

Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple *Program Transcript*

On-screen text: On November 18th, 1978, in Jonestown, Guyana, 909 members of Peoples Temple died in what has been called the largest mass suicide in modern history.

Deborah Layton, Peoples Temple Member, Author, *Seductive Poison*: Nobody joins a cult. Nobody joins something they think is going to hurt them. You join a religious organization, you join a political movement, and you join with people that you really like.

Jim Jones Jr., Peoples Temple Member: I think in everything that I tell you about Jim Jones, there is going to be a paradox. Having this vision to change the world, but having this whole undercurrent of dysfunction that was underneath that vision.

Jim Jones (archival): Some people see a great deal of God in my body. They see Christ in me, a hope of glory.

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: He said, “If you see me as your friend, I’ll be your friend. As you see me as your father, I’ll be your father.” He said, “If you see me as your God, I’ll be your God.”

Kristine Kravitz, Peoples Temple Member: Jim Jones talked about going to the Promised Land and then, pretty soon, we were seeing film footage of Jonestown.

Jim Jones (archival): Rice, black-eyed peas, Kool-Aid.

Kristine Kravitz, Peoples Temple Member: We all wanted to go. I wanted to go.

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Grace Stoen, Peoples Temple Member: Peoples Temple truly had the potential to be something big and powerful and great, and yet for whatever reason, Jim took the other road.

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: On the night of the 17th, it was still a vibrant community. I would never have imagined that 24 hours later, they would all be dead.

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): Die with a degree of dignity! Don't lay down with tears and agony! It's nothing to death. It's just stepping over into another plane. Don't, don't be this way.

Rebecca Moore, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: I vividly remember the first time that I met Jim Jones. My sister Carolyn had invited my parents and my younger sister and I to visit her in Potter Valley. We came and there was this strange man in her house, and her husband wasn't there. Annie and I were sent out to go on a walk. When we came back, something had happened. Something terrible had happened, because everyone had red eyes except for Jim Jones.

We didn't really get the story until we were in the car going home. He was carrying on an adulterous relationship with my sister. And because his wife couldn't relate to him as a wife – that Carolyn had taken over that role. Everything was plausible, except in retrospect, the whole thing seems absolutely bizarre.

On-screen text: Peoples Temple Children's Choir – Welcome

(Singing, archival): Welcome, welcome all of you.

Janet Shular, Peoples Temple Member: The first time I visited Peoples Temple, I drove at the urging of a friend – a co-worker – to Redwood Valley.

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Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: We all got suited down, neck-tied and everything. You know, and we were sharp.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: As soon as I walked into the San Francisco temple, I was home.

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: I was one of those kind of guys that – I used drugs. I was an alcoholic. I drunk alcohol and stuff like that. And – and all these people that were like my age, they were clean.

Woman (archival): Before I came here, I was taking LSD, marijuana, every type of dope you can imagine. Without our pastor, Jim Jones, to teach me the right way, I would not be in college right now.

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: And for me, that was like, “Wow, man.” I liked that.

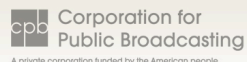
Woman (archival): Thank you very much, thank you.

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: There was an interracial group. The choir was interracial and they used to sing this song – “Never heard a man speak like this man before. Never heard a man speak like this man before. All the days of my life, ever since I been born, I never heard a man speak like this man before.” After they sang one or two songs, the whole place was lit up.

On-screen text: Peoples Temple Choir – Something Got a Hold of Me

(Singing, archival): Something got a hold of me, oh yes indeed. I said something got a hold of me.

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Garrett Lambrev, Peoples Temple Member: The Peoples Temple services, they had life, they had soul, they had power. We were alive in those services.

Claire Janaro, Peoples Temple Member: I would be up jumping in the balcony and clapping my hands. If you came in as a stranger and didn't know anything about the politics, you were thinking you were entering an old-time religion service.

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: By the time Jones did come out to do his speaking, the table had already been set.

Jim Jones (archival): I represent divine principle, total equality, a society where people own all things in common. Where there is no rich or poor. Where there are no races. Wherever there is people struggling for justice and righteousness, there I am. And there I am involved.

Neva Sly Hargrave, Peoples Temple Member: What he spoke about were things that were in our hearts. The government was not taking care of the people. There were too many poor people out there. There were poor children.

Jim Jones (archival): The world is like a human family. The little child may not be able to go and draw a paycheck, but the father guarantees the childcare. The grandmother may not be able to work anymore, but the father and mother guarantees her the right to live.

Deborah Layton, Peoples Temple Member, Author, *Seductive Poison*: Every single person felt that they had a purpose there and that they were exceptionally special. And that is how he brought so many young college kids in, so many older black women in, so many people from diverse backgrounds who realized that there was something bigger than themselves that they needed to be involved in – and that Jim Jones offered that.

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Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: I went home, told mom – “You know what, this is the right church for me.” It was the next week that I became a member of Peoples Temple.

(On-screen text): Indiana, 1931-1965

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): There’s a little town in Indiana. The moment I think of it a great deal of pain comes. As a child I was undoubtedly one of the poor in the community, never accepted. Born as it were on the wrong side of the tracks.

Phyllis Wilmore-Zimmerman, Childhood Friend: I grew up with Jimmy Jones. We started first grade together. My brothers used to go over to Jimmy’s house and hung around his barn, which was where he played.

Chuck Wilmore, Childhood Friend: From the time I was five years old, I thought Jimmy was a really weird kid, there was something not quite right. He was obsessed with religion; he was obsessed with death.

Phyllis Wilmore-Zimmerman, Childhood Friend: My brothers came back with stories of him conducting funerals for small animals that had died.

Chuck Wilmore, Childhood Friend: A friend of mine told me that he saw Jimmy kill a cat with a knife. Well having a funeral for it was a little strange, killing the animal was very strange.

Phyllis Wilmore-Zimmerman, Childhood Friend: Jimmy’s father did not work, did not have a job, and was a drunk. Jim’s mother had to work in order to support the family.

Jim Jones Jr., Peoples Temple Member: And he was kind of left to his own devices. Kind of the kid who ran wild in the street, you know what I mean? Listen, he was in a dysfunctional

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family. We got a nice name for it now. But when you live in a dysfunctional family, you think it's normal.

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): Feeling as an outcast, I'd early developed a sensitivity for the problems of blacks. I brought the only black young man in the town home and my dad said that he could not come in and I said, "Then I shan't," and I did not see my dad for many years.

John R. Hall, Sociologist: In Lynn, Jim Jones looked for community and couldn't find community, in Lynn as a town – which had a population of what, a thousand people? But he did find community in the Pentecostal Church.

Tim Reiterman, Journalist: He saw that they were a surrogate home. He saw that the preachers were like father figures to their congregations. And that role represented power over the lives of your congregation.

John R. Hall, Sociologist: Jim Jones started out on the revival preaching circuit, learning the ropes of being a preacher. And once he started doing that, it became clear that he could get a following.

