



PEOPLES TEMPLE

Jim Jones,
Pastor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 10, 1978

OPEN STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF PEOPLES TEMPLE
IN JONESTOWN, GUYANA, SOUTH AMERICA

The statements of public accusations that have been presented at press conferences staged by a group of people calling themselves "Concerned Relatives" represents the latest in a long series of preposterous attacks against Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple.

We have repeatedly and in great detail made it clear to the public that what they have been witnessing is a series of elaborate charades that only imperfectly masks a politically motivated conspiracy, using former members of Peoples Temple who have worked within our organization as agent provocateurs. We are only one of a large number of progressive groups who have been targeted for destruction because we are uniting poor and working class people across racial lines giving them power over their own lives and doing it non-violently.

The fact that we have pointed to the failure of the so-called Free Enterprise system to provide for all segments of the population and the fact that we have taken up justice and liberation causes; the fact that we have been able to put together all those successful survival programs that have made the difference for thousands of people, providing food, medical assistance, jobs, training, the kind of corporate power and solidarity that racist forces in the U.S. want to keep for themselves; the fact that we have several thousand members; the fact that we live a cooperative lifestyle, and have been able to generate some wealth thereby -- which has been used for the welfare of all the people in the form of human service; the fact that we have been able to put out a free newspaper that hits hard on injustice: these are the real reasons why we are under attack.

The group of "Concerned Relatives" is only the latest ploy. These shallow appeals indicate that they are growing desperate. "Concerned Relatives" are now groaning about "human rights violations" against individuals who have publicly stated that they want nothing to do with them. The statement of the "Concerned Relatives" was signed by a sordid crew of individuals who, among other things, have tried blackmail; have embezzled from Peoples Temple while infiltrating it; have even been involved in the manufacture of ammunition and have advocated ridiculous and mad schemes of violence in order to achieve revolutionary "ends" in the classic manner of agent provocateurs. Included in the group are people who have used and trafficked in drugs; some who have molested children, including their own, such as Maria Katsaris just publicly exposed her father; who have operated credit card rackets, forged checks, stolen money from the treasury in the amount of thousands of dollars;

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who have actually abused and treated black youngsters as house slaves; who have engaged in welfare fraud and who have exhibited a series of highly unstable personal patterns in their private lives, e.g. sadism.

They are organizers, collaborators, and recruits, both paid and volunteer, in a conspiracy that has tried every trick in to the book to -- in the words of one of them--, "destroy" us.

Conspiring with other individuals, leaders in the group have lied about us, getting the worst kind of smear and innuendo-filled articles in the press. They have sent out aides to bribe people to lie about us; who have the devices and "dirty trick" methods of Cointelpro that have been used repeatedly to harass other progressive organizations.

They have tried a host of schemes: sabotaging our communications; instigating bogus investigations that get headline media coverage while turning up nothing; using lies, distortions, faceless accusers to create an aura of implied guilt; they have attempted to cut off pensions to elderly people in our organization, at our beautiful agricultural project in Guyana, in an effort to actually starve them out. They have tried to use the Offices of high officials in the State Department, everyone they could think of to sabotage our work here, which has been described by thousands of visitors as a model of cooperation, earning praises all over the world. They have circulated lies about us everywhere and have even tried to send undercover agents hired to snatch away children illegally and violently from their rightful parents and homes, and have tried to bribe and pay off officials to help them. It is all documented fact.

Today, the organizers of these efforts are particularly infuriated because they haven't gotten anywhere with their schemes to date. So here they are again, mostly the same cast of characters, now with the new name, "Concerned Relatives", now talking about "human rights", with sanctimonious expressions on their faces, and the mask of outraged antiquated moralism which they have learned to wear so well.

The group is lead by a gentleman who cannot stand the fact that his 24-year-old daughter has asserted her independence from his emotional tyranny over her, and has been desperately trying to reunite daughter to "doting daddy". (This individual is also a clergyman of sorts, and once instructed her to "worship me as an icon unto God".) The group also includes people who have publicly threatened to hire mercenaries to do whatever necessary to "liberate" their children. An interesting approach coming from persons supposedly concerned about "human rights"! With the help of their lawyer-leader, Tim Stoen, the group has put together a document that is filled with distortions, misportrayals, and lies.

It is interesting and instructive that many of the "Concerned Relatives" have shown only a token concern in the past about their "loved ones" that they now claim to agonize over. These loved ones... the truth is that they are glad to be free of these relatives, and they wish to be left alone to lead a life of their own choosing. It is a most basic human right which the "Concerned Relatives" are violating, not Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple.

Let us look at it a little more closely. The "Concerned Relatives" are merely threatened by the fact that Peoples Temple and Jim Jones have been able to provide the meaningful, wholesome lifestyle that they have failed to provide for those whom they profess such "concern" about. The accusa-

tion that Jim Jones is "power hungry"; the sing-song of the documents is predictable as it is absurd. What sort of power is being referred to? No answer. The authors and signers of the document reflect again their total inability to understand the dynamics of a collective unit that seems threatening to them precisely because it is no worship of self, no power hunger. They prove their own "power hunger" in their possessiveness of their relatives, a state which is completely inconsistent, indeed impossible, in the cooperative, sharing, socialistic lifestyle that Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple live in Jonestown. They cannot even relate to that: there is something about a person deciding to devote themselves to a cause, an ideal, to the well-being of others outside their own narrow ken, that shakes these people up.

