

CHAPTER THREE

1978—Jonestown

We tried to find a new beginning. But it's too late. You can't separate yourself from your brother and sister. No way I'm going to do it. I refuse. I don't know who fired the shot. I don't know who killed the Congressman. But as far as I am concerned, I killed him. You understand what I'm saying? I killed him. He had no business coming. I told him not to come.

—Jim Jones at the final Jonestown gathering

And I just like to thank Dad for giving us life, and also death. And I appreciate the fact of the way our children are going. Because, like Dad said, when they come in, what they're gonna do to our children—they're gonna massacre our children. And also the ones that they take capture, they're gonna just let them grow up and be dummies like they want them to be. And not grow up to be a person like the one and only Jim Jones. So I'd like to thank Dad for the opportunity for letting Jonestown be not what it could be, but what Jonestown is. Thank you, Dad. [Applause]

—Man at the final Jonestown gathering¹

The Violence

On Saturday, November 18, 1978, the communal settlement of the Peoples Temple in Guyana, South America, became the paradigmatic “destructive cult.” A total of 918 persons died on that day as a result of the activities of Peoples Temple members. Prior to the mass suicide/murder, a group of Jonestown men shot and killed five persons and wounded ten in U.S. Con-

gressman Leo Ryan's party, who were attempting to depart from a nearby airstrip. The five killed were Congressman Ryan, NBC reporter Don Harris, NBC cameraman Bob Brown, *San Francisco Examiner* photographer Greg Robinson, and Peoples Temple defector Patricia Parks.² The assassins then returned to Jonestown to commit suicide with their community. In Jonestown, residents carried out a group suicide/murder that they had discussed and planned for years. The Jonestown physician and nurses prepared a brew of tranquilizers and cyanide. People were either injected with the deadly mixture, or they drank Fla-Vor-Aid, which contained the poison. Nine hundred and nine people died at Jonestown including 294 children under the age of eighteen. The Peoples Temple minister, Jim Jones, age forty-seven, and a nurse, Annie Moore, age twenty-four, died of gunshot wounds. Because only seven autopsies were performed, it was never determined if any people died of causes other than poisoning.³ There was no evidence that people were forced at gunpoint to commit suicide. After hearing about the suicides by shortwave radio, a loyal member of Peoples Temple stationed in Georgetown, Guyana, slit the throats of her three children and then killed herself. Four months later, the church's public relations man, Mike Prokes, a former television news bureau chief, called a news conference in a Modesto, California, motel. Prokes said, "I can't disassociate myself from the people who died, nor do I want to. The people weren't brainwashed fanatics or cultists; the Temple was not a cult." Then he went into the bathroom and shot himself in the head.⁴

Eighty-five members of Peoples Temple survived, including an elderly woman who slept through the group suicide/murder, an elderly man who hid in a ditch, people who escaped into the jungle, and members who were away from Jonestown. The latter included three sons of Jim Jones who were in Georgetown playing in a basketball tournament.⁵

Jim Jones

James Warren Jones was born on May 13, 1931, in a small farming town in Indiana. He was the only child of James T. Jones and Lynetta Putnam Jones. His father, a World War I veteran disabled by mustard gas, felt defeated by life and was emotionally distant. His mother, whose features revealed her Cherokee blood, worked hard to support the family during the Great Depression. Lynetta worked at a variety of jobs, including farm and factory labor. As a child, Jim Jones felt unloved and was an aggressive and angry boy. Lynetta Jones resented being poor, and she became a trade union organizer and agitator in the factories. Lynetta's son also resented having been born on the wrong side of the tracks. Being considered poor white trash, Jim Jones felt alienated from society.⁶

As a young man, Jim Jones worked in a hospital in Richmond, Indiana, attended college, and preached on the street corners in working-class and industrial neighborhoods. He preached a message of brotherhood to racially mixed audiences. In 1949, Jones married Marceline Baldwin, a young white woman from a Methodist family who subsequently completed her nurse's training. During this time, Jim Jones was associating with communists. These friends told him, "Don't become a member of the Party; work for the Party."⁷

In 1951 Jim and Marceline Jones moved to Indianapolis, where Jim attended communist meetings and rallies. He later reported that the harassment he experienced during the McCarthy era increased his commitment to communism. Jones was distraught at the execution of the Rosenbergs in 1953 for spying, because he believed that they were executed because they were communists. Jones asked himself, "How can I demonstrate my Marxism?" and concluded that the answer was to "infiltrate the church." Jones embarked on a project to use the church as a cover to preach that religion was "the opiate of the people."⁸

In 1952 in Indianapolis, Jones became a student pastor in a Methodist church. According to Marceline, he "was eager to awaken people to the humanity of Jesus and to let them know that what Jesus was, they could be also. . . . He said there must be no creed but the helping ministry of Christ and no law but the law of love."⁹ Jones left that church, because those Methodists refused to permit him to integrate African Americans into the church.¹⁰

Jones attended a faith-healing service at the Seventh Day Baptist Church, and observed that healing attracted people and their money. Jones concluded that with financial resources he could do some good in society. At a Pentecostal convention, a Pentecostal/Holiness woman minister called Jones out and declared, "I perceive that you are a prophet that shall go around the world. . . . And tonight ye shall begin your ministry." Immediately Jones called out people by their names and Social Security numbers, identified their illnesses, and healed them. Jones became a popular revival preacher who healed, discerned people's thoughts and troubles, and prophesied. With the help of accomplices, he faked some healings because they found that the staged healings increased faith among people, which in turn produced healings.¹¹

Jones's goal in healing and thus in attracting people and financial resources was to help the poor. He always preached the social gospel, but in his early revival days Jones did not reveal that his gospel was communism. By the late 1960s, Jones openly preached in the Peoples Temple his version of communism, which he called "apostolic socialism." Citing Acts 4:31-32, he taught that Christians should hold their financial resources

in common, and, citing Acts 4:35 that distribution of resources should be according to need. Peoples Temple members held to the Marxist axiom: From each according to his ability, to each according to his need. Even after Jones openly preached socialism and derided religion, the Peoples Temple stationery continued to quote Matthew 25:35-40, in which Jesus asserts that the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the naked, the imprisoned, and strangers should be served, and concludes, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."¹²

Jones taught that he was a manifestation of the Christ Principle. Jones healed like Jesus did, and he even claimed to have raised the dead. Like Jesus, Jones preached the importance of right human relations and radical egalitarianism. He taught that all people had access to the Holy Spirit within themselves, but that his own healing power demonstrated that he was a special manifestation of "Christ the Revolution."¹³ In a sermon in San Francisco, Jones preached,

I have put on Christ, you see. I have followed after the example of Christ. When you see me it's no longer Jim Jones here. I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ that lives here. Now Christ is in this body.