June Cordell, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: The first time I met Jim Jones was Easter 1953. My mother-in-law, Edith Cordell, had a monkey and it hung itself and she wanted to replace the monkey. So she looked in the *Indianapolis Star*, and in that *Indianapolis Star* was Jim Jones's ad that he had some monkeys to sell. So it was through that that she met Jim Jones, and came back saying that he had invited her to church this next Sunday.

(On-screen text): Voice of Jim Jones, 1953

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June Cordell, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: It didn't make no difference what color you were. It was everybody welcome there in that church and he made it very plain from the platform.

Eugene Cordell, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: We had some people that disagreed with Jimmy. They got up in the audience and they said they disagreed with him. They did not like this integration part of the services. We did ask people to leave the church one night because of that.

Jim Jones Jr., Peoples Temple Member: I was the first Negro child adopted by a Caucasian family in the state of Indiana. Jim and Marceline actually went to adopt a Caucasian child. The story goes that I was crying real loud and it drew attention for Marceline to come over, and once she picked me up, I stopped crying. My family was a template of a rainbow family. We had an African American, we had two American Asian and we had his natural son, homemade.

Rev. Garnett Day, Minister: Jim was breaking new ground in race relations at a time when the ground was still pretty hard against that. Jim Jones was hated and despised by some people, particularly in the white community.

Fielding McGehee, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: There had been pressures on him to leave Indianapolis. He thought that Indianapolis was too racist of a place for him to be, and he wanted to take his people out.

Rebecca Moore, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: California is perceived to be a very progressive state. This would be the place to implement the dream of racial equality. Not Indianapolis, which seems hopeless, but California, which seems to be the Promised Land.

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Fielding McGehee, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: He chose Ukiah in northern California – about 90 miles north of San Francisco – because there was an article in *Esquire Magazine* that said that Ukiah was one of the nine places in the world that in the event of thermonuclear attack, people would survive.

Eugene Cordell, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: I told Edith, “If you follow Jimmy to California, you’re crazy.” So what did Jimmy do, but took her to a psychiatrist and sent me a certified letter that she is of sound mind, and she is not crazy. I was there the afternoon that Edith drove away. I didn’t know I’d never see her again.

On-screen text: Ukiah, 1965-1974

Jim Jones Jr., Peoples Temple Member: The move to California was really fun. There were about twelve to fifteen cars driving across United States and making that journey to a place that none of us knew, you know – none of us could even imagine. We were going to California, our new world.

On-screen text: Peoples Temple Farm, Ukiah – Redwood Valley, California.

Claire Janaro, Peoples Temple Member: When I saw Redwood Valley, I couldn’t believe my eyes because it was like a paradise. It was rural. It was green. There were grape vines everywhere, and I fell in love. I said this is got to be a perfect way to live.

Jim Jones (archival): We started with about a hundred and forty-one people and from that, we’ve grown to a very thriving congregation. We have about every level of society, all socio-economic income strata – professional down to the ordinary field worker, field laborer. Really, it’s beautiful to see that all these divisions have been broken down – not only race, but any differences of economic position.

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Joyce Shaw-Houston, Peoples Temple Member: The focus of Jim’s message was taken from the Bible, where Jesus in his earliest days told people to sell all things and have all things in common.

Jim Jones (archival): Jesus Christ had the most revolutionary teachings to be said, in the sense that he said to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, take in the stranger, administer to those who are widows and afflicted in their suffering. And we feel that no one really tried Christianity too effectively in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Deborah Layton, Peoples Temple Member, Author, *Seductive Poison*: The membership increased substantially as he procured more and more Greyhound buses and fixed them up, and every summer he began this cross-country tour.

Claire Janaro, Peoples Temple Member: The purpose of the bus trips was to spread Jim’s beliefs about socialism and the world, and how we can live a better life and about an integrated lifestyle. But behind that, I think it was to gather more members for the Temple.

On-screen text: Peoples Temple Choir – He’s Able

(Singing, archival): As pilgrims here, we sometimes journey.

Bryan Kravitz, Peoples Temple Member: I decided not to go to Vietnam, and I was just at the point of what am I going to do with myself? I heard Jim Jones was going to be coming to Philadelphia, and coming to Benjamin Franklin High School. And I went Wednesday night and I listened to him, and I was impressed by how it was such an interracial group and people were really happy.

Jim Jones (archival): You got nothing to lose. Who else is going to stand and look you in the face and say, “Come and I’ll give you a job. Come and I’ll give you a home. Come and I’ll give

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you a bed?” “But I’ve got nothing but a pension.” “Go and leave your pension behind,” who else will tell you that? Who’ll tell you, “I’ll put you on that bus tomorrow?”

Bryan Kravitz, Peoples Temple Member: I heard Jim Jones talking about equality among races, what it’s like living in California, in the Redwood Valley, the good works that they’re doing. Things that, like, I wanted to get involved with, but didn’t even know where to make an entrée. And all of a sudden, the answer was there.

Jim Jones (archival): Somebody is gonna get on the freedom train in Philadelphia!

Bryan Kravitz, Peoples Temple Member: He was there for three evenings, and the third evening I went off on the bus and came to California.

Garrett Lambrev, Peoples Temple Member: When I joined Peoples Temple in the spring of 1966, there were exactly eighty-one members. Five years later, an extended family of eighty people had become an organization of thousands.

Rebecca Moore, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: Peoples Temple really was a black church. It was led by a white minister, but in terms of the worship service, commitment to the social gospel, its membership – it functioned completely like a black church.

Jim Jones Jr., Peoples Temple Member: He talked black. He really understood it. He understood how it was to be treated differently. And that’s from his roots coming out of Lynn.

Juanell Smart, Peoples Temple Member: When people heard Jim, they didn’t look upon him as being a white preacher, you know. People didn’t look at Jim as being white. He was not white. He was just their preacher.

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Jim Jones (archival): You going to go to Texas with me when I have that campaign?

Senior Woman (archival): I was just wondering whether I could go or not. I would like to go.

Jim Jones (archival): Why of course you'd go, you went to Mexico with me.

Deborah Layton, Peoples Temple Member, Author, *Seductive Poison*: As older people joined, it took a year or so and he'd convince the people that he was doing so much in the community and so why not rather than just tithe your twenty percent, why not sell your home, give the money to the church? And that is what people began to do.

Jim Jones (archival): Now in this church, what have we done in a short time? We have four senior citizens' homes that are the most innovating, the most beautiful you want to see.

Mike Touchette, Peoples Temple Member: They had their own rooms, they had every need taken care of, they had their food provided. They were well looked after.

Jim Jones (archival): Now my home is stone block and there's not a piece of new furniture in it. But our senior citizen homes, they're elegant. And that's beautiful.

John R. Hall, Sociologist: They were giving their life's money and savings to the church, but in exchange, the church was agreeing to take care of them in the community, not just in a nursing home.

Neva Sly Hargrave, Peoples Temple Member: Well it got to the point where there were so many duties in the Temple that some people had to become full time. So when you were full-time Temple, you worked about twenty hours a day.

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Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: My week kind of ran like this – I'd work my regular job on Mondays, you know, eight to five. Then, I'd work on files.

Kristine Kravitz, Peoples Temple Member: There were people who ran rest homes. There were animals to be taken care of. There were the publications. Everybody had a job.

Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: Wednesday night we'd have a meeting in Redwood Valley and I'd go to the meeting for – until probably 10 or 10:30.

Neva Sly Hargrave, Peoples Temple Member: We turned our paychecks over every time we got paid. And then we got an allowance – five dollars a week.

Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: And Friday, I'd go to work and I'd get off of work, and I'd hop on the bus or drive the bus to San Francisco.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: If I had to go to the doctor, it was taken care of. If I had to go to the dentist, it was taken care of. If I needed clothes, that was taken care of.

Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: And often on Saturday night, we'd have planning commission meetings until 2 or 3 in the morning.

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: We would always try to let each other know the next day, "Well, how long did you sleep?" "Oh, I slept two hours." "You only slept two? Well, I slept an hour-and-a-half."

Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: And then Sunday, we'd have a Sunday morning service and then around one o'clock hop on the buses, drive up, drop people off in San Francisco, and drive up to Redwood Valley.

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Joyce Shaw-Houston, Peoples Temple Member: The longest I ever stayed awake was six days, and that's with no coffee, no nothing.

Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: It changed over the years, but it was always busy.

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: Being in an environment where you're constantly up, you're constantly busy, and you're made to feel guilty if you take too many luxuries like sleeping – you tend to not really think for yourself. And I did allow Jones to think for me because I figured that he had the better plan. I gave my rights up to him. As many others did.

Jim Jones (archival): Edie. Fingers, are your fingers numb in your right hand? Reach the fingers out that are bothering you. Now, is the pain gone?

Woman (archival): It's gone.

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: There was a senior citizen and we nicknamed her Power. He would have her to come up in the midst of one of his meetings, and she used to say, "The man got power. The man got power, ya'll." And the whole place would just go wild.

Jim Jones (archival): Take your glasses off. Let's just dare in our faith. Now look at my face. I love you, the people love you, most importantly Christ loves you. What do you see?

Visually-Impaired Woman (archival): One finger.

Jim Jones (archival): One finger!

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Neva Sly Hargrave, Peoples Temple Member: One of the most incredible healings, to me, was this little old lady and she was in a wheelchair. Jim said, “Darlin’, you know, today is your day. We’re going to – you’re going to get healed today.” He said, “We’re going to – we’re going to heal those legs of yours. You’re going to walk again.” And the whole auditorium went totally crazy.

Jim Jones (archival): Come forth, my dear. Stand up. Take that step. Bless your heart. Take that step.

Neva Sly Hargrave, Peoples Temple Member: And she takes this real slow, shaky step. She said, “I can feel it.” He said, “Yes, I know you can feel it. Now take your other leg and do it.” And so another real slow, shaky step and he says, “Now I want you to walk toward me.”

Jim Jones (archival): Move forward. Move forward. Move forward, darlin’. You can do it.

Neva Sly Hargrave, Peoples Temple Member: And she starts taking forward steps. And pretty soon she is walking. And she starts walking up one of the aisles. And pretty soon she’s running. Well, by this time the whole congregation’s running down these aisles with us – we’re all just running around the aisles, just hoopin’ and hollerin’ up a storm. Later, I found out that this person that I had seen healed and cried with was really one of the secretaries, made up to look crippled and blind.

Jim Jones (singing, archival): Never shall forget what He’s done for me. Oh, what’s he done for me. Oh, what he’s done for me. Oh, what he’s done for me. I never shall forget what he’s done for me.

Deborah Layton, Peoples Temple Member, Author, *Seductive Poison*: For those people that hadn’t grown up in the apostolic world, Jim would say, you know – “I know this is different for you. But for people to come from extremely religious backgrounds – so that I can bring

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them forward to the message that's so important for all of us today and that is activism — then I need to speak on each person's level.”

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: He said, “A lot of you people, you Christian people coming in, you're so hung-up on this Bible.” He said, “This black book has held down black people for the last two-hundred years.” He said, “But I'm going to show you this has no power.” So he leaned way back like a football player and he flung it. And when he flung it and let it go, the place got dead quiet like. And he waited until it hit the floor — POW! When it hit the floor, he stood and he looked back and forth. He said, “Now, did you see any lightning come from the sky and strike me dead?”

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): You're gonna help yourself, or you'll get no help! There's only one hope of glory...That's within you! Nobody's gonna come out of the sky! There's no heaven up there...We'll have to make heaven down here!

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: And he said, “What you need to believe in is what you can see.” He said, “If you see me as your friend, I'll be your friend. As you see me as your father, I'll be your father, for those of you that don't have a father.” He said, “If you see me as your savior, I'll be your savior.” He said, even so, “If you see me as your God, I'll be your God.”

Janet Shular, Peoples Temple Member: People lifted Jim to a level of adoration because many believed that he had healed them of cancer. Many believed that he had saved their son or daughter from an automobile accident. There were many reasons for many people to admire, love, excuse, overlook much of what Jim did.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: I had been in the Temple for just a few months. I was sent backstage in Los Angeles to — to get something for somebody, I don't remember what. And Jones happened to be coming out of his room and he said, “Hi Tim, how are you doing?”

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How is it going? How do you like everything so far?” And, “Oh, I like it a lot.” And, “you know, it’s really cool.” I don’t remember exactly.

And he reached up and kind of patted the back of my neck, and he said, “I’ll [expletive] you in the ass if you want.” And I just kind of stammered, “No.” You know, “No.” And he said, “Well, you know, if you ever want that, that’s okay, just let me know and we’ll do that.”

Joyce Shaw-Houston, Peoples Temple Member: Jim said that all of us were homosexuals, everyone except – he was the only heterosexual on the planet. And that the women were all lesbians and the guys were all gay. And so anyone that showed any interest in sex was just compensating.

Deborah Layton, Peoples Temple Member, Author, *Seductive Poison*: What he explained to each of us, and in sermons, was that sexual relationships were very selfish and they took away from the focus of the church – and that was to help others. Jim was not celibate. Nobody knew that until perhaps it was their time to find out. What he spoke from the pulpit wasn’t what he did behind the scenes.

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: I remember one night, one of the brothers had stood up and said, “You know, I think everybody that wants Father to [expletive] them in the butt, you need to take an enema first.” I’m telling you the truth man, I’m telling you the truth. And then the question went on, “Well, how many of you in here have had him to do that?” And whether they were lying or just following suit, hands of the men just went up around the room.

And I’m sitting there petrified because I’m like, “Is this what it’s leading to, that I’m supposed to get to?” And I’m thinking, “hmmm.” But I played it off like, “Okay, I’m being cool. Okay, if that’s where they at, that’s not where I’m at.” Because I’m thinking, “My wife – I’m happy with my wife. With this sleep I’m not getting, I’m not getting enough anyway.”

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Grace Stoen, Peoples Temple Member: One of the powerful things that Jim used, to keep us to not think, was that we were never really allowed to speak with one another. I'd look around and I'd say, "Am I the only one that feels this way?" I learned, eventually, not to say anything to anyone.

