

JIM JONES SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Jim Jones (born 1931) grew up in the grinding poverty of the Great Depression in a rural town in Midwestern United States. His earliest experiences were those of the unwanted poor, and the suffering he saw made him determined at an early age to do something about the great social inequities around him. Even before his 'teens' he became a partisan for the cause of social justice and liberation. He tells of hearing of the heroic defense of Stalingrad over the radio, and the deep impression it made upon him. The valor of the Soviet people during that terrible struggle sparked his interest in the Soviet Union and the principles upon which it was founded. Before long, he was reading avidly of the life and struggle of Lenin, and by the time he was sixteen, he was a Marxist, openly declaring his ideals in the closed environment of rural America. He was quickly ostracized for those beliefs. By the time he graduated from high school he was actively involved in work toward the advancement of socialist causes.

The McCarthy period was especially difficult for a man of Jim Jones' convictions and outspokenness. Though he and his associates were severely persecuted, watched, followed, questioned (some had to flee the country), he persisted. Because he quickly saw that the labor movement in the United States had been either transformed into another arm of capitalism, or effectively intimidated by the McCarthy witchhunt, he searched for another vehicle to use to politicize working people. The few semi-progressive organizations that remained had been cowed into inaction, or were so riddled with FBI agents and informers as to be useless. Moreover, it was clear that such progressive or socialistic organizations that existed were largely made up of an intellectual elite, and had long since ceased to address the problems of the working class or attract its ranks as members.

Thus, although a confirmed atheist from his youth, Jim Jones turned to the church as a vehicle for education and organization. The church still attracted large numbers of working people, and by entering the church Jim Jones recognized that he might be able to "subvert" this only remaining practical platform for the education

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of Marxist ideology. Those who entered the doors thinking they were "just going to church", stayed on to become confirmed socialists and atheists, although they never would have set foot into a "political" meeting.

From the start Jim Jones directly confronted the most controversial issues of the day. Most prominent among those issues was the deep scar of racism. He recognized that foremost among the factors that had destroyed the radical labor movement in the United States had been the racial antagonism among the working class. Thus, in the bitter atmosphere of the Midwest in the nineteen fifties, Jim Jones confronted the racial issue head on and laid the blame directly at the door of capitalism. Though the city (Indianapolis) where Peoples Temple was based was a viciously racist one (indeed it was the origin of the Klu Klux Klan) Rev. Jones was a non-compromising advocate of integration and racial equality. With his wife, Marceline, he adopted many children of different races, including his black son, Jim Jones Jr. He became the city's first Human Rights Director and integrated a host of public facilities, restaurants and hospitals.

Because of his convictions and activism, he and his family were the targets of intense harassment and racially motivated violence for years. He was branded a "race-mixer", "traitor" and, of course, truthfully, a "communist." There were constant threats and attempts on his life and the lives of his children. Throughout that time, he lived, as he does today, in very modest circumstances, refusing (any personal luxuries or conveniences), wearing only used clothing.

Seeking an atmosphere that would perhaps be more receptive to his outspoken work, he and his family moved to California in the mid-1960's. There despite continued harassment (California did not prove to be the ground of tolerance he had hoped) Peoples Temple flourished and grew to thousands of members. Branches of the Peoples Temple were opened in several cities, and the work of rehabilitating drug addicts, finding jobs, and homes for destitute people, providing services for youth and the elderly went on in each locale. Jones kept up a grueling schedule, speaking five or six times weekly to thousands of people, mostly urban

HNBA2

ghetto-dwellers, all across the state. Periodically he would journey across the United States where extensions of Peoples Temple formed in a number of cities.

Not a meeting went by that Jim Jones did not expose, comprehensively, yet in simple and forceful language, the smug corruption, the blatant hypocrisy, the abuses, disgraces, and contradictions of American capitalism. He attacked the ostentation and irrelevance of religious institutions, and their general refusal to challenge prevailing economic and social injustice. He was scathing in his denunciation of the military-industrial complex, corporate greed, profiteering, the politics of neglect and genocide, and host of other abuses of capitalism both within the U.S. and around the world. He established a hard-hitting newspaper (Peoples Forum) that exposed U.S. corruption within, and U.S. imperialism without--and distributed each issue free to over one half million people.

Throughout, his advocacy of socialism and his admiration of the Soviet model has been consistent. For years he has put forth Marxist-Leninism as the only answer to the waste, neglect, deceit and corruption of American capitalism. His outlook is internationalist--he has advocated an alliance of all races of working class people through the world, in the struggle against the exploiting class and all who serve it. And, although the humanitarian activities of Peoples Temple are staggering in their scope, this movement was never conceived of, nor implemented as simply a "good works church."