You will not get Christ's blessing in Jim Jones' blessing until you walk like Jim Jones, until you talk like Jim Jones, until you act like Jim Jones, until you look like Jim Jones. How long will I be with you until you understand that *I* am no longer a man, but a Principle. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Light. No one can come to the Father but through me.¹⁴

Jones warned that a cataclysmic period of race war, genocide, and ultimately nuclear war was nearing. He taught that Nazi fascists and Ku Klux Klan white supremacists would put people of color in concentration camps. As the messiah, Jones offered a place of refuge in his church and ultimately the "promised land" in Jonestown. Utilizing a powerful metaphor from the book of Revelation in the New Testament, Jones taught that American capitalist culture was irredeemable "Babylon." There was no point in trying to reform its corrupt institutions. Instead, the elect had to withdraw to a place of safety to survive the destruction, after which they would emerge to establish the perfect communist society.¹⁵

Jim Jones sincerely preached a gospel of socialist redemption, and he did not personally enrich himself from the financial resources accumulated by the Peoples Temple.¹⁶ Barton and Dorothy Hunter, Disciples of Christ members who knew Jones in the 1950s in Indianapolis reported that he "was not always evil; he became evil."¹⁷ Jones became evil because the peo-

ple around him permitted and assisted him in committing evil acts. Peoples Temple members' dualistic (us versus them) perspective, in which they saw Peoples Temple, the righteous remnant, as being attacked by evil capitalistic society, Babylon, led them to resort to violent acts to preserve their community. For the residents of Jonestown, the preservation of their community was the most important thing in the world—it was their ultimate concern—and any means could be employed to save that community.

Peoples Temple

After having to leave the Somerset Southside Methodist Church for bringing black people to the services, Jones began a church called Community Unity in a rented building in Indianapolis. In 1955 a building was purchased, and the church was renamed Wings of Deliverance. Later in 1955 its name was changed to Peoples Temple Full Gospel Church.¹⁸

While living in Indianapolis, Jim Jones engaged in numerous activities to help the poor and to work for racial equality and justice. Jim and Marceline Jones turned their residence into a nursing home for the elderly, and they started their “rainbow family” by adopting children of several races. In the late 1950s Jim Jones visited Father Divine’s Peace Mission in Philadelphia, and he subsequently borrowed some of Father Divine’s themes and emulated his organizational structure. Jones became known to his congregation as “Father” or “Dad.” Borrowing the rhetoric of Father Divine, Jones emphasized “the promised land” in his sermons. In 1959 Jones affiliated his congregation with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) naming it the Peoples Temple Christian Church Full Gospel. In 1961 Jones was hired as the executive director of the Indianapolis Human Rights Commission, and he successfully integrated churches, restaurants, the telephone company, the police department, a theater, an amusement park, and the Methodist Hospital.¹⁹

Jones’s work for integration and his multiracial family attracted the ire of local racists. In response, Jones increasingly became preoccupied with finding a nonracist environment in which his family and congregation could thrive. In 1961 Jones visited British Guiana (after independence, known as Guyana).²⁰

Jones read an article in the January 1962 issue of *Esquire* entitled “Nine Places in the World to Hide,” which gave advice on locations that would be safe in the event of nuclear holocaust. Based on that article, Jones and his family moved to Belo Horizonte, Brazil, and lived there from 1962 to 1963. The Cuban missile crisis occurred in October 1962, and Brazilians made bitter remarks to Jones such as, “You goddamn Yankees, you’re gonna blow up the world.”²¹

After returning to the United States, Jones visited Redwood Valley, California, another safe place specified by the *Esquire* article. Upon his return to Indianapolis from Redwood Valley, Jones had a vision of a nuclear flash originating in Chicago. In 1965, Jones, his family, and about seventy members of Peoples Temple relocated to Redwood Valley. In California, the church was known as the Peoples Temple of the Disciples of Christ.²²

Mary McCormick Maaga has identified three populations within the Peoples Temple: 1) people, predominantly whites, who joined primarily in family groups when Peoples Temple was a Christian sect in Indiana affiliated with the Disciples of Christ; 2) young, college-educated whites who joined Peoples Temple beginning in 1968 in California; and 3) blacks who joined in the early 1970s when the Peoples Temple began urban ministries in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Maaga terms these three Peoples Temple constituencies the white Indiana sect members, the white California new religious movement (NRM) members, and the black urban church members. The white Indiana sect members were loyal to Jones's ideal of apostolic socialism and maintained a personal loyalty to Marceline Jones after Jim Jones began his psychological decline into drug addiction. The white NRM members became church leaders. They were the administrators of the Peoples Temple, and later of Jonestown; they extended the Peoples Temple ministry to urban blacks in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The black urban church members constituted the majority of Peoples Temple's membership. They were the beneficiaries of a variety of social services organized by the Peoples Temple, including nine homes for the elderly, six homes for foster children, assistance in negotiating the American welfare system, and a ranch for the mentally retarded.²³

Among the white California NRM members, commitment to the goals of the Peoples Temple often was expressed in sexual relations with Jim Jones. Jones had sexual relations with a number of young women and with some of the men. While undoubtedly personal pathologies and insecurities were being acted out in the inner circle in which Jim Jones was idealized as the sole virile male,²⁴ there was also a sociological aspect to the sexual relations with Jim Jones. The young adults' sexually expressed love for Jones empowered them as his delegates to perform administrative duties in their collective work for social justice and the establishment of their ideal socialist community.²⁵ Marceline Jones's acquiescence to this situation is puzzling, but her commitment to the ultimate concern and work of the Peoples Temple apparently outweighed her pain at having to share her husband.²⁶ Quite a few young white women were empowered by their relationship with Jones to challenging careers in the Peoples Temple in which they worked for the socialist transformation of society. Given the limited options for women to find meaningful work at

that time in the United States, Maaga has stressed that “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.”²⁷

In 1972 Temple member Grace Stoen gave birth to John Victor Stoen. Grace’s husband, Timothy Stoen, signed an affidavit stating that John Victor was fathered by Jim Jones, “the most compassionate, honest, and courageous human being the world contains.”²⁸ Tim Stoen stated in the affidavit:

The child, John Victor Stoen, was born January 15, 1972. I am privileged beyond words to have the responsibility for caring for him, and I undertake this task humbly with the steadfast hope that said child will become a devoted follower of Jesus Christ and be instrumental in bringing God’s kingdom here on earth, as has been his wonderful natural father.²⁹

After Grace and Tim Stoen defected separately, leaving John Victor in Jonestown, this child became the focus of a bitter custody battle that was an important catalyst for the group suicide/murder.

