peace vigils. In high school they bore witness to peace with justice in our world. Their youth group provided a camping experience for foster children. When Annie was sixteen,

She worked as a volunteer in Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C. She worked directly with the children, playing with them, playing her guitar and singing. The children loved her. She decided that she wanted to work in a burn unit, which she did at San Francisco General Hospital before going to Guyana.

Our children took seriously what we believed about commitment, caring about a better, more humane and just society. They saw in Peoples Temple the same kind of caring for people and commitment to social justice that they had lived with. They have paid our dues for our commitments and involvement.

The second question we have been asked is: "What went wrong?" What happened to turn the dream into a nightmare? I shall mention two things that were wrong from the beginning. These are idolatry and paranoia. I speak first of idolatry.

The adulation and worship Jim Jones' followers gave him was idolatrous. We expressed our concern from the first. The First Commandment is the first of two texts for my sermon. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Our children and members of Peoples Temple placed in Jim Jones the trust, and gave to him the loyalty that we were created to give God alone.

It's not that they were so different from other mortals, for idolatry has always been easy and popular. The more common forms of idolatry are to be seen when people give unto the state or church or institution their ultimate devotion. The First Commandment says "No!" and warns of disastrous consequences for disobedience. The truth is that the Source of our lives, the One in whom we trust and unto whom we commit our lives is the Unseen and Eternal One.

To believe the First Commandment, on the other hand, affirms that every ideal and principle, every leader and institution, all morals and values, all means and ends are subordinate to God. This means that they are all subject to criticism. There was no place for this criticism in Peoples Temple.

The second thing that was wrong was paranoia. This was present through the years that we knew Peoples Temple. There's a thin line separating sensitivity to realities from fantasies of persecution. Jim Jones was as sensitive to social injustice as anyone I have ever known. On the other hand, he saw conspiracies in the opposition. I remember painfully the conversation around the table the last night we were in Jonestown. Jim and other leaders were there. The air was heavy with fears of conspiracy. The entire conversation on Jim's part dealt with the conspiracy. They fed each other's fears. There was no voice to question the reality of those fears.

As their fears increased, they increased their control over the members. Finally their fears overwhelmed them.

The death of hundreds and the pain and suffering of hundreds of others is tragedy. The tragedy will be compounded if we fail to discern our relation to that tragedy. Those deaths and all that led up to them are infinitely important to us. To see Jonestown as an isolated event unrelated to our society portends greater tragedy.

Jonestown people were human beings. Except for your caring relationships with us, Jonestown would be names, "cultists," "fanatics," "kooks." Our children are real to you, because you know and love us. Barbara and I could describe for you many of the dead. You would think that we were describing people whom you know, members of our church. If you can feel this, you can begin to relate to the tragedy.

If my judgment is true that idolatry destroyed Peoples Temple, it is equally true that few movements in our time have been more expressive of Jesus' parable of the Last Judgment of feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, giving shelter to the homeless and visiting those in prison than Peoples Temple. A friend said to me Friday, "They found people no one else ever cared about." That's

true. They cared for the least and last of the human family.

The forces of life and death, building and destroying were present in Peoples Temple. Death reigned when there was no one free enough, nor strong enough, nor filled with rage enough to run and throw his body against a vat of cyanide spilling it on the ground. Are there people free enough and strong enough who will throw themselves against the vats of nuclear stockpiles for the sake of the world? Without such people, hundreds of millions of human beings will consume the nuclear cyanide, and it will be murder. Our acquiescence in our own death will make it suicide.

The forces of death are powerful in our society. The arms race, government distant from the governed, inflation, cybernation-unemployment are signs of death. Nowhere is death more visible than in the decay of our cities. There is no survival for cities apart from the creation and sustenance of communities within. Cities governed by law, but without a network of communities which support members and hold them accountable, these cities will crumble, and will bring down nations.

This is what made the Jonestown experiment so important for us. It was an effort to build this kind of common life. Its failure is our loss as we struggle against the forces of death in our cities.

I have talked of history and our personal histories, of our journeys and our choices. Providence is God's working with and through all of these. God has dealt with tragedy before, and God is dealing with tragedy now. We are witnesses to the resurrection, for even now God is raising us from death. God whom we worship is making all things new.