Jim Jones (archival): We had a lady who visited us a week ago here and was speaking to one at the door, and she was a member of a prominent church, a pastor's wife, and she said, "I think that the poor should be made to control how many children they bring into the earth." You remember? Some leading scientists say, "We have to have euthanasia." Oh, no. Oh, no. Who's going to decide who and when a person's going to die? We must never allow that because this is the kind of thing that ushers in the terror of a Hitler's Germany. We must not allow these kind of things to enter our consciousness.

Jim Jones Jr., Peoples Temple Member: My father used to tell me that people's lives – sixty percent of people's lives – were made on emotional decisions. Make your decisions – sixty percent of your decisions – based on logic, fact and reason, and allow emotion to be the secondary motivator. And – we were Star Trek fans. He and I were Star Trek fans, and he used to always say, "Just vulcanize yourself. Just vulcanize yourself."

Joyce Shaw-Houston, Peoples Temple Member: We were celebrating New Years Eve. There were about a hundred and twenty people.

Neva Sly Hargrave, Peoples Temple Member: Jim started talking about our cause and he said, "This punch is going to be passed out to everybody here." We all drank our punch and then he said, "You just drank poison. And we will all die, right here in the church, together as one." The women were just screaming, "Oh no, my baby, my baby," and others just sat there. And all of a sudden, Jim says, "That wasn't poison you drank."

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Joyce Shaw-Houston, Peoples Temple Member: Jim said that this was a test of loyalty. He just wanted to see if we were truly committed to our cause, and that was how we would show it.

Janet Shular, Peoples Temple Member: Well it wasn't about our loyalty, because we were demonstrating loyalty all the time. Coming there, being there in the meetings, sitting, listening – you know, supporting, working. And I thought it had a lot more to do with Jim's sense of rehearsal. Did he feel like he was potent and – and omnipotent enough to really get people to kill themselves when he said so? And that frightened the hell out of me.

On-screen text: San Francisco, 1974-1977

Tim Reiterman, Journalist: Jim Jones, I think, realized that ultimately Ukiah was not the sort of climate where Peoples Temple would thrive. He wasn't going to be gaining large numbers of members. He couldn't declare himself to be a socialist god openly, certainly in a city like Ukiah.

Marshall Kilduff, Journalist: In San Francisco, Jones walked in on a sort of a wild kind of party, where there was a lot of new faces and new sources of power. And there was a sort of feeling that smaller groups – neighborhood groups, activist groups – had a bigger chance.

Rebecca Moore, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: I think the early sixties had been a time of great optimism; there was a belief that we could change the world through social movements. With various assassinations – Malcolm X, Medgar Evers, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy – there was definitely a feeling of hopelessness. The message of Peoples Temple was, “No, the dream is alive.”

Vernon Gosney, Peoples Temple Member: If you had a demonstration in San Francisco and you wanted people to show up, Jim Jones – the Peoples Temple – could be there in twenty

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minutes, with hundreds of people. And we would be enthusiastic. There was an attitude of, “We can change the world.” And that’s what we wanted to do.

Marshall Kilduff, Journalist: These people would be on time, they’d be polite and nice. They were a span of ages, a span of races. They were tailor-made for a political rally. To a politician, it was like a birthday cake times twelve.

Willie Brown, California State Assemblyman (archival): You have managed to make the many persons associated with Peoples Temple part of a family. If you are in need of healthcare, you get healthcare. If you’re in need of legal assistance of some sort, you get that. If you’re in need of transportation, you get that. And that’s the kind of religious thing that I am excited about, and have some respect for.

Tim Reiterman, Journalist: When vice presidential candidate, Walter Mondale, came to San Francisco, Jim Jones was part of the entourage that boarded his private jet. When Rosalyn Carter came to San Francisco, she gave Jim Jones a private audience. Jim Jones had political power that few people, let alone preachers, could have imagined.

Vernon Gosney, Peoples Temple Member: Jim Jones represented the Peoples Temple as a progressive movement that was threatened. That there were outside forces who didn’t want us to do what we were doing. And it was the government. The government was infiltrating and wiretapping and trying to kill people or assassinate people. That’s what was happening.

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: He was always paranoid that someone was going to get in and try to kill him — that they had two people that had dedicated their lives, that they were going to jump in front of Jones and take the bullet, kind of like the secret service so to speak.

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Neva Sly Hargrave, Peoples Temple Member: Jim started changing a lot in the seventies. He was taking drugs. I think he said it was his kidneys at the time. And he was getting more and more paranoid. Incredibly paranoid.

Vernon Gosney, Peoples Temple Member: There was always threats. Always, always, always, always threats. They were there. They were just about to try to destroy us if we weren't always vigilant [sic] about our movement.

There was a fire in the San Francisco Temple. The Temple was burned down and had to be rebuilt. The fire proved they are out to get us. They so don't want us to do what we're doing; they've burned down the Temple. They'll do anything to keep us from doing what we're doing. So we have to be even stronger.

Jim Jones (archival): What about the fact that the Ku Klux Klan has increased one hundred times in its membership? Where? Not Mississippi, I'm talking about New York State. It's the church's duty to have a place of protection for its people.

Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: December of '75, ninety of us went by plane, into Guyana, and saw where we were building the community there.

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): See, they've made progress on the road and leveled it, clear in to five miles. And you're seeing in the distance, housing complexes, that are being built.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: What I saw that creation as being was building a city where we could move and raise our children, outside of the oppression and the racism of the United States of America.

Mike Touchette, Peoples Temple Member: When I first went into Jonestown, it was just a footpath in the rainforest. We had Indians in front of us with machetes, and we had Indians

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behind us with machetes. Three-hundred miles into the jungle, we literally built a city in the middle of the jungle, in the middle of nowhere.

Mike Touchette, Peoples Temple Member (archival): Hello family. It's been a — it's such a joy and great pleasure being here, because of Father's love. We are trying to make — and we are making a place of refuge for all of you here. There is no — nothing at all that I would — that I have any holdings here. I do not want to go back in any way, shape or form to the States. I love it here and this is the place where all of you are going to be.

Kristine Kravitz, Peoples Temple Member: Pretty soon we were seeing film footage of the first crew that went down there. We all wanted to go. I wanted to go. It looked like — like freedom.

Jim Jones (archival): Now, will each of you give a very fond embrace, a salutary kiss of greeting to your neighbor — and let's fill this atmosphere with warmth and love.

Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: We thought of ourselves as one big family that did handle our own discipline. I was in a lot of the meetings where people were spanked or beaten, and I was slapped once, also in a public meeting.

Janet Shular, Peoples Temple Member: People were brought up front and asked — had to tell who they had slept with and who they had sneaked off to a restaurant with.

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: There wasn't a week that went by that I wasn't called up on the floor because of my behavior, because of my attitude. "Stanley Clayton, up, front, center."

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Janet Shular, Peoples Temple Member: He would ask people, “What do you think we ought to do with them? Do you think they ought to get a good boxing?” And then he’d get a resounding roar, “Yes!”

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: You might fight five people in one night. Well, you know, you’re very tired! I’ve seen situations where they actually knocked the person out and actually took water and threw water back on him, woke him up, and whooped him some more.