Foremost among the women of Jones’s inner circle was Carolyn Moore Layton, a high school political science teacher and a daughter of a United Methodist minister’s family committed to working for social justice. In 1969 Carolyn Moore Layton functioned as Jim Jones’s partner, and in 1975 she gave birth to a son fathered by Jones named James John (nicknamed Jim-Jon, and also Kimo). Jim Jones and Carolyn Moore Layton believed that they were the reincarnations of Lenin and his mistress.³⁰

Pressures on Peoples Temple in California prompted preparations to relocate to Guyana. The first news stories to be critical of Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple began to appear in 1972, particularly in the *San Francisco Examiner*. In 1973, the Peoples Temple church building in San Francisco was set on fire, probably by white racists. The Peoples Temple board of directors decided on October 8, 1973, to establish an agricultural settlement in Guyana. After Jones was arrested for lewd conduct in a Los Angeles public bathroom, he visited Guyana to initiate the preparations for the move there. In 1974 Jones sent a small group of pioneers to Guyana to clear a portion of the 3,824 acres leased from the socialist Guyanese government and to begin the building of Jonestown. By 1975 there were about fifty residents in Jonestown. Peoples Temple moved from Redwood Valley to San Francisco, where the members’ activities helped to elect George Moscone as mayor.³¹ Jones’s “populist and paranoid antigovernment stand”³² attracted support from California Republicans, but the liberal success of electing Moscone mayor of San Francisco in 1975 moved Jones

to the center of Democratic Party activities in California; Jones cultivated contacts with Rosalynn Carter and Walter Mondale. In 1976 Jones was appointed to the San Francisco Housing Authority and elected its chair. While Jonestown was being established as the new “promised land” and a refuge from persecution, Jones openly allied himself with leftist political figures and groups in California.³³

The activities of Peoples Temple defectors in producing with reporters sensationalized news stories, sparking an investigation by the Treasury Department and the interest of the Internal Revenue Service, confirmed Jones’s belief that Peoples Temple would be persecuted and that they needed to seek refuge in their separated promised land.³⁴ During the summer of 1977 over 1,000 Peoples Temple members, including Jim Jones, moved to Jonestown, their promised land in the Guyanese jungle.³⁵

Catastrophic Millennialism

Jim Jones taught that the ultimate reality, the true God, was “Principle” or “Divine Principle.” Principle was equated with “Love,” and Love was equated with “Socialism.” Jones derided traditional Christianity as “fly away religion,” and rejected the Bible, particularly the influential King James Version, as being written by white men to justify the subordination of women and the oppression and enslavement of people of color. According to Jones, the Bible only contained beliefs about a “Sky God” or “Buzzard God,” who was no God at all.³⁶

Jones asserted that he was a savior or messiah sent by the true God, the Principle of Socialism, to rescue humans from their imprisonment in the evil earthly realm of suffering in which the Buzzard God was ignorantly believed to be the true God. Jones cited his psychic abilities, his powers to prophesy, to heal, and to raise the dead as demonstrating that he was the messiah sent by the true God, Socialism. Jones asserted that he had been immaculately conceived. His mother’s desire to give birth to a savior had put her into mental attunement with a highly evolved planet outside the Sky God’s realm of influence. Jones claimed that he was a highly evolved black soul incarnated in a white body, but whose black hair and dark eyes revealed his affinity with black people. Like Jesus, Jones was born into a poor family. Jones claimed that he was previously incarnated as Moses to lead the Hebrews out of slavery, as Jesus to preach the gospel of human dignity and equality to the socially oppressed, and as Lenin to establish communism in the U.S.S.R. Jones as savior was the person who most fully manifested the Principle of Socialism, and his mission was to teach others to become gods like himself, complete manifestations of Socialism. Jones’s purpose was to liberate all, particularly people of color and women, who

were oppressed, commodified, enslaved, and used in the capitalist economic system. Jones would save people from being classified as subhuman by sinful capitalism, and restore to them their dignity and full humanity.³⁷

David Chidester has pointed out that Jim Jones's alienation from American culture was expressed in his orientation toward the communism of the U.S.S.R., the People's Republic of China, and Cuba, and also in his claim to be an extraterrestrial visiting this degraded and corrupt world on a rescue mission. Jones's doctrine of reincarnation relativized embodiedness; characteristics of sex and race were temporary and would, in all likelihood, change in the next incarnation.³⁸

Jones taught that the world soon would be destroyed by nuclear holocaust, and that the surviving elect would then create a new socialist Eden on Earth. After he returned to Indiana from Brazil, Jones predicted that the nuclear catastrophe would occur on July 15, 1967. This prediction impelled the relocation of Peoples Temple to Redwood Valley. After his prophecy was disconfirmed, Jones claimed that "I know the day," but would not specify another date. This had the effect of maintaining the urgency generated by belief that the current world would be destroyed imminently.³⁹

Jones taught that the United States would suffer the greatest destruction in the nuclear holocaust. Only communists, such as members of Peoples



In May 1978, Rev. John and Barbara Moore visited their two daughters and grandson in Jonestown. Barbara Moore, on the right, stands with Peoples Temple members relocating to Jonestown. The majority of Jonestown residents were African Americans seeking relief from racism and poverty in the United States. (Photo courtesy of Rebecca Moore)

Temple, the U.S.S.R., and China had made adequate preparations to survive. Nuclear destruction would be the means used by Divine Socialism to wipe away evil capitalism and open the way for the socialist millennial condition.⁴⁰

Dualism characterized the catastrophic millennial worldview taught by Jim Jones. The United States was the Antichrist and capitalism was “the Antichrist system.” The United States was “Babylon,”⁴¹ and Jones would lead the elect to the promised land where they would build a new Eden.

The success of Jones’s political and social service activities in California marked a period in which Peoples Temple had the potential to become a progressive millennial movement, achieving its millennial condition through social service. Instead, active opposition by the federal government, the anticult organization calling itself the Concerned Relatives, and the media convinced Peoples Temple members they were being systematically persecuted, which caused them to cling to their dualistic catastrophic millennial perspective and to see themselves as being on the righteous side in a pitched battle of good versus evil.

The Persecution

The racially integrated Peoples Temple was persecuted by white racists in California. After the San Francisco church building was fire-bombed and badly damaged in August 1973, the church’s board of directors passed a resolution on October 8, 1973, to establish an agricultural mission in Guyana. Temple members believed local Neo-Nazis had burned their church. Members of the American Nazi Party threatened Peoples Temple members and their children in Redwood Valley and Ukiah, California. Neo-Nazis sent them hate mail, and slashed the tires of Temple members’ cars.⁴²

By 1977 Peoples Temple was under attack by ex-members, particularly Tim Stoen, and Al and Jeannie Mills (formerly named Elmer and Deanna Mertle), who initiated a campaign against Peoples Temple with multiple fronts. They enrolled reporters to produce highly negative news stories about Peoples Temple, they prompted several federal agencies to investigate Peoples Temple, and they lobbied congressmen to investigate Peoples Temple. The defectors and parents of Peoples Temple members coalesced into a group (of primarily whites) calling themselves Concerned Relatives.