Our Lord identified with the least of humans. Christ is present in the hungry and lonely, the sick and imprisoned. Christ, the love and power of God, is with us now. In Christ we are dying and are being raised to new life.

My last words are of our children. We have shared the same vision, the vision of justice rolling down like a mighty stream, and swords forged into plows. We have shared the same hope. We have shared the same commitment. Carolyn and Annie and Kimo served on a different field. We have wished that they had chosen ours, but they didn't. And they have fallen. We will carry on in the same struggle until we fall upon our fields.

No passage of scripture speaks to me so forcefully as Paul's words from Romans: "Nothing, absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God we have known in Christ Jesus our Lord." This week I have learned in a new way the meaning of these words of Paul: "...love never ends."

Now may the Word which calls forth shoots from dead stumps, a people from dry bones, sons and daughters from the stones at our feet, babies from barren wombs and life from the tomb, call you forth into the new creation.

May, 1978

Notes and reflections on our trip to Guyana, particularly our three days at the Peoples' Temple Cooperative Agricultural Project.

"Impressive" was the first word to come to mind when I was asked what I thought of the project. The clearing of more than eight hundred acres from the midst of the jungle, and the planting of crops is impressive. To imagine more than a thousand Americans migrating to Guyana and working in the project is impressive. Every aspect of the work and life there I found impressive.

As we rode into the area of the buildings we saw Annie and Kimo. Carolyn was quickly there. They took us for a *tour* of the area. Senior Citizens were engaged in calisthenics under the direction of a young woman. We walked to the nursery where infants and toddlers were being cared for.

Later in the day, probably early in the evening, we visited the clinic and talked with Larry (M.D.) who is obviously exceptionally bright. He showed slides and pictures of some of their work. He has equipment for cellular studies, tests, and a new portable x-ray. Two X-ray technicians are there. Two or three nurse practitioners, with varying specialties, and five or six R.N's (or more) round out the medical staff. Annie, in addition to nursing, is in charge of medical supplies. They provide family planning for members of their own community. Clinic hours on Sundays for residents of the region were posted at the entrance to the Project, however, they treat people whenever they come.

They are in instant communication with a network of physicians through amateur radio operators. Larry has consulted with specialists a number of times, including his delivery of twins by caesarean section. They have been visited by the president of a medical association which provides consultative services by radio, and have his full support.

Two Guyanese dentists have held clinics at the Project. Upon one occasion the dentist found only two cavities among the children. This is probably attributable to diet. I think that there are more than forty pre-schoolers living there, in addition to other children of all ages.

The educational program is accredited by the government department of education. I think that they have had, this year, classes through jr. high, with high school work being offered in the fall. The teachers are enthusiastic, for they are able to do some of the things they've always wanted to do in teaching, but have never been free to do. They make their own educational tools, as well as a variety of play toys. Classes are offered for people of all ages including reading and writing, as well as current events. The p.a. system keeps the people abreast daily of events throughout the world. Both dramatic and educational films are shown every evening. "The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter," and a film on the status of women in the Soviet Union were shown one night we were there.

Our first evening at the project, a Friday, people gathered to listen to the band and enjoy the entertainment. The band has performed in Georgetown and has received good press coverage. They play jazz, soul, rock, etc. A seventy-five year old woman did her "Moms Mabley" routine, and a preacher the same age sang and danced. A twelve year old boy sang a solo. A Guyanan from that region brought his flute, played and sang. It was good entertainment.

Single people live in dormitories while families live in houses. One older woman wanted her own house, so they constructed a tiny house for her. The elderly live close in where they *are* checked daily to ascertain the status of their health. The buildings are simple, with wood siding and sheet-metal roofs. Throughout Trinidad and Guyana the roofs were of sheet-metal. There was running water in the guest house, and I presume in the dorms and houses. Showers and toilet facilities are in separate buildings.

All of the cooking is done in a central kitchen on wood stoves. Imagine serving three meals a day to more than a thousand people! People are free to eat in a small dinning area or take their food wherever they choose. All of the buildings, except where people sleep, have open sides. Some of the meeting areas are covered with heavy tenting, still open sided. What is needed is protection from sun and rain with structure for circulation of air to keep cool. There is no need for fuel for heat. We ate well. Most of the food has been grown or produced on the land there. They are not producing enough rice or potatoes for their use. Casava is a tuber which is used for flour for bread, and I suspect hot-cakes, as well as for feed for the animals.