Neva Sly Hargrave, Peoples Temple Member: I had welts really bad, and when I went to work the next day, one of my employees noticed the welts when I sat down. And I just broke down and told her. She didn’t even know I was Peoples Temple. And she called the manager of the station up and they talked to me about leaving. I couldn’t say goodbye to my son or my husband because at that point, it was like the Gestapo – the families were turning in each other. If I had said goodbye, one of them would have reported me.

Joyce Shaw-Houston, Peoples Temple Member: It’s kind of like when you get married and you have this ideal. And you’re, you know, you’re in love and then – you know, the honeymoon wears off and reality sets in. And most people, once the going gets rough, don’t jump out immediately.

Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: In one planning commission meeting, Jim was getting notes – kind of love notes – from one of the members on the planning commission.

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: Jones is sitting there calmly and so another lady said, “Well, I don’t know why you keep doing that. What makes you think you’ve got something that he wants anyway?” And so another woman says, “Well, you know what? You ought to just take off your clothes and show him what you got. You ain’t got nothing.” And

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so, by this time, they looked back to Jones and so he looks over his glasses, and he nods with approval. “Yeah, that’s a good idea.”

Juanell Smart, Peoples Temple Member: She was to be totally naked and she was down to nothing but her skin – not even any shoes on, you know – no bra, no panties, no nothing.

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: Then they begin to say what her breasts looked like, her stomach, butt, vagina, you name it. Everything they could think of, they were saying. By this time, her face is red, her body’s almost red from embarrassment, and I noticed something. Jones was sitting, looking over his sunglasses, but he had a smile on his face like he’s really enjoying this woman being torn down.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: I have a conscious memory of sitting there, thinking to myself, “This is wrong.” And I didn’t do a damned thing to stand up and say, “This is wrong.”

Jordan Vilchez, Peoples Temple Member: It’s like a child in a dysfunctional family. On a certain level, it’s normal, you know? I just kind of took everything in stride.

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: But then we felt like we had gotten involved and gotten in so deep that it was actually no way out.

Deborah Layton, Peoples Temple Member, Author, *Seductive Poison*: I had traveled on Bus Seven, which was Jim’s bus. And he sat down next to me. And I was sitting there and I thought, “That’s weird – it smells like alcohol next to me.” And he leaned over and he said, “Do you know what you do to me?” He had informed me that I was to come in – on Bus Seven, there was a room in the back for just him. He had books. He had a desk. He had a bed. When everyone got off the bus at the rest stop, I went into his little room and I sat there and waited for him. And finally he opened the door, and without any talk or anything, he just pulled down his pants and – and had sex with me. And as I lay there frightened, not sure

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what to do, and as I shivered, he'd say to me, "This is for you. I'm doing this for you, Debbie."

Marshall Kilduff, Journalist: Well, in 1975 it was a mayoral election in San Francisco. A conservative candidate and a liberal candidate, George Moscone. Jones had several hundred people who would go door-to-door Election Day. Instead of a group that might give you twenty or thirty of these people – or a hundred – you had three or four hundred.

John R. Hall, Sociologist: The Moscone election was very close. The margin of victory was probably no more than 4,000. So you had to credit a big chunk of decisive votes to Peoples Temple.

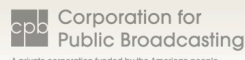
Rebecca Moore, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: The reward for the election of George Moscone was the appointment of Jim Jones as Chairman of the City Housing Authority.

Deborah Layton, Peoples Temple Member, Author, *Seductive Poison*: What was once a really boring meeting, all of a sudden, became like really interesting when Jim Jones became the head of it – because we all came down on the buses. And we were instructed that when Jim came in, we stood, and when he left or spoke, we'd stand and clap.

Marshall Kilduff, Journalist: The sheer staginess, the controlled atmosphere that sort of enclosed this guy, made him so unusual, so different than the norm, that it made me very curious. My biggest problem was getting somebody to sort of talk to me about the Church in kind of conversational terms.

Grace Stoen, Peoples Temple Member: I had become friends with some of the various defectors, and one of the defectors told me that she was going to speak publicly about Jones. And I said to her, "Well, if you're going to speak publicly – I'm going to speak with you. I'm not going to let you do this alone."

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Marshall Kilduff, Journalist: I finally heard from some ex-members who heard I was interested in writing a story about the Temple for *New West* magazine, and they took a chance. They called me and some of them said, you know, “You don’t know nothing about the Church. Wait until I tell you what I went through.”

Deborah Layton, Peoples Temple Member, Author, *Seductive Poison*: Before the article was going to break, Jim convinced the publisher that she needed to read it to him. He was on one phone and I was on — taping the other end of it, while somebody else listened on another one. Jim didn’t understand that there was no way he could talk her down from whatever this article was going to say.

And as she continues to read this article, he’s looking around the room at about five of us and you could tell that he’s becoming more and more anxious and as — and you know, his mouth becomes dryer and dryer.

And he realizes that this article is going to be hugely damning, and it was midway through it he mouths to all of us in the room, “We’re leaving tonight.” They flew out to Guyana, six hours before that article was going to hit.

On-screen text: Jonestown, 1977-1978

Tim Reiterman, Journalist: When Jim Jones decided that there was too much pressure, too much trouble to stay in San Francisco, he ordered the move to Jonestown and it happened almost overnight. People were being taken to airports. There were people who were packing their belongings and leaving their homes — with virtually no explanation to their family members as to where they were going or why they were going. Fred Lewis came home and found that his wife had taken their seven children and gone to Guyana, along with all their possessions.

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Eugene Smith, Peoples Temple Member: My wife had gone over three months prior. And I was waiting on pins and needles, and I was talking to her probably twice a week on the hand radio and Leona Collier came up, “Ok, Eugene it’s your time, you’re going over.” Coming into Jonestown, you see a guard at the front gate and you’re all excited, you’re going down this road. The trailer comes to a stop and then you can see the wooden pathway that leads to the pavilion. And you’re just – you want to run, but you know, you just try – “Alright I’m gonna be cool.”

And just as you reach the edge of the pavilion, people started rushing you that you knew. My wife was there. Haven’t seen my mother in over a year or so. And I’m just hugging people and it’s just – it’s like, I have arrived and everything is going to be okay now.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member (archival): I have never been so totally happy or fulfilled in my life. I can’t begin to describe it. You could sit here and talk all day long and no words could describe the peace, the beauty, the sense of accomplishment and responsibility and camaraderie that’s here. It’s overwhelming, it really is. You can’t describe it.

Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: You know, it’s just such an exciting time. Everything was new and unique and -- and just fun. You know, we just had fun with it as it grew. I just loved that we created what we ate, that we did all these jobs.

Male Peoples Temple Member (archival): What you think about your friends back down in the States? You think they should be here?

Female Peoples Temple Member (archival): Well,

Male Peoples Temple Member (archival): Do you want to share with them this morning? Speak up!

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Female Peoples Temple Member (archival): I wished I could,

Male Peoples Temple Member (archival): Can you do it?

Female Peoples Temple Member (archival): share with them,

Male Peoples Temple Member (archival): Would you do it?

Female Peoples Temple Member (archival): But they won't listen to me.

Male Peoples Temple Member (archival): Won't listen to you, huh?