Jim Jones' activism in the cause of liberation struggles both in the U.S. and abroad was extended and enhanced through the organization of Peoples Temple. Recipients of this support have been efforts for Southern African liberation from apartheid and economic exploitation, anti-fascist efforts in Chile, Northern Ireland, South Korea (Jones has adopted children who were fathered by U.S. servicemen during that vicious war of U.S. aggression.), and many other nations. The Temple has assisted Chilean refugees and Native Americans, hosted delegations from the Soviet Union, given strong support to countless victims of oppression,

political prisoners such as Angela Davis, and has spoken out militantly for the release of Rev. Ben Chavis and the Wilmington 10. The vast congregation of Peoples Temple has helped plan and has attended en masse countless demonstrations in support of liberation movements, peace, and socialist causes around the world, while opposing repression and the blatant denial of human rights within the United States.

To do this within the United States has been a most dangerous undertaking. Jim Jones has been the target of organized, establishment opposition in reactionary circles. He has been shot, knifed, poisoned, and threatened innumerable times. His family members, children, congregants (and even their pets) have been terrorized, beaten up, spied upon, waylaid. His churches have been fire-bombed, vandalized and arsoned. Attempts have been made to infiltrate the organization with provocateurs, a few of whom are now making false allegations against him. Peoples Temple has been subjected to severe, McCarthyistic harassment, bogus "investigations", yellow journalism, and torrents of malicious gossip and highly-publicized lies.

In recent months, a campaign to destroy Jim Jones has stepped up, involving agents, reactionaries, criminal and Nazi elements. Similar campaigns have been mounted against other organizations within the U.S., even some (such as Synanon) who have no socialist perspective, but simply a collective lifestyle. The Black Panther Party has been completely destroyed, and, informed sources have told us that this destruction was engineered, step by step, as part of a frighteningly successful, calculated plan. (These sources have documented proof to this effect, proof which shows even Huey Newton's current murder charge to be part of the over-all design) These are some of the reasons why Jim Jones has built up the Guyana community-- a "frontier" socialist co-operative, agriculturally-based. We were told by members of the Communist Party in the U.S. and other activists that our group had to be destroyed by reactionary capitalist forces because Jim Jones had the most organized, powerful activist program, in urban America, and he was moving with too much success for a Marxist in the political arena (though he did not personally want or seek political power.) One Communist attorney told us our

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solidarity behind the Soviet Union was responsible for much of the harassment we received. Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple are well aware that it is only a matter of time before their ability to function effectively within the United States will be seriously hampered and even destroyed. Thus, by establishing a base outside the U.S. in a third world nation we could better insure both the continuation of our movement and the safety of our children with the intention, of course, of continuing the struggle for world peace within the United States as well.

It has been a mammoth undertaking in Guyana, and now over 1000 people have relocated there from the United States, and they are transforming the tropical forests into productive croplands, as well as establishing outstanding medical facilities and health-care services.

Despite the attacks and conspiracies against him, Jim Jones has persisted in his work and has proven that the original premise upon which he founded Peoples Temple is strong and sound. The socialist structure of Peoples Temple, sharing and support, compassion and co-operation-- has continued to thrive, thanks to the leadership and courage of Jim Jones. He has over the years been enormously successful in helping thousands of people, many of whom had nowhere else to turn. Drug addicts have been rehabilitated, persons arrested on false charges or who had no counsel have had legal assistance; young people who had no hope of advancement have received educational opportunities, assistance in the form of scholarships, job training, and counseling; senior citizens have been cared for, decently housed, clothed, and fed, assured of medical care, personal care, therapy, an end to the loneliness, despair and insecurity that are so often their plight. Many people on the verge of suicide have found help, and something to live for. Through Peoples Temple, massive and often critical, life-saving help has been rendered to hundreds of individuals, groups, organizations and worthy causes that have needed it, or who are working in the interests of human decency, liberation, and justice.

Today, at 46, Jim Jones is working hard as ever to build socialism. A friend of the Soviet Union, he and the thousands

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of people in his organization, both in Guyana and the United States, look to the USSR as their "spiritual Homeland", the mother of the revolution which will someday free all mankind from oppression and bring man to a higher stage of development, as has already been demonstrated in the heroic achievements of the USSR. It is the hope of Jim Jones that people of his home country, the United States, will come to see the great achievements of the Soviet Union, and realize that it is the path of socialism, that will bring American society out of its crises, and terminal illness.

(Jim Jones' public pronouncement of our Marxist-Leninist and atheist perspective has jeopardized our standing within the denomination with which we are affiliated, therefore, if such were to appear in the world press, we would likely experience repercussions that could hamper our effectiveness. However, we felt that we could do no less than to be completely honest with you in this communication.)

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