They grow casava (and use both leaves and tubers) custard apple, citrus, pineapple, cocoanut, bananas, I think pineapple, edoes, cutlass bean and corn. They are still working on dry farming of rice. (Guyana is a rice exporting nation.) Starting with 12 seeds of the winged bean, which is 38% protein, they hope to plant eight or ten acres this fall. They produce their *own* eggs and frying and stewing chickens, as well as pork. They have some cows, and soon will have modern dairy equipment.

Their first priority is to become self-sufficient. I think that their major cash outlay is for animal feed, fertilizer, and petroleum for generating electricity. Of course they must pay cash for medical equipment and supplies. They have a 60 foot trawler which they use to haul in supplies and equipment to Port Kaituma, and they sometimes take pay loads, as they do with a truck in Georgetown. One of their members travels up and down the river engaging in barter.

They have a nutritionist who is engaged in continuing research. They have found some ways to use plants that *have* been considered unedible. The Amerindians share their wisdom with the people about food and medicinal herbs. They have their own herb garden, as well as a smoke house. They are excavating for underground cold-cool storage.

They have a machine shop with a tool and die maker teaching younger people to do the work of machinists. They have a mill where they can cut material and erect a house in a day. They are making furniture and toys. They, of course, maintain all of their equipment. They are constructing a windmill which they hope may help with some generating power.

We heard after we returned that the President and Prime Minister of Guyana, and the Prime Minister of Surinam visited the project unannounced. Officials of the U.S. embassy have visited, as well as officials in the departments of health, education and agriculture. (Guyanese) The Guyanese have a vital interest in developing the interior of the country. The people live on the coastal plains. If the Peoples' Temple Agricultural Project can become self-sufficient, it has significant implications for the nation as well as similar countries.

I have never been anyplace where I saw the older people so much a part of the community. We have visited P.T.'s homes for the elderly,

infirm, and retarded in the U.S. Those homes were superior. In Jonestown the elderly receive superior health care. They work and contribute to the community life as they are able. One woman was out hoeing her own little garden. Others had picket fences around their houses. I know of no retirement home which provides better food and health care and a more wholesome environment. They are part of a community with babies and children as well as of young people and adults. This fact is a two way street, benefiting the young as well as the old. When I saw the woman hoeing, I thought of Micah's words "...they shall sit every one under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid:...." The fears that are a part of city life are gone.

The Project has expertise and inexperience. They are proceeding by trial and error. They have had serious accidents, but no fatalities. (Jim Jones' mother died and is buried there.) An agronomist, with a B.S., supervises their farming. They turn to the best advice they can find in Guyana and outside for assistance. A man from an urban area is in charge of the piggery. Another man with no experience is in charge of the chickery. In both instances they have been successful and are learning. Young people who have never had opportunities to learn trades or skills are being given these opportunities now.

The morale is high. There is no possible way for this Project to succeed apart from high morale. No one is paid anything. Everyone eats the same food and sleeps in comparable quarters. Everyone is expected to work. Workers were in the fields early in the morning. They do a lot of work with manual labor, even while they are bringing in some labor saving devices. There is no way they could have done what they have done apart from hard work on the part of many men and women. I was asked by a reporter if I had asked people if they were happy. AS I thought about that question later, it seemed like asking people celebrating at a party if they were happy, or coming down out of the stands and asking members of the team who were moving the ball toward a touchdown if they were happy.

Some parents have charged P.T. with brainwashing their children, (who are in their twenties and older.) and holding them against their will. We saw nothing to suggest any truth in this. Furthermore, I am much more ready to believe that P.T. would expend energy to facilitate unhappy people leaving the Project rather than expending energy to restrain people. In my judgment, they simply do not have the luxury of using any energy to restrain and coerce people. They need all of the energy they can muster devoted to their common task of developing that land and becoming self-sufficient.

The project is entitled "Peoples' Temple Cooperative Agricultural Project. The people working in specific areas meet regularly, sometimes daily, to discuss their work. Suggestions and criticisms are encouraged.