They are unable to understand the ultimate commitment of people to a cause that transcends their own personal self-interests. Their "concern" --about a group of people who feel strongly enough about their work for justice and human liberation that they would give their lives for such a cause-- is at once phony and disgusting. Such dedication has always been a puzzlement and a threat to people who have no such commitment, to people whose lives move on a superficial moral plane, circumscribed by a thousand fears, and compensation for the half-realization of the emptiness of their lives; people who --devoid of principle-- are content merely to read the newspaper and live for self.

Accusations of "power hunger" are not new to Jim Jones, or to other principled leaders who have called humanity to a higher road. There is no question that, in the process of choosing a path in life that transcends the "us four and no more" syndrome, people will leave their biological relatives, not so much out of rejection as from a parting of the ways on the grounds of conviction in conscience, which finally transcends mere biology and genetics. Those who are left behind cannot, because of their emotional sickness, accept the choice of those who have responded to the call of a different drummer, to a life of service, to a renunciation of selfishness, to the building of brotherhood. For a time, they will live with a hopeless contradiction, recognizing the validity of that road, but morally unprepared to travel it. They will finally seek to eradicate their pain by trampling, villifying, sabotaging and crucifying the standard-bearers of that higher vision. Sooner or later, they find each other, band into desperate confraternity, and plan their crimes, being careful always to gloss over their infamy with the appearance of righteousness. It is in such a perspective that we must view the statement of the "Concerned Relatives". Such statements have been issued many times through history, beginning perhaps with the pleas of the outraged parents in ancient Athens about a teacher who was "corrupting" the minds of their children. We publicly repudiate not only the "interpretations" of the "Concerned Relatives" of the commitment of our organization to ideals of economic justice and human liberation for which we are willing to give our lives, but we repudiate their "concern". We call it a vicious hoax. We've no use to even dignify their lying and inane allegations.

Our community in Guyana is an open book. It has been visited by hundreds of people some of whom have decided to join with us even though they had no previous association with Peoples Temple. Others visiting are relatives of residents, both members and non-members of the organization. What they have found in this city shows the lie of all the perverted portrayals of the ringleaders of the "Concerned Relatives" group: a

community of joy, beauty, industry, accomplishment, total lack of racism. A community where people whose lives were being wasted and thwarted are now finding meaning and purpose. A community that has been called a model of cooperation by the countless number of people who have penned glowing entries into the guest book (a partial list of visitors and their comments is attached). This group with their fictitious complaints represent only the tiniest fraction, even, of the relatives of people in Jonestown who are coming to the Project in increasing numbers and are thrilled by what they see. Soon a Methodist Superintendent and his wife, parents of Jonestown residents, will be visiting, and they are only one visit amongst many.

So, who precisely, are these "Concerned Relatives"? Briefly, the ringleaders are two individuals, fathers, who are moaning about their daughters, both of them in their twenties, one of whom is living in Guyana with her mother; whose parents were divorced before the daughter was born, and has always lived away from him. The other is Tim Stoen, whose civil case has already been clarified by his own sworn statement that his "son" is not really his own at all. He must uphold the fiction of paternity since his entire reputation rests on it. So he's been the main force behind the "Concerned Relatives". The three dubious fathers are joined by others who have been absolute false witnesses against Jim Jones since the smear campaign was instigated over a year ago. A few others are recent recruits, and in practically every case they are whining about adult married relatives, some of whom are in their 50's and 60's and have families of their own in Jonestown.

But neither we nor many others are fooled. One of these charlatans has now publicly threatened to hire mercenaries. Underneath the sanctimonious lying, there is a particular viciousness of a vindictive, desperate band of people, secretly jealous of their loved ones' desire to live a life of principle and service that many of them once professed but never practiced.

Their lies we do not take seriously, but threats of hired killers we do. We know from experience what individuals with wounded pride, unable to confront their own failure and guilt, will do when desperate. We have therefore notified the President of the United States, members of Congress, and appropriate officials in the Department of State and the government of Guyana as well including local law enforcement agencies, of the clear threat to violate laws and send violence experts in to terrorize our organization.

Persecution is nothing new to us -- since Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple began to make social justice and economic equality work over 25 years ago, we have been beset by racists, arsonists, hired assassins, and every kind of effort to discredit, even destroy the Peoples Temple work. But we have not been intimidated even slightly, and we have had enough. We state without equivocation or reserve that we will never back down, whatever heinous actions are attempted against us. We will continue to fight this conspiracy --and expose it-- every step of the way. Several thousand strong, we stand on our record of human service, and will never abandon our beliefs, not their practice which has built the most humane kind of community on this Earth.

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