Jim Jones Jr., Peoples Temple Member: When you don't have anything, you own Jonestown – you are part of Jonestown. You were a shareholder of Jonestown if you were African American. It gave them the opportunity to – to really be a part of creating a utopia.

Relative of Peoples Temple Member (archival): I think that Jim Jones took his group down there because he was afraid to face the publicity and answer the questions here in this country. I don't think that he feels confident having people talk to their relatives. I think the only way he can survive and sustain what he started is to isolate all his followers from this country and from their families.

Marshall Kilduff, Journalist: The Concerned Relatives were the ex-members who wanted other family members, still in the church, to know they could leave. They wanted them to feel that there was an outside world – that Jones was wrong about telling people they could never leave the church, and that they would be treated badly in the real world.

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Rebecca Moore, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: The Concerned Relatives prompted FCC investigation of Peoples Temple. They organized letter-writing campaigns to public officials, to members of Congress. They were incredibly effective in mobilizing government and media interest in Peoples Temple.

Former Peoples Temple Member (archival): He was talking integration. He was talking helping people. He was talking better this and better that.

Male Reporter (archival): What about now? What's your impression now?

Former Peoples Temple Member (archival): My impression now – that those are fronts for him. I think he's gone crazy.

Eugene Smith, Peoples Temple Member: When Jim Jones wasn't there, things tended to be a little bit lighter. You know, people would be dancing or singing. There would be music in different cottages. But when Jones was present, it was very, very dark. It was almost like a dark cloud.

Deborah Layton, Peoples Temple Member, Author, *Seductive Poison*: In Jonestown, there was a speaker system and only Jim spoke on it. And it went twenty-four hours a day and he would tape himself. So, in the middle of the night, all through the night, his voice was talking to you.

Jim Jones (archival): The United States is calling for the removal of all Blacks and Indians. So is England. They want to have their immigrant Black, Indian population removed in six months.

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Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: We had no other radio or T.V. or communication with parents or any kind of, you know, update that could show us, really, that there's a whole other thing going on besides what Jim was interpreting for us.

Jim Jones (archival): I make my stand clear. Give us our liberty or give us our death.

Jordan Vilchez, Peoples Temple Member: No matter where you were, you could hear. You could hear it in your – in your bunk at night. You could hear it when you're in the outhouse. You could hear it when you were working in the field. You – you could hear it all the time.

Jim Jones (archival): At least on those terms, we choose our death and no one chooses it for us. Don't try to take any of our children.

Rebecca Moore, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: There was this pervasive sense of being under attack in Jonestown. He told them that things were just getting worse in the United States, they couldn't go back home. And not only that, but these forces were traveling to Guyana to destroy them there.

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): You can't know how much of a conspiracy there is in the U.S. these days. Maybe it's economics? Who knows what it is? I'm not able to say...But I do know it's real. It's obvious that Martin Luther King was murdered by conspiracy...Malcolm X, Senator Kennedy...

Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: Over the summer of 1978, all of us noticed that Jim was – seemed to be getting sicker. His harangues over the loudspeaker were getting more and more frantic, and really just sounding more and more insane.

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Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: He had gotten to the place that even his voice was becoming slurred, and he said it was because the nurse was giving him the wrong medications. But yet still, everyday it was getting worse and worse.

Deborah Layton, Peoples Temple Member, Author, *Seductive Poison*: Every night, at some point, his voice would come over the loudspeaker and he'd say, "I'm sending somebody out tonight, somebody you know, somebody you trust and they're going to act like they want to leave. But this is a loyalty test and you need to turn them in."

Vernon Gosney, Peoples Temple Member: A father would turn in a son. A husband would turn in a wife. A small child would turn in a parent. There was no freedom to express to one another what was going on, because everything was suspect. The most forbidden thing to express was to leave.

Jim Jones Jr., Peoples Temple Member: He had a real issue with separation. People could not leave him. He took it as a betrayal to the cause, and to him personally.

Female Peoples Temple Member (archival): He said, "I really want to get away from him. By Christmas, I will be gone."

Jim Jones (archival): By Christmas, do you want to be gone? By Christmas, do you want to be gone?! By Christmas, do you want to be gone?!!

Male Peoples Temple Member (archival): I would ask you, could I go home and make a trip to see my people?

Jim Jones (archival): I have the power to send you home by Christmas, but it's not on Transworld Airlines. It's blasphemy! It's blasphemy to talk about going back when you have not been given any approval! Do you want to go home?

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Male Peoples Temple Member (archival): No.

Jim Jones (archival): Well, then be seated and shut your mouth and don't be in my face anymore.

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: Congressman Ryan was unique in the political sphere. He had this hands-on approach to legislating. He just didn't take no for an answer. So when he was in the state assembly, he went to Folsom State Prison and spent a week as an inmate to understand the prison issues and prison reform.

He became concerned because a number of residents in San Mateo County had become members of the Peoples Temple – and family members started contacting him, concerned about their whereabouts and concerned about whether or not they were being held against their will. The word we were getting was that there was an armed encampment. It was enough for the Congressman to say, “You know what? I want to go find out for myself.”

Vernon Gosney, Peoples Temple Member: There was a lot of preparation for Congressman Ryan's visit. There was all these different scenarios that were presented. He wasn't going to let him in. He was going to let him in. We were going to wait for them to come in and we were going to kill 'em all when they came in.

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: I was very fearful about making the trip. I had a copy of the Congressman's will and placed it in a particular drawer in my desk, just in case.

Stephen Sung, Sound Technician: We flew in sometime in the afternoon, about 6pm. We saw this beautiful sign, “Welcome to Jonestown.”

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Tim Reiterman, Journalist: As we approached Jonestown, it was spartan, but very impressive.

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: How could you not be impressed that out of the jungles of Guyana, they had carved out a community? They had crops growing. They had cabins. They had a little medical clinic, a little daycare area.

Jim Jones (archival): Flour, rice, black-eyed peas, more peas. We have different containers surrounding the place – we couldn't go through all of the tremendous inventory they built up. Kool-aid –

On-screen text: November 17, 1978

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: When Ryan came, he came on a Friday night and we put on a reception for him.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: The songs that we sang that night – it was people saying, “This is who we are and this is what we are about.”

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: It was a vibrant community. I would never have imagined that twenty-four hours later, those people would be dead.

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: Everything up to that point was, was – was good. Everybody was thrilled that Ryan was thrilled. He just kind of praised us.

Congressman Leo Ryan (archival): I think that all of you know that I am here to find out more about – questions have been raised about your operation here. And I can tell you right now, that from the few conversations I've had with some of the folks here already this

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evening, that whatever these comments are – there are some people here who believe that this is the best thing they’ve ever had in their whole lives.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: That response to him was spontaneous. It was loud. It was emotional. What I was feeling was – this is an opportunity that I can vocalize how much I believe in what we are doing here. The reporter next to me said, “I’ve never felt anything like this before,” and I said, “Because you haven’t felt anything like this before.” I actually felt pretty good overall. This went probably as well as it possibly could go, so far.