Both the Concerned Relatives and Jonestown residents perceived their relation to each other in simplistic, dualistic terms. It was a battle of good versus evil, with each side convinced it was in the right and the other was evil. The dualism of Jim Jones and Peoples Temple members had long led them to act on their conviction that their ultimate goal of multiracial communal justice and brotherhood justified the use of any means includ-

ing deception, illegal activities, coercion, and violence. The dualism of the Concerned Relatives also led them to conclude that their goal of their loved ones' liberation from Peoples Temple justified the use of any means, including telling exaggerated atrocity tales to the press and to government agents, kidnapping, and "deprogramming." Steve Katsaris made unsuccessful plans to kidnap and deprogram his daughter. Tim Stoen likewise claimed that he would kidnap John Victor Stoen. Concerned Relatives and Peoples Temple were opponents in a war.⁴³

The mass exodus of Peoples Temple members to Jonestown before adequate facilities were constructed was in response to a negative article appearing in the August 1, 1977, issue of *New West*,⁴⁴ in which defectors made allegations of sexual, financial, and physical abuses. Tim Stoen and Grace Stoen (by that time divorced) initiated legal proceedings to wrest custody of John Victor from Jones.

In a manner typical of the anticult movement, Concerned Relatives demonized Jim Jones and Jonestown as a dangerous "cult" that had to be dismantled.⁴⁵ The defectors continued to see the world in dualistic terms, but now Jim Jones was evil incarnate and the Concerned Relatives were the good guys. It was still a war of good versus evil, and former Peoples Temple members worked just as eagerly to oppose Jim Jones as they earlier had worked to support Jones and his cause. The dualism of the defectors only fed the fears of distressed relatives, such as Steve Katsaris, the father of Maria Katsaris, a young woman in Jones's inner circle who had taken over the mothering of John Victor Stoen.

The aggressive mobilization of legal, media, and federal resources to attack Jonestown, which culminated in the investigative visit by Congressman Leo Ryan, increased the sense within Jonestown of being besieged by evil forces that aimed to destroy their precious community. John Victor Stoen, whom Jones was determined not to give up, became the symbol in Jonestown for the potential for dismemberment of their community by outside evil forces. The demonization of Jim Jones and Jonestown by the Concerned Relatives was matched by the demonization of the Concerned Relatives, the news media, the federal government, and American capitalism by the residents of Jonestown. For both sides it was "us versus them," us versus the alien, evil other.

Jim Jones, a professed communist, expected to be persecuted by the United States government, and the facts appeared to bear out his expectation. In California in November 1976, when Unita Blackwell Wright, an African American mayor of a small Mississippi town, spoke to the Peoples Temple about her trip in 1973 to the People's Republic of China, Peoples Temple security guards noticed a man with electronic equipment on church grounds. They traced his rental car and discovered that he was an air force electronics expert who investigated possible sources of interference with the

U.S. national defense radar system. In 1977, Jones learned through an informant and his people's intelligence work, that the allegations of defectors had stimulated a Treasury Department investigation of the Peoples Temple. Peoples Temple leaders were well aware of the harassment of another new religious movement, the Unification Church ("Moonies"), by the Internal Revenue Service. The Peoples Temple leaders believed it was better to leave the United States than risk loss of financial resources to the IRS.⁴⁶

Rebecca Moore has argued that Jonestown residents were caught in a "vise," consisting of lawsuits filed by Tim Stoen and Concerned Relatives, investigations and actions by federal agencies that threatened the continued existence of Jonestown, dismay caused by internal dissension, highly negative press stories, and fears that their status in Guyana was precarious because of the Guyanese political situation. The Jonestown residents had no place to go to escape the multiple pressures. Jim Jones could not return to the United States, where lawsuits and a criminal complaint were pending against him.⁴⁷ African American residents of Jonestown did not see returning to racist America and ghetto life as a viable option. The white members did not want to be disloyal to the blacks and their shared ideal of multiracial justice and harmony.

In May 1978, Tim Stoen, an attorney, filed suit against Jones and Peoples Temple asking for damages of over \$56 million. A detective, Joe Mazor, working for Concerned Relatives, hired a San Francisco public relations firm to coordinate a negative publicity campaign against Peoples Temple. Jeannie Mills made false allegations that Jonestown was stockpiling illegal weapons, and this prompted an investigation by the U.S. Customs Service beginning in February 1977.⁴⁸ The Customs Service sent reports containing the exaggerated allegations to the State Department and Interpol, the international police organization. An Interpol report based on the Customs Report was shown to Peoples Temple leaders by Guyanese police.⁴⁹ Carolyn Moore Layton wrote to her parents in December 1977 that the Interpol document confirmed for the Jonestown residents that there was a conspiracy against Jonestown.

The media has advertised us in the most grotesque and unreal manner—due to this conspiracy which is indeed real, though I know you are not conspiracy-minded and tend to pooh-pooh the idea. I saw myself the Interpol [Customs] report which a high officer in government allowed a number of us to read firsthand. They are accusing us of the most absurd things—trafficking in weapons and currencies. This I saw with my own eyes....⁵⁰

The negative news reports about Peoples Temple prompted a variety of investigations by American federal agencies. The Social Security Adminis-

tration (SSA) asked the U.S. embassy in Guyana to send officials to Jonestown to interview Social Security recipients to make sure they were not being held against their will. Consul McCoy visited Jonestown a total of three times in 1977 and 1978, and none of the seventy-five people interviewed wanted to leave. McCoy later said, "Anyone who says it was a concentration camp is just being silly. For the old people, and the people coming from the ghetto, it was relatively better."⁵¹ The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) began monitoring Jonestown shortwave radio communications beginning in April 1977. The FCC fined Jonestown ham operators for broadcasting messages out-of-band, and Jonestown residents feared that the FCC intended to cut off their sole source of communication with the outside world. In the summer of 1977, the U.S. Postal Service returned Social Security checks (totalling about \$37,000 monthly for about 200 recipients) bound for people living in Jonestown to the U.S. Treasury Department. This continued until December 1977, but in spring 1978 more Social Security checks were misrouted. Since financial assets were held in common in the Peoples Temple, the loss of the monthly Social Security income threatened the economic survival of Jonestown. Another threat materialized in February 1978, when the Internal Revenue Service said it was investigating Peoples Temple to determine if any of its income was taxable.⁵²

The residents of Jonestown were convinced that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was working to destroy their community. After all, they were Americans espousing communism and living in a socialist country. To determine if the CIA actually had an interest in Jonestown, Fielding McGehee (whose two sisters-in-law died in Jonestown) filed a lawsuit in 1980 under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain the CIA's files on Peoples Temple and Jonestown. The heavily excised documents that were obtained from the CIA indicated that CIA agents were operating in Guyana. The CIA was the agency that first notified the U.S. Defense Department of the deaths by poisoning at Jonestown.⁵³ Subsequent to the 1978 Jonestown deaths, the House Foreign Affairs Committee produced a report on "The Assassination of Representative Leo Ryan and the Jonestown, Guyana Tragedy." The vast bulk of this twelve-volume report remains classified, including sections on whether there was a conspiracy against Jim Jones and Peoples Temple, whether the violence could have been foreseen, whether there was a conspiracy to kill Congressman Leo Ryan, the investigation of Peoples Temple by the Customs Service, and the role and performance of the State Department in the case.⁵⁴ According to Rebecca Moore, "The Jonestown tragedy continues because the government will not examine its role in the affair...."⁵⁵

