To Whom It May Concern:

October 24, 1977

About one year ago we read the Peoples Forum for the first time. Biblical quotations. Well-documented and researched examples of injustices. Examples of self-help, effective programs to save the rejected of injustices.

After reading a few more issues of the Peoples Forum, we visited the Peoples Temple. Friendly people. Willing to talk. Willing to listen. Woodworking room. Printing room. Spaces for eating, medical help, office needs. Examples of young people, learning and teaching skills. Being of use. Gaining respect of themselves and others. A look of caring. Feelings of morality. High purpose. A belief in Jim Jones. His life-long gift of serving others, of equalitarian practices. A leader, yes. But not authoritarian, except for the love everyone we talked to had for Jim Jones. A love. A respect. An awe of the level of his giving.

Then came the corporate-media stories. We recognized not one fact in the news stories which corresponded to our experiences of visiting the Peoples Temple or of reading the Peoples Forum. Yet, surely our experiences were available to the reporters, and to the editors who wrote such totally derogatory materials. Why the discrepancy between our perceptions and theirs?

The Peoples Temple is trying new, communal socialistic approaches to very difficult problems of our society which have been seemingly unsolvable by the resources we have been able to allocate. Problems such as how to help people, especially young ones who take too many drugs, or who get into the habit of stealing what they want and/or need, How to help older persons become involved in the real life and get away from the voyeuristic T.V. life. How to help just plain people do meaningful work leading towards a more humanistic society. With love, with hard work, with commitment. We Believe Peoples Temple is facing and trying to untangle these problems. And we thank them for their work.

But, they have been characterized by the corporate media as brutal, child beaters, unfeeling, unthinking...power mad...liars...fakes..only interested in grabbing people's money.

We have met many people during our four visits to the Peoples Temple. These people were beautiful and seemed full of love, compassion and commitment. Doers. Workers. Yet, with a sense of love and understanding.

We just can't believe our perceptions were that wrong. The people's actions and reactions during our visits couldn't have been allmake believe. We think that their pastor, Jim Jones, whom we met only briefly, is a shining star of giving love and help to others. We think he inspires the other members to do the same. And that is the beauty of the church. And its strength.

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And perhaps that is what the "expose" is all about. Perhaps when love, caring and commitment start to be effective, to make changes in our present system which seems based on competition and greed, perhaps that is when the corporate powers become worried. And perhaps when they become worried they actually commit many atrocities they charge others with, symbolically and otherwise. Perhaps the establishment-media storied are projections, projections of the present controlling powers who act through coersion and through devious means when they feel threatened.

And, of course, any person, any organization that is looked into with a magnifying glass, with an intent to discredit and no concern for the total truth, can be discredited for some matters. No one or nothing is perfect, especially when the persons or organizations are working with some of the most difficult problems of our society. We are all a Gestaldt of experiences and our lot in life.

But, there is a medium, related to the whole of truth, which can be evaluated. And the Peoples Temple has our vote and our support and our confidence. We choose them over the corporate media. And over the people who paid for all the investigations. And over the people who were paid for their part in the supposed expose. We choose the Peoples Temple.

And we urge any interested persons who believe that the stories they read in the establishment media might have been created for less than humanistic motives, any persons who believe there might be another side, we invite these people to do as we did and personally visit the Temple, talk to the people, look at the slides of Guyana, ask questions. Or, ask the Temple people to come to your neighborhood meetings. Their work, we believe, is exemplary.

Perhaps we all have freedom only as long as we are not effective in changing some of the obvious dangers which our present society is putting on us (such as 90% of all cancers are caused by the environment. Such as many nations now are capable of having an atomic bomb because of atomic reators, financed by our banks and built by our technology. Such as a high rate of crime brought on by people who have lost hope in our system.)

Perhaps the very freedom we cherish is only ours as long as we only watch T.V., watch baseball and drink Cokes. Any true effective efforts to change the present system to better fit our needs will be met by .....?

It is possible the Peoples Temple's struggle is also the struggle of those of us who are not yet hopeless, who are surviving in this system at present...but who possibly are living on borrowed time.

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We visited the Peoples Temple. We found friends. We hope you will do likewise. Unlike the media presentation, we found them to be thoughtful, loving and concerned people who are struggling to make a reasonable life for themselves and others without hurting anyone. That is their right. And it is our right also.

Patricia Helton William C. Helton

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