Vernon Gosney, Peoples Temple Member: When Congressman Ryan came, I wanted to pass him a note that said, “Help us get out of Jonestown.” When one of the reporters was walking around toward the edge of the pavilion, I stuck the note in the fold of his arm and it fell to the ground. And so I picked up the note and I – and I gave it back to him. I said, “You dropped something,” and this little boy, about nine years old, started saying, “He passed a note! He passed a note!”

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: Don Harris, who was the NBC reporter, came up to me and Congressman Ryan and handed us these two notes from people that wanted to leave. So at that point, we knew that something was very, very wrong.

On-screen text: November 18, 1978

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: I was like the first to rise up the following morning. It was a bright sunny day, but it was a dark day. It just didn’t feel right.

Stephen Sung, Sound Technician: We were there, supposed to interview some of the family members to ask them why they cannot leave.

Reporter (archival): Are you happy here?

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Female (archival): Oh, I should say I am. I've never been any happier in my life.

Reporter (archival): Do you want to stay?

Female (archival): Definitely. I certainly do.

Reporter (archival): Some people have said they couldn't leave if they wanted to. Do you think you could?

Girl (archival): Yeah. If I really wanted to I'm – I'm free to go, if I really wanted to. I would be free to go.

Girl's Mother (archival): Well, I believe it. I've been here a few days and I have – I have absolutely no complaints at all. It is really nice here. It is really nice. And I'll be leaving in a couple weeks and they could come with me, but they said they didn't want to come.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: Literally, out of nowhere, this storm came blowing in. The sky turned black. The wind came up and it just – torrential rain. But what I personally felt was that evil itself blew into Jonestown. It was about 11:30 in the morning. Edith Parks walked up to Jackie Speier and said, "I'm being held prisoner here, I want to go home."

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan (archival, subtitles): Now do I both understand you to say that you both want to leave Jonestown on this date, November 18th, 1978?

Young Man (archival): Yeah.

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Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: Immediately, the whole vibe changed. I mean this reporter said, “We got our story.” You know, “The story’s here. It’s happening right now.”

Vernon Gosney, Peoples Temple Member: Jim Jones came to talk to me and the first thing he said was, “Don’t say anything to the reporters. They’re all liars.” The last words I heard from Jim Jones was, “I just want you to know that you can come back to Jonestown and visit your son any time you want.”

Reporter (archival): Last night, someone came and passed me this note.

Jim Jones (archival): He’s the one that I’m just talking about. This is the man that wants to leave his son here.

Reporter (archival): Doesn’t it concern you, though, that this man, for whatever reason, one of the people in your group...

Jim Jones (archival): People play games, friend. They lie. They lie. What can I do about liars? Are you people going to – leave us. I just beg you, please leave us. Bill, we will bother nobody. Anybody wants to get out of here, can get out of here. They have no problem about getting out of here. They come and go all the time.

I don’t know what kind of games people like. Who – people like publicity. Some people do. I don’t. But some people like publicity. But if it’s so damned bad, why is he leaving his son here? Can you give me a good reason for that?

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: When word got out that people were leaving, all hell broke out.

Woman (archival): You bring those kids back here! You bring them back!

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Male (archival): One second. One second.

Woman (archival): Don't you touch my kids!

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: More people wanted to leave. And then Jim Jones started to make pleas to people, saying, "You can't leave. You're my people. Why do you want to leave?" It was an emotional roller coaster for everyone there.

Woman (archival): Don't you touch my kids! Mother! You're not taking my kids! No!

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: Jones was in the pavilion. At one point, he said, "Well, of course you can go if you want." But clearly, that was not the message. The message was, "You are betraying me."

Vernon Gosney, Peoples Temple Member: I went and I spoke to the Congressman in the pavilion. I told him, "You are in extreme danger. You need to leave." And he said, "You don't have anything to worry about." He says, "You have the Congressional shield of protection around you." And I just looked at him like he was totally insane.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: Congressman Ryan was directly across from me, and I saw this Temple member walk up behind him – and he was actually crying and shaking – and all of a sudden, he pulled out this knife and said, "All right, [expletive], you're gonna die." We all jumped on him, and there were just screams of horror everywhere.

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: We heard this great uproar in the pavilion and the truck stopped. Then, shortly thereafter, Congressman Ryan starts walking out in this bloodstained shirt.

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Tim Reiterman, Journalist: Those of us in the news media viewed Congressman Ryan as a form of protection, a shield of the United States. What happened there in those few moments made it clear that nobody was safe.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: I went back to my cottage. All I wanted to do was see my wife and my son. Gloria and I were laid down on the cot and we just held each other and I said, “You know, I think we may all die.” And she said – she kind of looked at me and then she looked down at our son, who was playing on the floor with the toys, and she said, “You’re scaring him.” I had literally opened my mouth to say we need to leave, when there was an announcement on the loud speaker – “Will everybody report to the pavilion for a meeting.”

Stephen Sung, Sound Technician: We drove back to the airstrip, Port Kaituma. All of a sudden, we saw a dump truck from far away arriving to this airstrip. We realized these people catch up from people from Jim Jones, they’re very close lieutenant to Jim Jones. These three guys, they get off the truck and walk around this area as though they were looking for somebody. They looked in people’s faces. They stared at us for a little bit, but they didn’t say one word. They didn’t ask anything. Right away, they walked back to the truck.

They drove this truck all the way across the airstrip and stop on this side of the plane, so literally they cut us off from the jungle. We never know there’s people hidden inside the dump truck. The moment it stopped, they start shooting right away. Everybody ran toward the plane, on this side of plane. They try to hide underneath the wheels.

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: Then the Congressman ran under the plane, and I sort of followed suit and got behind one of the tires.

Stephen Sung, Sound Technician: All you can hear is the gun – pop, pop, pop – goes off constantly. We lie flat on the tarmac at that moment. But shortly afterwards, I heard my

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partner, the cameraman. He yelled, “Oh [expletive].” He said he got – he got shot. He was sitting up.

Tim Reiterman, Journalist: There were people tumbling and yelling and letting out cries as they were hit. I was hit in my arm and wrist.

Stephen Sung, Sound Technician: I felt a tremendous explosion, right next to my head. I got a tremendous pain ran through my arm and on my shoulder. I was really shaking, but I didn’t move. I took the pain and hold still.

Jackie Speier, Aide to Congressman Leo Ryan: I was lying on my side, pretending that I was dead, with my head down. And – they came and shot me at point blank – point blank range. I remember someone coming to me and telling me that Congressman Ryan was dead. But I was at a point where I didn’t know how much more time I was going to be alive.

Stephen Sung, Sound Technician: The gun’s dead and all we can hear – this one engine was still running. So all you could hear the engine noise. And that’s it.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: We walked up to the pavilion together, with everybody else. It was very quiet. It was very somber. It was very sad, but it wasn’t a death march.

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): The congressman is dead! You think they’re going to allow us to get by with this? You must be insane. They’ll torture some of our children here. They’ll torture our people. They’ll torture our seniors. We can not have this!

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: He said, “Well, we got to go. We got to get out of here. We got to – we got to go to sleep. Get the solution together.”

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Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): If we can't live in peace, then let's die in peace.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: Maria Katsaris walked up to him and whispered in his ear, and he looked at her and said, "Is there anyway to make it taste less bitter?" And she said, "No, no apparently not." And he said, "Is it quick?" And she said, "Yeah, it's supposed to be quick."