In response to the threats posed by Concerned Relatives, the media, and the American government, draconian measures were instituted

within Jonestown to stifle dissent and keep people from defecting. It was feared that defectors would join the outside evil forces attempting to destroy Peoples Temple; therefore, it was all-important to control dissent. At Jonestown, a punishment imposed by Jones was to make the offender chew and swallow hot peppers. Rebellious residents of Jonestown were drugged; some were kept sedated in the "Special Care Unit." Troublemakers, including people who attempted to escape, had to perform hard physical labor or were confined in coffin-sized boxes. Jim Jones manipulated people by pretending to have heart attacks, or by staging gunfire attacks on himself that he attributed to the CIA, mercenaries, or Guyanese soldiers.⁵⁶ Jones mediated all information about events in the outside world to Jonestown residents by recounting his version of the news over the public address system. Jones presented reports that made the outside world seem a dangerous place on the brink of nuclear war and/or other conflicts.⁵⁷

Paranoia in Jonestown was increased by the attempts of the Stoens to gain custody of John Victor Stoen. Carolyn Moore Layton wrote about the custody case:

Pragmatically the issue of John Stoen is not an isolated custody case to us. From the political perspective we know that if we do not get backing on this issue, how could we ever have confidence in the government backing us on far more controversial issues. We also know that if John Stoen were taken from the collective, it would be number one in a series of similar attempts. . . . It was very much for the good of the collective that we decided as a group to make a stand on the John Stoen issue. . . . No child here would ever again feel secure if we handed over John Stoen. . . .⁵⁸

After Grace Stoen was granted custody of John Victor in California, her attorney visited Jonestown at the end of August 1977 to pick up the boy, but John Victor and Jones were nowhere to be found. After the attorney departed, Jones returned to Jonestown and made claims of being besieged by the Guyana Defense Force. For three days and nights, someone fired shots into Jonestown. Talking by shortwave radio to Marceline in the United States, Jones said that they would all commit suicide. Marceline Jones frantically solicited assurances from Guyanese officials that Jonestown would not be assaulted. After another California court decision gave custody of John Victor to Grace and Tim Stoen, they, with Grace's attorney, went to Georgetown, Guyana, to initiate legal proceedings there.⁵⁹

Increasingly, it appeared to Jonestown residents that Jonestown was not the promised land of safe refuge. They explored the possibility of



Kimo Prokes (left) and John Victor Stoen (right) playing in Jonestown. (Photo courtesy of Rebecca Moore)

relocating to Cuba or the U.S.S.R. but received no encouragement from those countries.

Peoples Temple leaders desperately looked for advocates who shared their dualistic and embattled perspective. Their own attorney in the United States, Charles Garry, was discredited in their eyes for reporting that he could find no evidence that the U.S. government was conspiring against Peoples Temple and for advising that Jonestown open itself up to investigators. They found the advocates they wanted in Mark Lane, an attorney noted for his conspiracy theories about the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., and in Don Freed, another conspiracy theorist and Hollywood writer. Lane and Freed persuaded Joe Mazor, a private detective who had worked for Concerned Relatives, to visit Jonestown and confess his activities against Peoples Temple. Lane was hired as a Peoples Temple attorney and public relations consultant, and he announced he would file lawsuits against various Concerned Relatives, the U.S. attorney general, the FBI, and the CIA for conspiring to destroy the Peoples Temple.⁶⁰

The confrontation that immediately provoked the murders and mass suicide was the visit of Congressman Leo Ryan to Jonestown on November 17-18, 1978. Ryan's visit brought into Jonestown the enemies most hated by Peoples Temple members: the press, Concerned Relatives, and the American government. Initially, Jones point-blank refused permission for Ryan and his party to visit Jonestown. Peoples Temple members wrote to Ryan asking him not to visit Jonestown, and saying that if he did,

they regarded his visit as intended to destroy Jonestown. Jones grudgingly acquiesced to the visit only when Ryan and his party made arrangements to come anyway. Once in Jonestown, the reporters insisted on being taken into a building that Peoples Temple members did not want them to inspect; it was an overcrowded dorm for seniors. At the end of the visit, while the camera filmed, reporter Don Harris aggressively questioned Jim Jones for 45 minutes about weapons, physical punishment, and drugs. As the defectors were getting into a truck, a woman remaining in Jonestown began screaming because her husband was taking their children without telling her of his plans to leave. While Congressman Ryan informed Jones that his report would be primarily positive, that he saw no coercion being used to keep people in Jonestown, and that he recommended that Jonestown increase its interaction with the outside world, Ryan was attacked by a man wielding a knife. Ryan demanded that the man be arrested, but then the party hastily departed for the airstrip. As soon as Ryan's party left, a short and unusually violent thunderstorm eerily blew into Jonestown.⁶¹

The Failure of the Millennial Goal

Jonestown was already failing to achieve its residents' goal of becoming a model socialist collective prior to the visit of Ryan, the Concerned Relatives, and the reporters. Mary McCormick Maaga has pointed out that about one-half of the Jonestown residents were elderly or juveniles. About 150 people were sixty-five years of age or older, and 340 were nineteen years of age or younger.⁶² The able-bodied adults had to work hard to provide material support, health care, and education to the other residents. By the time of the mass suicide, the adult residents were tired and despaired of whether their collective was working. This was particularly true of the women leaders in Jones's inner circle.

The ultimate concern of the Jonestown residents was to preserve their community. Loyalty to the collective was the primary value. In solidarity, each person served according to her or his capacity, and each person received community services according to her or his needs. For the African American residents, Jonestown was an improvement in quality of life compared to their existence in racist America. For the young, white, college-educated residents, Jonestown was a sacrifice in standard of living to achieve their ideal of human unity. Maaga has pointed out that the defectors were primarily whites with the social and financial resources to return and be integrated back into American mainstream society.

In the dualistic Peoples Temple worldview, people who defected were demonized as traitors. The traitor was the "most dangerous person of all,"

because he or she appeared to be an insider, but in fact was an outsider.⁶³ Since the ultimate concern was to maintain the community at all costs, no one wanted to be seen as disloyal.