The Project provides an opportunity for some to use education and skills, and for others the opportunity to try new things. The man in charge of the piggery is from Chicago. An attorney is developing the winged bean and citrus crops. Young people for whom doors in the city were closed are learning mechanical and agricultural skills.

I would add to the paragraph on the cooperative the following. There is a sense of ownership which is not present under private ownership. I suspect that this same sense of ownership is often absent even where the legal ownership is corporate, including the workers. The people give themselves in hard work, in part because it is their project. All share the same food and housing. I think that all spend some time in manual labor.

I had a feeling that everybody was somebody. I thought of Israel's understanding of herself, and later the church's self-understanding: "We who were nobody are now God's people." Being somebody is more than corporate identity. People in the Project give the feeling that they are somebody, not simply because they identify with the Project, but in their own right. One woman has the house of her dreams. Other older people tend their own gardens, sing and entertain. While we were in Georgetown, an older woman with a speech impediment, perhaps from a stroke, was waiting eagerly to go to Jonestown. She flew in with us. That night during the entertainment she was keeping time to the music with her cane and swaying. A boy of nine or ten flew in with us. He had been in Georgetown while his artificial leg was lengthened. We met his brother in Jonestown. He is bent with a disfigured spine. In the states he knew the ridicule of playmates. Here there's a different sensitivity. An accountant is using his experience in the business affairs of the church. A lawyer is teaching. Young adults who've come through the drug scene are engaged in significant work. I think that it was Dostievsky who said that a society could be measured by the way it treats people in prison. Surely the humanness of any community is to be seen in part by its inclusion of the children and the elderly, the infirm and those of limited abilities.

The project provides for maximization of deep relationships between people of varying ages, men and women, and of different races, cultural and class backgrounds. The contribution of the nuclear family is strengthened within this kind of a community.

The community has dealt with drug use through negotiation. The young agreed to abstain from the use of drugs while the adults agreed to abstain from the use of tobacco and liquor. These drugs are not a part of the life of the community.

John V Moore
Reno, Nevada

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Peoples Temple and Jonestown

A Statement by

John V Moore

Reno, Nevada

December 16, 1978

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED

HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 12/9/92 BY 1042 DKA/mrdn

Do not
nor quote
For information only -

Two of our daughters, Carolyn Layton and Ann Moore, and our grandson, Jim Jon, died in Jonestown on November 18, 1978. We knew others, most of whom died, and some of whom survived including Larry Layton, our former son-in-law, Michael Prokes, and Tim Carter. Sharon Amos and her beautiful children died in Georgetown. Patty Cartmill, always a barrel of fun, and her daughter Patricia died. My wife and I will always carry with us memories of other good human beings, not so different from the rest of us, who died in that tragedy. The memory of the beautiful, innocent children who were murdered is the most painful memory of all.

I write to make my contribution to our common struggle to understand what moved nine hundred brothers and sisters to end their lives. I do not presume to understand, but our experience is part of the data which must be considered by any who would understand.

We all have difficulty with ambiguity. Something within us wants to see the world divided between the good and the evil, between the life-affirming and life-destroying forces. Almost all of the reporting about, and reflection upon Peoples Temple has perceived only one side of this ambiguity. The destructive forces at work in Peoples Temple are so obvious that we fail to discern the constructive forces which were also present in Jonestown. These life-affirming and life-destroying forces were in conflict until the very end.

The assassination of Congressman Ryan and the others shocked and horrified us. That horror was infinitely compounded with news of the mass murder and suicide. We feel the rage of all who rage. We feel the hurt and grief of all

J. Moore's statement, page 2

who suffer and sorrow. Unlike most others, we have also known of the humane and caring work of Peoples Temple through the years. The evil and destructive forces, and the good and constructive forces have been a part of the history of Peoples Temple.

How did our children become involved in Peoples Temple?

Through the years all kinds of human beings were attracted to and became members of Peoples Temple including people of all races, Jews as well as Christians, young and old, rich and poor, well educated and others with little schooling, strong and weak, adults who were stable and productive in their vocations as well as people whose lives had been chaotic. It is important to remember this diversity as I relate how our children became involved in Peoples Temple.