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): Anyone that has any dissenting opinion, please speak.

Christine Miller, Peoples Temple Member (archival, subtitles): When we destroy ourselves, we're defeated. We let them, the enemies, defeat us.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: On the last day of Jonestown, Christine Miller stood up and said, "I don't want to die here. Why are we going to throw all this away? We've worked too hard."

Christine Miller, Peoples Temple Member (archival, subtitles): I look at all the babies, and I think they deserve to live.

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): I agree,

Christine Miller, Peoples Temple Member (archival, subtitles): You know...

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): but also they deserve...what's more, they deserve peace.

Christine Miller, Peoples Temple Member (archival, subtitles): We all came here for peace.
... Is it too late for Russia?

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Fielding McGehee, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: She's calling Jim Jones on some of the things that he has promised them that they were going to do. Jim had promised, as an alternative to them dying in Jonestown, that they could go to the Soviet Union.

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): I'm listening to you. You asked me about Russia. I'm right now making a call to Russia. What more do you suggest?

Fielding McGehee, Relative of Peoples Temple Member: Eventually, the rhetoric ratchets up enough that she is shouted down.

Man (archival, subtitles): Christine, your life has been extended to today. That you're standing there is because of him.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: That's when I noticed that there were armed guards that had kind of taken positions up around the pavilion. I'm thinking, "Where did all of these [expletive] guns come from?"

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: Jones came down off the podium and he said, "Hey, we got to do this. We got to – we got to go, that if we don't go this way, we going to go like this." They were coming, taking like newborn babies out of their mothers' arms.

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): Mother, mother, mother, mother, mother please. Mother, please, please, please don't...Don't do this! Don't do this! Lay down your life with your child. But don't do this.

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: There was a young kid, his name was Thurman and when he came inside, he bumped into me. At that same time, he's falling to the ground and he's going into convulsion.

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Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): Hurry, hurry, my children, hurry! All right, let us not fall into in the hands of the enemy. Hurry my children!

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: I grabbed the kid from the shoulders up, and in that process of taking him out of the pavilion, this kid died in my arms. I mean, I just felt the life go out of him. To me – at that point, I knew that this [expletive] was real.

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): Die with respect, die with a degree of dignity. It's nothing to death, it's just stepping over into another plane. Don't, don't be this way!

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: I ain't never used the term "suicide," and I'm not gonna never use the term "suicide." That man killed – was killing us.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: As I walked up to the back of the pavilion, I saw a woman name Rosie on the ground crying, holding her dead baby. There were maybe eight or nine other people who were dying, or in the process of dying. Inside, I just wanted things to stop. Please, just let me catch my breath; let me figure out what's happening here. I looked to my right and I saw my wife, with our son in her arms and poison being injected into his mouth. My son was dead and he was frothing at the mouth. You know, cyanide makes people froth at the mouth. My wife died in my arms and my dead baby son was in her arms. And I held her and said, "I love you, I love you," because it's all I could say. She died in my arms, man.

Jim Jones (archival, subtitles): Quickly! Quickly! Quickly! Quickly! Quickly! Where is the vat? The vat, the vat...Bring it here, so the adults can begin.

Stanley Clayton, Peoples Temple Member: My wife came up to me, she didn't have no tears in her eyes. She just was – was just in a daze. "My mother, my grandmother, my sister, my

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brother, they gone.” You know she said, “Just take me. Just take me and just lay me down next to my grandmamma.”

And she went up to that Kool-Aid, to that death barrel and she just, I mean – didn’t hesitate, just took it and drunk it and then told me to hold her, to take her, and I did. And she died in my arms. And once I laid her down and she told me how she wanted to lay with her grandmother, I – at that point, knew that I didn’t have no reason to be here no more.

***Jim Jones (archival, subtitles) ***: We laid it down...we got tired. We didn’t commit suicide. We committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world.

Tim Carter, Peoples Temple Member: We were just [expletive] slaughtered. [Expletive] slaughtered. There was nothing dignified about it. Had nothing to do with revolutionary suicide, nothing to do about making a [expletive] statement, it was just senseless waste, senseless waste and death.

On-screen text: From an anonymous letter

Narrator (anonymous letter, archival): “To whomever finds this note. Collect all the tapes, all the writing, all the history. The story of this movement, this action, must be examined over and over. We did not want this kind of ending. We wanted to live, to shine, to bring light to a world that is dying for a little bit of love.”

Laura Johnston Kohl, Peoples Temple Member: I never believed in Heaven in my whole life. You know, that’s not the way I operated – but when I was in Guyana, and when I’d watch the sun rise, I actually thought there was a heaven on Earth. And now, I can’t believe in heaven anymore.

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Narrator (anonymous letter, archival): “There’s quiet as we leave this world. The sky is gray. People file by us slowly and take the somewhat bitter drink. Many more must drink.”

Juanell Smart, Peoples Temple Member: I’m saddened because it didn’t work out. Because it just seemed so beautiful. And I’ll say this about November 18th, I felt I’d lost a family and I knew I’d lost my children.

Narrator (anonymous letter, archival): “A teeny kitten sits next to me watching. A dog barks. The birds gather on the telephone wires. Let all the story of this Peoples Temple be told.”

Eugene Smith, Peoples Temple Member: We were people that – we wanted to make a change. It’s a shame it didn’t happen. It might not never happen. But one thing I can say, at least we tried and we didn’t sit back and wait on the laurels for somebody else to try it. Yes, we tried it. Yes, it was a failure. Yes, it was very tragic. But at least we tried.

Narrator (anonymous letter, archival): “If nobody understands, it matters not. I am ready to die now. Darkness settles over Jonestown on its last day on Earth.”

Hue Fortson Jr., Peoples Temple Member: I never had any dreams of Jonestown until this one dream came. I could see myself in Jonestown walking, and when I looked to my left, there was my son. He was standing in the middle of a duffel bag. And just right when I got ready to reach to touch his head, he pulled the bag up like this. And the bag fell and he was gone.

On-screen text: 909 Peoples Temple members died at Jonestown. Tim Carter, Stanley Clayton and three others escaped into the jungle. Five people were killed on the airstrip. Approximately eighty Jonestown residents, including three of Jim Jones’ sons, were away that day and survived.

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Jim Jones died from a shot to the head.

Neva Sly Hargrave lost her husband and son.

Eugene Smith lost his wife, son, daughter, and mother.

Rebecca Moore lost her two sisters and nephew.

Hue Fortson Jr. lost his wife and son.

Tim Carter lost his wife and son, sister, niece and nephew.

Stanley Clayton lost his wife.

Juanell Smart lost her four children, mother, and uncle.

Claire Janaro lost her two children.

Vernon Gosney lost his son.

Jim Jones Jr. lost his wife, unborn child, sister, two brothers, four nephews, niece, mother and father.

Jordan Vilchez lost two sisters and two nephews.

Mike Touchette lost his mother, sister, brother, uncle, and grandfather.

Grace Stoen lost her son.

Eugene and June Cordell lost Edith Cordell and nineteen other relatives.

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