Every defection was an assault against the ultimate concern, and there were defections beginning when Peoples Temple was located solely in the United States. Eight young people defected in 1973. Al and Jeannie Mills defected in late 1975.⁶⁴ Grace Stoen defected in July 1976, before the move to Guyana, and Tim Stoen defected from Guyana in June 1977.⁶⁵ Two white women who had been entrusted with Peoples Temple's complex banking arrangements defected from Jonestown: Debbie Layton Blakey in May 1978 and Teri Buford in October 1978. Debbie Layton Blakey reported to the American embassy at Georgetown that Peoples Temple members were rehearsing mass suicide.⁶⁶

When Congressman Ryan departed from Jonestown, his party included sixteen defectors, the majority belonging to the Parks and Bogue families. The Parks and Bogue families were Indiana sect members, so they were some of the earliest members of Peoples Temple. The Parks family helped run the Jonestown medical clinic, and Jim Bogue, an Indiana farmer, was the settlement's agricultural manager and one of Jonestown's founding pioneers. The defection of such long-time and important members was a tremendous blow to the collective, and it was particularly demoralizing to the remaining Indiana sect members.⁶⁷ Jim Jones begged Jerry Parks not to leave with the enemies of the Peoples Temple, and he offered to pay for the Parks's travel costs if they would leave a few days after Ryan's party departed. When Jerry Parks refused, Jones was crushed and said, "I have failed." Calling the defectors "traitors," Jones said, "All is lost. I live for my people because they need me. But whenever they leave, they tell lies about the place."⁶⁸

In addition to the looming economic and organizational failure of Jonestown, and the specter of the disintegration of the community caused by defections and the attacks by Concerned Relatives, the news media, and the American government as symbolized by Congressman Ryan, there was also the increasingly obvious failure of Jim Jones to be the messiah. For the majority of the residents of Jonestown: "To love God's justice on earth was to love Jim Jones; to be loyal to socialist values was to be loyal to Jones."⁶⁹ The members of the inner circle knew that Jones did not perform miracles, but many of the church members believed that Jones was a messiah who could heal and prophesy. Jones had saved many of them from death in the ghettos of racist America. But Jim Jones was addicted to drugs, and his addiction worsened after he moved to Jonestown. His orders were increasingly erratic, and many knew that wild orders given on the spur of the moment would be reversed later. His speech heard over the public address system was slurred. People saw Jones staggering or urinating in public view.⁷⁰ Increasingly, Jones was unable to walk without assistance.

Jim Jones was a messiah in danger of being discredited in the eyes of his followers. In Jonestown, Jim Jones was the patriarch of a dysfunctional family—dysfunctional because no one wanted to acknowledge the mental illness of their beloved and idealized Dad.

The Decision to Commit Violence

Rebecca Moore has argued that the members of Peoples Temple, and especially the residents of Jonestown, were bonded together by their shared participation in the life of the community, which increasingly included participation in rituals of violence. The Peoples Temple's emphasis on violence was not exceptional, but was congruent with the violence committed by mainstream American society and government. In the United States, boxing matches were utilized by Peoples Temple members to punish and humiliate troublemakers. In Jonestown, dissidents were drugged. People who attempted to escape were captured and confined. The level of institutional control and corresponding internally-directed violence and fear of attack escalated as the persecution by Concerned Relatives, federal agencies, and the media intensified. It was all important to preserve the collective from destruction by a hostile external world and internal traitors. Residents of Jonestown began rehearsing to commit "revolutionary suicide" to protect the cohesiveness of their community.⁷¹

Jim Jones first mentioned suicide as a possible response to the defections of eight young people in 1973. In 1976 the first suicide drill was conducted within Jones's inner circle as a loyalty test. For at least a year prior to fateful November 18, 1978, revolutionary suicide⁷² was discussed publicly at Jonestown; residents wrote essays expressing their feelings and thoughts on the subject. A rationale that many found compelling was that it might be necessary to kill the children in order to protect them from being "brainwashed" by capitalists. In 1978 there were drills in which Jonestown residents drank what was purported to be a poisoned beverage. Subsequently, Jones explained that the drill was a loyalty test that prepared them to commit suicide in the future. Jerry Parks, who left with Congressman Ryan, reported that there had been five or six suicide drills during the seven-and-a-half months he had been in Jonestown.⁷³

Maaga has pointed out that it is inaccurate to attribute the decision to commit group suicide solely to Jim Jones. She has demonstrated that Jim Jones's power in Peoples Temple, in fact, declined when he moved to Jonestown. Jones knew how to wield power and influence in urban contexts, but he had no skills to run an agricultural settlement in the jungle. The inner circle of leaders close to Jones, mostly young white women, applied their administrative skills to run Jonestown. At Jonestown, the emphasis was on medical health care, and not on Jones's healing power.⁷⁴

There were abuses of authority by Jim Jones at Jonestown, but the community's isolation and will to succeed as a socialist collective prompted people to carry out or overlook coercive measures to control dissidents.

The women within the inner circle at Jonestown were increasingly stressed. The leaders were not privileged in the Jonestown lifestyle; they worked hard and felt the heavy burden of providing for everyone in the collective. They were tired, and they wondered if they were going to fail to achieve their goal of creating a socialist community. They may have thought of leaving Jonestown, but that would have meant repudiating their ultimate concern of preserving the collective. For the leaders, leaving would have meant rejecting the responsibility they had undertaken for the well-being of everyone in Jonestown. This ultimate concern and the demonization of traitors made it unthinkable to give up and leave. As an alternative to passively watching Jonestown disintegrate, the white leaders (the young college-educated NRM members) increasingly thought that perhaps Jonestown could become a symbol of socialist solidarity in protest against corrupt capitalism by committing revolutionary suicide.⁷⁵

The rapid deterioration of Jim Jones's health and behavior increased the stress on the Jonestown leaders. Jones's erratic behavior made it increasingly likely that Jones himself would cause the failure of Jonestown.

The attacks by the Concerned Relatives and the press, and the Concerned Relatives' success in prompting investigations by federal agencies and in getting Congressman Ryan to visit Jonestown increased the pressure on the Jonestown residents. The paranoid, dualistic view within Jonestown was that their beloved community soon would be destroyed by outside evil forces. The possibility that John Victor Stoen might be removed from Jonestown symbolized to them the threat to the community.⁷⁶

Peoples Temple members often stated that they were prepared to die for their ultimate concern. On March 14, 1978, Pamela Moton wrote to the U.S. Congress alleging conspiracies against the Peoples Temple. Moton wrote, "I can say without hesitation that we are devoted to a decision that it is better even to die than to be constantly harassed from one continent to the next. I hope you can...protect the right of over 1,000 people from the U.S. to live in peace."⁷⁷ After defecting, Debbie Layton Blakey signed an affidavit stating that there had been a drill in which everyone drank a red liquid and were told that they would all die within forty-five minutes. Then Jones informed them that it had been a loyalty test, but soon they would have to die by their own hands.⁷⁸ During the summer of 1978, Mike Prokes wrote to the *San Francisco Examiner*, "We have found something to die for, and it's called social justice. We will at least have had the satisfaction of living that principle, not because it promised success or reward, but simply because we felt it was the right thing to do."⁷⁹ Prior to Congressman Leo Ryan's trip to

Guyana, Grace Stoen and Debbie Layton Blakey briefed the U.S. State Department on the possibility of mass suicide in Jonestown.⁸⁰

The defections of Teri Buford and Debbie Layton Blakey demonstrated that members of the inner circle were capable of becoming traitors. The departure of the Parks and the Bogue families was a blow to the Indiana-sect members remaining in Jonestown. The evidence that even founding members of Peoples Temple could abandon the ultimate concern made the Indiana-sect members willing to cooperate in the group suicide in order to preserve the community. At the last community meeting in Jonestown, Jim Jones facilitated the persuasion of the black urban church members to commit suicide, and they agreed that the most important thing in the world was to remain loyal to their community. The black members did not want to be disloyal like the white defectors.⁸¹