There's no simple explanation for the course of peoples' lives. We are all given our genetic inheritance, our family ancestry and social history. We are all on our personal journeys. We all make choices.

The relationship between the events of the sixties and this tragedy can be seen in our family. Our children learned that mothering is caring for more than kin. More than fifteen teenagers and young adults shared our home with our children. Some were normal, but others had problems. From childhood our girls saw their mother respond to people in need from unwed mothers to psychotic adults, and the poor.

Carolyn loved to play, but as president of the church youth group she pushed the members to deal with the serious issues in their lives and in our society. She had a world vision. She traveled to Mexico with her high school Spanish class. Four years later she spent a year studying in France. At the University of California in Davis she majored in political science. As a member of Peoples Temple she stood with the poor as they prepared for and appeared in court. She expressed her caring both in one-to-one relationships and in working to influence legislation.

From 1963 until 1972 when Annie left home, Annie and Becky walked with us in civil rights and anti-Vietnam War marches. We were together in supporting the farm

workers' struggle to organize. They stood in silent peace vigils. In high school they bore their witness to peace with justice in our world. Every year their church youth group provided camping experiences for foster children. When Annie was sixteen, she worked as a volunteer in Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C. One who observed her said: "She was a miracle with the children." She decided that she wanted to work in a burn unit, which she did as a registered nurse in the San Francisco General Hospital.

As a member of Peoples Temple, Annie worked with other nurses in taking blood pressure checks and providing sickle cell anemia tests. Education about nutrition was an important part of the teaching program of the church. We visited church homes for the aged and one for retarded boys.

Our children took seriously what we believed about commitment, caring about a better, more humane and just society. They saw in Peoples Temple the same kind of caring for people, and commitment to social justice that they had lived with. They have paid our dues for our commitments and involvement.

Why did the people go to Jonestown?

The people went to Jonestown with hope, hope which grew out of a loss of hope in the United States. There can be no understanding of movements such as Peoples Temple and Jonestown apart from this loss of hope. They migrated, because they had lost hope in any commitment of the American people or the Congress to end racial discrimination and injustice. They had lost hope in the people and the legislatures to deal justly and humanely with the poor. They saw the nation turn inward after the civil rights struggle. They saw the glorification of self interest and affluence. They saw less and less place in our society for people with marginal skills. They saw indifference and callousness in leaders and institutions toward the hopes of the weak and oppressed.

Older people went to Jonestown hoping to become free of purse snatchings,

muggings, and the harshness of the urban scene. Some young people hoped to learn new skills, or to become free from pressures of peers in the crime and drug scenes. People went to Jonestown to find freedom from the indignity our society heaps upon the poor. They went with hope for a simple, quiet life. They anticipated life in a diverse community. They saw themselves leaving a materialistic society where things are valued more than people. Many went as pioneers to create a new community in the jungle. Still others saw in Jonestown a vision of a new society, a wave of the future.

The letters from our girls, which are attached, reveal something of the life in Jonestown. Our girls liked Jonestown. They often spoke of wanting us to retire there. Their letters speak of the agricultural development, concern for nutrition, with frequent references to the excellent care provided by Larry Schacht, child-care, the library, medical services, school, classes for all ages, the band and entertainers, the beauty of the place, visitors, critics and conspiracy.

We spent four days with members of Peoples Temple in Georgetown and three days in Jonestown last May. Two reports of that experience are attached. It is my impression that our favorable reports were not significantly different from the reports of other visitors to the agricultural project. Outward appearances encouraged us to hope in the viability of the project. The attached publication of Peoples Temple, "Peoples Temple Agricultural Project, Progress Report-Summer 1977" is a straight forward report of the life and work of the project.

It is my judgment that Jim Jones and Peoples Temple chose Guyana as the location for their community, because English is the language, ninety-five percent of the population is either East Indian or Black, the socialist government seemed compatible with their views, and because they had something to offer the government and nation of Guyana.

The Meaning of Jonestown

Scholars who will be trying to understand Peoples Temple and Jonestown will find clues in utopian societies, religious orders, religious movements

J. Moore's statement, page 5

such as the Mennonites and Latter Day Saints, and in Marxism. It is my judgment that they will find more similarities between Peoples Temple with the first phenomena than with Marxism. The principle difference between Peoples Temple and Marxists was their establishment of a community first in the United States and later in Jonestown. I believe that they devoted all of their energies to developing Jonestown as a self-supporting community. In moving from the United States to the jungle, they moved away from influencing any society except by example.

