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San Francisco County Superior Court

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CARL M. GLENN, Clerk  
BY H. MACDONALD  
Deputy Clerk

8  
9 SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
10 IN THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

11  
12 In re the marriage of ) No. 719-147  
13 Petitioner: GRACE LUCY STOEN ) DECLARATION OF GRACE STOEN  
14 and )  
15 Respondent: TIMOTHY O. STOEN )  
16

17 I am informed and believe that my minor son, JOHN VICTOR  
18 STOEN, date of birth January 25, 1972, age 5 is in the physical  
19 custody of the Peoples' Temple, Inc. of San Francisco, Calif-  
20 ornia; that the Peoples' Temple has taken John to the Peoples'  
21 Temple Agricultural Mission in Guyana and that they will refuse  
22 to return him to me or to bring him within the jurisdiction of  
23 this court unless ordered to do so. I further believe that un-  
24 less this court acts, John will continue to be held in an at-  
25 mosphere that is detrimental to his mental and emotional well  
26 being and that he will be permanently deprived of the loving

1 and stable home I can provide for him.

2 I am a former member of the Peoples' Temple. I joined  
3 the organization shortly after my marriage to Respondent in  
4 1970. At the time of the marriage, I was nineteen years old,  
5 impressionable and looked to my husband, who was 12 years old  
6 for guidance. Respondent was a Deputy District Attorney for  
7 Mendocino County. He is intelligent and widely read, I great  
8 respected his judgment. He was a member of the Temple; I so  
9 became a member also. The organization's professed ideals of  
10 social justice, racial equality and concern for the economic  
11 disadvantaged held great appeal for both of us.

12 I was given the position of bookkeeper and became inti-  
13 mately involved with the inner workings of the organization.  
14 I was instructed to become a notary public in order to assist  
15 the deeding of large amounts of real property to the Temple  
16 its members.

17 It soon became apparent to me that the organization and  
18 the lives of its members were tightly controlled by the Reverend  
19 Jim Jones, the founder. The Temple's Planning Commission  
20 created an illusion of collective decision-making. The Commis-  
21 sion made major decisions affecting the lives of the members  
22 It decided where members would live, with whom their children  
23 would live, the career they would pursue and what they were  
24 do with their earnings and property. The Planning Commission  
25 selected members out for punishment and public humiliation.  
26 Public humiliation and the threat of it caused members to b

1 passive in the face of demands made by the Temple. The Planni  
2 Commission was in fact the alter-ego of Rev. Jim Jones. Membe  
3 felt a general loss of autonomy.

4 I worked in close association with Rev. Jim Jones. His b  
5 havior was frequently erratic. Rev. Jones often expressed a  
6 paranoid world vision wherein he and his organization were the  
7 objective of multiple conspiracies. To protect himself from  
8 alleged threat of assassination, he employed bodyguards. He  
9 feared attack from within the Temple as well as from without.  
10 To protect himself from internal threat, members were frequent  
11 directed to sign statements declaring their predisposition to  
12 one aberrant form of anti-social behavior or another. I was  
13 required to sign such a statement. These statements were re-  
14 garded as an internal security measure. There was no suggesti  
15 that they were truthful. The statements were intended to be  
16 used to discredit anyone who turned against the church.

17 My own life was strictly regulated by the Temple. My  
18 minor son was sent to live with other Temple members. The  
19 children of other Temple were in turn sent to live with me.  
20 Though undermining the nuclear family was not a stated aim of  
21 the church, such was frequently the effect of the Temple's  
22 directives. The heavy schedule of church duties to which I  
23 was assigned often left me no more than 5 to 6 hours sleep  
24 per night. Nevertheless, because of the strong love I felt fo  
25 my son, I was able to maintain close contact with John, genera  
26 seeing him at least four times a week. We enjoyed a warm and

1 affectionate relationship.

2       The Peoples' Temple gradually took control of my life. T  
3 regulation and regimentation of our lives caused Respondent and  
4 myself to grow apart. Leaving the Temple seemed impossible.  
5 Members were strongly discouraged from leaving. Any defection  
6 from the ranks was seen as a threat to the security of the  
7 organization. Rumors circulated about dire consequences which  
8 would befall defectors. Because of my intimate knowledge of  
9 the organization's financing, my departure would be viewed as  
10 especially threatening.

11       Toward the end of my time as bookkeeper, the Temple's  
12 finances came under scrutiny. Allegations that transfers of  
13 money had been fraudulently induced began to be heard. Paranoia  
14 within the organization increased.

15       Thoroughly disillusioned with the organization I secretly  
16 departed in July, 1976. Since leaving the organization in July  
17 of 1976, I have made numerous attempts, first acting alone, and  
18 then with the aid of my attorney to secure my son's return  
19 through informal negotiations with Respondent and the Peoples'  
20 Temple.

21       I did not seek a court order because I feared that the  
22 Temple would secret the boy in Guyana and deny knowledge of his  
23 whereabouts. My last meeting with Respondent confirmed that  
24 our minor son was in Guyana with the Temple. Respondent indi-  
25 cated that he believed that custody should be split between  
26 the Temple and myself. He further stated that he would make

1 all reasonable efforts to have John sent back to live with me  
2 for six months, and that if negotiations with the church failed,  
3 he would travel to Guyana to institute legal proceedings. This  
4 conversation with Respondent confirmed my worst fears. Respon-  
5 dent is unsure of his own ability to secure the return of our  
6 son.

7 I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is  
8 true and correct except for those matters stated on information  
9 and belief and as to these I believe them to be true.

10 Executed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of August, 1977 at San Francisco,  
11 California.

12 *Grace Lucy Stoen*  
13 GRACE LUCY STOEN  
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