In addition to their decision to direct violence inwardly, a few Jonestown men first directed violence externally to take revenge against those who threatened their community. Prior to his departure, Ryan was attacked by a knife-wielding Jonestown resident. The two Peoples Temple attorneys, Charles Garry and Mark Lane, wrestled the knife away from Don Sly (known in Jonestown as Ujara), and Ryan was not injured. Ryan and his party left immediately. John Victor Stoen (age six) remained in Jonestown. None of the defecting Jonestown residents leaving with Ryan at that time were related to the Concerned Relatives. Larry Layton, the brother of Debbie Layton Blakey and the former husband of Carolyn Moore Layton, pretended to be a defector and left with Ryan's party. Larry Layton probably was a planted assassin, for he fired a gun inside the partially boarded airplane while half a dozen other men from Jonestown opened fire on members of Ryan's party outside the plane. In the attack on Ryan's party, shots were fired at close range to make sure that Congressman Leo Ryan, NBC reporter Don Harris, NBC cameraman Bob Brown, and *San Francisco Examiner* photographer Greg Robinson were killed.⁸²

During the final Jonestown gathering, Jim Jones claimed, "I can't control these people. They're out there. They've gone with guns."⁸³ As the Jonestown physician and nurses prepared the poison and organized its distribution, Jones articulated in a final rambling speech that he, too, believed in the ultimate concern of loyalty to the Jonestown collective. He would stick with his people even when they committed violence, and to preserve their community he would join them in suicide.⁸⁴ Jones blamed the ex-members for the necessity of committing suicide, particularly Tim Stoen and Deanna Mertle (Jeannie Mills), for prompting Congressman Ryan to make his unwelcome visit to Jonestown.

The audiotape of Jonestown's final gathering as the poison was prepared, distributed, and given (first to the children) provides a lesson in the



Jim Jones and Peoples Temple members in Jonestown. (Corbis)

danger of succumbing to peer pressure and of uncritically giving authority to a charismatic leader. Christine Miller, a sixty-year-old black woman, argued with Jones that suicide was not the proper response. Miller suggested that they could relocate to Russia, and Jones claimed to put in a call to Russia to convince her that Russia would not take them. Miller argued that the handful of people who defected were not worth the lives of the whole community. She asserted that she believed that “as long as there’s life there’s hope. . . .” Jones did not silence Miller, but he began to remind her and the members that he was a prophet with all the answers. Miller stated, “I’m not ready to die,” and argued that the babies deserved to live. She further argued that by committing suicide they were just letting themselves be defeated by their enemies. Jones again said he was “speaking as a prophet today,” and “I cannot separate myself from the pain of my people. You can’t either, Christine, if you stop to think about it. You can’t separate yourself. We’ve walked too long together.” Miller then asserted that “we all have a right to our own destiny as individuals.”

At this direct challenge to the ultimate concern of Peoples Temple—loyalty to each other as members of a socialist collective—another person intervened. Jim McElvane, a black man who was the head of Peoples Temple security in California, spoke up. He had arrived in Jonestown only two days previously. McElvane shifted the focus of the discussion back to the ultimate concern—communal solidarity—but with the emphasis that

the community identified with Jim Jones and his salvific power: “Christine, you’re only standing here because he was here in the first place. So I don’t know what you’re talking about, having an individual life. Your life has been extended to the day that you’re standing there because of him.” Another woman acknowledged to Jones, “you’ve saved so many people.” Jones’s reply indicated that he still believed himself to be a manifestation of Christ: “I’ve saved them. I saved them, but I made my example. I made my expression. I made my manifestation and the world was not ready, not ready for me. Paul said, ‘I was a man born out of due season.’ I’ve been born out of due season, just like all we are—and the best testimony we can make is to leave this goddamn world. [Applause]” Christine Miller complained that people were becoming hostile toward her, but Jones encouraged her to speak and said that she was not a traitor: “I know you’re not a runner.” But Miller decided to stop arguing: “That’s all I have to say.” Christine Miller chose to die with her community.

Other Peoples Temple members continued testifying, and McElvane spoke up again to offer the concept of reincarnation as a comfort to people as they committed suicide together. He claimed that as a therapist who had conducted past-life regressions, he knew that stepping over to the other side “feels good.” Numerous other people thanked Dad for his love, for giving them life and also death. Jim Jones reiterated McElvane’s statements about reincarnation by saying that dying was “just stepping over to another plane.” Toward the end, Jim Jones expressed his conviction that “this world is not our home,” and that the Jonestown community by committing suicide was saying, “we don’t like the way the world is.” Jim Jones’s last words on the audiotape were, “We got tired. We didn’t commit suicide, we committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world.”⁸⁵

Annie Moore, a nurse and the twenty-four-year-old sister of Carolyn Moore Layton, apparently was the last person to die.⁸⁶ Annie wrote a final letter that concluded with the following paragraphs:

Jim Jones showed us all this—that we could live together with our differences, that we are all the same human beings. Luckily, we are more fortunate than the starving babies of Ethiopia, than the starving babies of the United States.

What a beautiful place this was. The children loved the jungle, learned about animals and plants. There were no cars to run over them; no child molesters to molest them; nobody to hurt them. They were the freest, most intelligent children I had ever known.

Seniors had dignity. They had whatever they wanted—a plot of land for a garden. Seniors were treated with respect—something

they never had in the United States. A rare few were sick, and when they were, they were given the best medical care. . . .

Underneath the note, in different colored ink, she added:

We died because you would not let us live in peace. Annie Moore⁸⁷

The Jonestown residents' ultimate concern was preserved.

Notes

1. Mary McCormick Maaga, "Triple Erasure: Women and Power in Peoples Temple," Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1996, Appendix Two, transcript of audiotape of the final Jonestown gathering, 154.
2. John R. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1987), 279.
3. Rebecca Moore, "'American as Cherry Pie': Peoples Temple and Violence in America," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 121-37; Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 5.
4. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 291.
Mike Prokes and Tim and Mike Carter were not present for the group suicide because the women leaders had sent them off with suitcases filled with the Peoples Temple financial assets to deliver to the Soviet embassy in Georgetown. See Hall, 280-81.
5. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 5-6; Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 155, 293; Lawrence Wright, "Orphans of Jonestown," *New Yorker*, November 22, 1993, 66-89.
Jim and Marceline Jones adopted a number of children into their "rainbow family": Agnes was part Native American. Stephanie (who died at age five in a car accident), Lew, and Suzanne were Korean. Their surviving children are Stephan Gandhi Jones, their only natural child who is white, James Warren Jones Jr., who is African American, and Tim Jones, who is white. To a great extent, Stephen, Jimmy, and Tim were saved from the group suicide because they were young men rebelling against their father, and perhaps they perceived their father's insanity more clearly than many other Jonestown residents. See Wright, "Orphans of Jonestown."
6. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 3-6, 11; Rebecca Moore, *Sympathetic History of Jonestown: The Moore Family Involvement in Peoples Temple* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 148-50.
7. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 16.
8. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 17, 144; Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 150.
9. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 17.
10. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 151-52.
11. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 18-22.
12. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 19-22, 24-26, 146; David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 38.
13. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 23-25, 31.
14. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 155.