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Every community exercises discipline over its members. The only knowledge I have of discipline in Peoples Temple, other than from what I have read, came several years ago when our youngest daughter lived in a church dormitory while she studied nursing. One of the twenty-five students living in the dorm was a "gold brick." He refused to pull his oar. He was brought before the church for judgment. I don't know what the consequences were, but I assume that the church acted to push him to carry his share of the load as a member of the community.

I do know both how we fail to hold people accountable in our schools, communities, and industry, and also how we discipline members in our society whose behavior is deviant. I know something of the cruelty and brutality and dehumanizing powers which are endemic to our jails and prisons. Whenever I pass judgment upon the way other communities deal with deviant behavior, I am conscious of the ways my society deals with behavior it regards as deviant. This consciousness is not a restraining influence on judgment, but it is a safeguard against self-righteousness.

Peoples Temple supported its members and held them accountable. There was no place for liquor or drugs, other than those used for medicinal purposes, either in the United States or in Jonestown. We were told that at some point in history the young people agreed to abstain from the use of drugs and the adults agreed to abstain from the use of liquor and tobacco. Peoples Temple property in Redwood

J. Moore's statement, page 6

Valley had "No Smoking" signs posted. Peoples Temple taught abstinence, because it objected to the use of food grains for liquor as well as because of its damage to the body and mind. The church supported its members as they lived in accordance with its principles and values.

The community which provided support also provided little room for disagreement. We were told that groups working with pigs or chickens, or ground crops, or in the mill would review and evaluate their work, and decide upon changes to improve quality and production. On the other hand, I doubt if there were serious challenges on major community issues. However, according to one report of the tape, opposition to the suicides was expressed.

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Every church calls upon its people to take their vows seriously. One of the most common laments of church leaders is the lack of commitment of the people. The same discouragement is heard from civic leaders who sense a lack of commitment of Americans to the Constitution and to serving their communities and the nation.

Members of Peoples Temple have been deeply committed. Eight years ago our oldest daughter told us that she was giving 25% of her income to her church. Years later our daughters gave everything to their church. In return, the church provided for their needs. Their life style, as that of all Peoples Temple members, was simple. We never regarded our daughters' decisions either as strange or as though they were being manipulated. The practice of Peoples Temple holding possessions in common and distributing resources according to need is as old as the Christian Church. Furthermore, our daughters freely chose to give their possessions to the church. There were characteristics of Peoples Temple which did disturb us, but this decision to share in the common life of their church was not one of them.

It has been a common practice for churches in our country to enter into irrevocable trusts with individuals in exchange for housing or total life care.

Peoples Temple's provision for life in its community in exchange for property has not been fundamentally different from procedures of others churches. Furthermore, social security income has been used by residents of church and fraternal homes, and private facilities, as well as by members of Peoples Temple as payment for their care. I have been told that in addition to the medical services provided in Jonestown that the residents were covered with major medical insurance. The elderly in Jonestown lived in a community with babies and children, young people and adults, a fact which made their experience different from life in segregated communities for the aged.

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Jonestown struck us as similar to homesteading. The major difference, of course, was that Jonestown was a large community in contrast to single family homesteaders. Homesteading is not for everyone, nor was Jonestown. I assumed that some people did not like Jonestown, but it was not easy to leave; because of its geography, but also because of peer pressure. It was a serious mistake to keep unhappy people there. It impressed me as significant that so few people chose to leave with Congressman Ryan.

Homesteading in Jonestown was not like Alaska. No energy was needed to provide for heating. Jonestown was in instant communication with the world. Its medical services, library, educational program, entertaining as well as educational films made it different from family homesteading. I assume that the work was hard as it is on farms especially where much of the work must be done by hand.

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Peoples Temple has always been hyper-sensitive to criticism. I must say several things before proceeding. In my judgment members of Peoples Temple, most of whom are Black, have known injustice and discrimination all of their lives. Second, the church has known harrassment and opposition. Third, whereas I am among the last

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to believe in conspiracies, it is possible that people and groups did conspire to destroy Peoples Temple. While this is a possibility, and whereas criticism was strong, I believe that Peoples Temple fell because of what was wrong within the community.