- 15 Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 32, 36, 145, 175-76; Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 157-59.
16. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 35.
17. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 37.
18. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 1-2.
19. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 45-56, 146.
20. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 57-9.
21. Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 5, 109-10.
22. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 2; Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 160, 163; Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 109-10.
23. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 71-83, 126; Wright, "Orphans of Jonestown," 68.
24. Laurie Efrein Kahalas, *Snake Dance: Unravelling the Mysteries of Jonestown* (New York: Red Robin Press, 1998).
25. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 70.

This situation sounds bizarre but it is a known human organization of power. In Yorubaland in southwest Nigeria, the sovereign of the Oyo kingdom had numerous wives who traveled as his delegates and exercised power in his name; men who performed similar governing functions for the Oyo king were known as his "wives." See J. Lorand Matory, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More: Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Oyo Yoruba Religion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

26. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 76.
27. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 53.
28. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 61, note 21. This statement was signed also by Marcelline Jones. See Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 127.
29. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 229.
30. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 8, 54; Rebecca Moore, *The Jonestown Letters: Correspondence of the Moore Family 1970-1985* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 112. Carolyn Moore Layton and Mike Prokes were married in December 1974 to provide legitimate status to her child. Therefore, Carolyn's son was known as Kimo Prokes. See Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 100.
31. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 3, 6; Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 133; Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 116.
32. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 153.
33. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 153, 163, 166, 168-70.
34. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 177, 178-89.
35. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 3; Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 161.
36. Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 51-56, 64-68.
37. Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 56-59, 60-63, 73-78.
38. Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 79-92, 124.
39. Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 109-11.
40. Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 111-13.
41. Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 90.
42. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 115-16.
43. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 210-53, 256.
44. Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 142.
45. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 3, 28.
46. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 176, 182-83, 207.
47. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 259, 273-315.
48. After the mass suicide/murder, only ten guns, thirteen small-calibre rifles, seven shotguns, and a flare gun were found in Jonestown. See Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 293.
49. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 259, 277-82. The content of the report is given in

full on pages 280-81.

50. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 282.
51. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 287-88, quote on 288.
52. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 275, 292-301; Moore, "'American as Cherry Pie.'"
53. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 399-427; Rebecca Moore, *In Defense of Peoples Temple—And Other Essays* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 152-53.
54. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 360-61; Moore, *In Defense*, 149-51.

There were numerous federal investigations of Jonestown after the deaths on November 18, 1978. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) found that Jonestown had no illegal weapons. In fact, for a community living in the jungle, Jonestown was remarkably underarmed. The Department of Health and Human Services found that Jonestown was not committing welfare fraud. The U.S. Customs Service reported that no customs violations had been committed by Peoples Temple. See Moore, *In Defense*, 146-47.

55. Moore, *In Defense*, 153.
56. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 233, 240-41; Wright, "Orphans of Jonestown," 72, 77-78, 80; Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 218, 220, 309-11; Moore, "'American as Cherry Pie.'"

In California physical punishments were administered. Offending adults had to box stronger members in literal battles between justice (the collective) and anarchy (individualism); young people were spanked hard with a three-foot paddle. These were punishments that the church members collectively sanctioned against misbehaving members. See Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 123-25, 143.

57. Moore, "'American as Cherry Pie.'"
58. Moore, *In Defense*, 21.
59. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 217-18, 221; Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 283-87.
60. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 248-49, 251-53; Moore, "'American as Cherry Pie.'"
61. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 265-72, 274-77; Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 315, 319-26.
62. In Jonestown, 48 percent of the residents were black women, 22 percent were black men, 14 percent were white women, 10 percent were white men. Fifty women were raising one or two children and eighteen women had three or more children. "Half of the three hundred 'single individuals' at Jonestown were over the age of fifty and nearly all of them were women." See Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 9, 82.
63. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 28.
64. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 134; Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 139.
65. Grace Stoen defected with her lover, Walter "Smitty" Jones. Four months prior to her defection, Grace and Tim Stoen had signed a release permitting John Victor to be taken to Guyana. Three months after Grace Stoen defected, Tim Stoen gave the power of attorney for John Victor to Jim Jones, Maria Katsaris, and other Peoples Temple members. In fall 1976, John Victor Stoen, age four, was taken to Guyana. See Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 180-81.
66. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 117-18, 122.
67. Maaga, "Triple Erasure," 125-26.

Tommy Bogue attempted to escape in 1978, but was captured by the security force. He and friends were shackled in chains and forced to chop wood for 18 hours a day for three weeks. Bogue reported that others who attempted to escape were confined in coffin-sized boxes for several days. See Moore,

“American as Cherry Pie.”

68. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 273-74.
69. Maaga, “Triple Erasure,” 65-66, 122.
70. Maaga, “Triple Erasure,” 89, 114.
71. Moore, “American as Cherry Pie.”
72. The term *revolutionary suicide* came from a 1973 book by that title by Black Panther theorist Huey P. Newton (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich). Jones visited with Newton in Cuba in 1977. See Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 135-36, 205, 218, 295.
73. Maaga, “Triple Erasure,” 104-5, 114-15, 120-21; Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 135; Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 130-32.
74. Maaga, “Triple Erasure,” 84-87.
75. Maaga, “Triple Erasure,” 113-14, 120.
76. Maaga, “Triple Erasure,” 105-6.
77. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 229.
78. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 246.
79. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 254.
80. Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 263.
81. Maaga, “Triple Erasure,” 123, 126.
 The two Peoples Temple attorneys, Charles Garry and Mark Lane, who remained in Jonestown after Ryan’s party left, recounted that they were taken to the guest house so the group suicide could begin. They were told about the plans for revolutionary suicide by two teenagers who passed by. The boys told Garry and Lane how to walk to Port Kaituma, and then returned to the group to commit suicide themselves. See Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 281.
82. Maaga, “Triple Erasure,” 124, 142, note 1; Hall, *Gone from the Promised Land*, 276-79; Moore, *A Sympathetic History*, 327.
83. Maaga, “Triple Erasure,” Appendix II, 143.
84. Maaga, “Triple Erasure,” Appendix II, gives the entire transcript of the final Jonestown gathering, 142-57.
85. Maaga, “Triple Erasure,” 142-57.
86. A Jonestown resident hiding in the jungle heard six gun shots. Later it was found that two shots had been fired to kill two dogs, two shots had been fired into the pet chimpanzee, one shot had killed Jim Jones, and one shot to the head killed Annie Moore. The final and sixth shot was heard a good while after the others. Moore, *Sympathetic History*, 335.
87. Moore, *Jonestown Letters*, 286.