It strikes me as significant that Jim Jones and Peoples Temple have been on the move for twenty years. They moved from Indiana to Redwood Valley, and from Redwood Valley to San Francisco. In the spring of 1977 they began a major migration to Jonestown. I suspect that in each instance mounting pressure upon the church was related to the moves.

The move to Jonestown put a different but an enormous pressure upon Jim Jones and the church. Providing food and shelter and economic undergirding for a thousand people is no small endeavor. Jonestown was under pressure to become self-sustaining. Even large financial resources would eventually run out unless the project became self-supporting. They worked to increase their income through the sale of crops and products of their cottage industry, and transporting materials by boat and truck.

While in San Francisco many, if not most, of the people in leadership positions worked in secular jobs. In Jonestown very few church members had day-to-day contacts with people outside of the community. Although they kept abreast of the news by way of radio, I suspect that there was little variety in their interpretation of events. Jim Jones was probably the major interpreter of the news. When we sat at the table one evening in May, I sensed that no dissenting voice was heard. I wrote our daughter saying how important I thought it was for them to be in serious dialogue with people outside of their community.

As they became more convinced of threats by those whom they believed were bent upon destroying them, they probably became more controlling of their own members. This is the usual response of leadership under pressure: the greater the threat, the greater must be the internal control. People who left Jonestown and survivors

report that this is what happened as the months passed in Guyana.

Looking back now I realize how weary Jim Jones was in May. I am persuaded that his personal exhaustion played a significant role in the events leading up to and culminating in the mass self-destruction.

Idolatry brought down Peoples Temple. Jews and Christians affirm that God alone is worthy of our ultimate trust and loyalty. Idolatry is pervasive and universal. Peoples Temple was not unique, but the people placed in Jim Jones their ultimate trust and gave him their ultimate loyalty. When a human or an institution is treated as ultimate, order, law, justice and freedom become dependent upon the god. Means are rationalized and justified, because the god decrees that they serve the end. Idolatry is quicksand which leaves us no place to stand to criticize the gods. When the gods falter and fall, they bring down their followers with them.

The Significance of Jonestown for Us

All of us are concerned with protecting the lives of Congressmen and their staffs, as well as other Americans. There is also the question: "How can we protect people from the extremes of religious movements?" This is a legitimate question, but it is not nearly so important as the question: "How can we protect ourselves from the destructive forces which erupted in mass murder and suicide on November 18 in Jonestown, and which are working now in our society?"

What happened in Jonestown was a human and historic phenomenon. The tragedy erupted from deep within the human psyche and also from out of a particular history. The event is being treated as a religious phenomenon unrelated to the same forces which are working in every society. The world is not threatened by religious movements, not even the Jonestown tragedy. The world is threatened by the forces of self destruction which are working in every city and in every capitol.

Jonestown is a sign, a warning of the powers of death which are present in every soul, every institution, and every government.



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John V. Moore Douglas M. McCoy
Ministers

December 21, 1978

James M. Wall
The Christian Century
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Dear Jim:

When I received your letter, I intended to lay aside the suggestion that I try to write of my grasp of the relationship between Jonestown and the sixties. I see no time in the foreseeable future when I will have the energy and time to write an article. However, rather than letting your query pass, I decided to respond off the top of my mind in this letter. I write of observations, impressions, hunches and reflections.

I assume that events which occur simultaneously and/or consecutively in a culture are related to each other. Specifically, I assume that everything that was happening in the United States in the sixties was interrelated. Furthermore, all of those events had roots in our national history. Finally, those events continue to bear fruit. Just as they grew out of history, they shaped history.

Jonestown erupted out of the human soul, and out of a particular history. I'll try to sketch my recollections of some of the things that happened in the sixties. The next question is: "Where are these movements and the people who were involved in them today?" Peoples Temple was directly related to the most important things that were happening during that decade, and the people who died in Jonestown were directly involved in the issues and turmoil of the sixties, or were their heirs.

Here are some of my memories of what was happening during those years. Black Americans were affirming their dignity, and were engaged in the civil rights struggle, which stimulated other minority ethnic groups to act. Students demanded greater participation in the governance of universities and colleges. They initiated the Vietnam Teach-Ins and mobilized the opposition to the war. The sensitivity training sessions of the National Training Laboratory mushroomed into the human potential movement. Many of the young became attracted to Eastern religions. The counter-culture, and along with it the drug scene, was a part of the whole. Sexual practices and mores were changing. Homosexual women and men began to claim their civil liberties. Women dusted off the old banners and renewed the historic struggle.

Each one of these movements, or phenomena, had a wide spectrum of involvement. All were related to each other. The Black affirmation and struggle for civil rights included the Black Muslims, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the NAACP, the Urban League, CORE, SNCC and Stokely Carmichael, and Koinonia Farm. They shared a common concern. They fought on different battlefields. Some worked through the courts; others engaged in direct action. This war to make the Constitution apply to all Americans was met by the strategy of all deliberate delay by entrenched white power.

The Anti-War Movement included such diverse groups as the F.O.R. and the Yippies, the Quakers and the young socialists and communists. Teach-Ins, draft card turn-ins and burnings, the tidal wave of draft avoidance, resistance within the military, the underground, the McCarthy campaign and the Democratic Convention were all part of that scene.

The other movements of the sixties had similar spectra of involvement.

Jim Jones and Peoples Temple were deeply involved in the dominant movements of the sixties. According to the retiring executive of the F.O.R., while he was pastor in Indianapolis, Jim Jones integrated the Methodist Hospital overnight. Peoples Temple was an integrated church from the beginning when other churches were trying to become integrated. When the perspective on integration changed, Peoples Temple continued as an integrated community. Consequently it came under severe criticism from those who felt that Black people needed Black leaders.

Peoples Temple created and sustained a community during those years when the young especially were looking for new forms of communal life. The tide of new communities cast upon the shore all kinds of communes, including Christian communities. Peoples Temple was a heterogeneous community. Its simple life style attracted middle class white people who were unsatisfied with our affluent society.

Peoples Temple welcomed men and women from the drug scene. Rehabilitation of people injured by drugs was not its central concern. In this it was different from Synanon and local drug abuse centers. Peoples Temple did provide a community which enabled many to bring order out of their chaotic lives, but this number was few compared with the membership.

Peoples Temple was never simply a community concerned with itself. It was concerned with civil liberties as it was with civil rights. Long before The Christian Century or New Republic or the ACLU became concerned with Senate Bill #1, Peoples Temple was sounding the alarm. Jones and his community were always concerned with legislation.

Jim Jones, who for a time worked with the poor in Brazil, identified with the struggles of the oppressed in Latin America. He shared the outlook, although not the stability which comes from biblical rootedness, of the people of Solentinam and their priest. Peoples Temple always identified with the poor. Most members had always been poor. More than any other movement the civil rights movement was of and with the poor. The loss of hope of the poor accounts in part for the attraction of Peoples Temple, and the migration of more than a thousand people to Guyana.

The high tide of the civil rights movement of the sixties ebbed. The nation turned inward. The best that can be said for this is that the nation needed time to integrate the changes which had occurred.

Many, perhaps most, of the people who were involved in the sixties in the struggle for greater justice and for peace have moved into established careers. The Vietnam Era Veterans continue to bear the consequences of that war. Discrimination and injustice and threat of war are still with us. In America the poor are the despised poor as the Jews of Europe for centuries were the despised Jews. The poor are the scapegoat for the ills of the land.

James Wall, page 3

Peoples Temple and other groups knew that the work of the sixties was only the beginning. Unlike the nation which turned away, these groups continued the work in which they had been engaged. The discontinuity of concern and work was not with these groups, but with the nation. In my judgment, Peoples Temple did take a major turn in the spring and summer of 1977 when hundreds of people migrated to Jonestown. I see that turn as a giving up on the United States and putting all of their energies into establishing their new community.

Peoples Temple fell, as I have suggested elsewhere, because the self-destructive forces which were always present in Jim Jones and the community became overwhelming.

Perhaps another time I can write to some other questions which you raised.

May the shalom of Christ be with you and your loved ones,

John V Moore

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