

A Dream Deferred: The Promise and Pathos of Peoples Temple

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Before beginning, I need to say a few words in the spirit of full disclosure. Although I never was a member of Peoples Temple, my older sister Carolyn Layton, and my younger sister Annie Moore, were both part of the Temple leadership group. Carolyn bore one of Jim Jones’ children, a boy named Jim Jon. All three of them, along with 900 other men, women, and children, died in Jonestown on November 18, 1978.

I met Jim Jones once or twice, because my sisters wanted my parents and me to join them in the life they had found in the Temple. I never saw him in a church service, and I have to say I didn’t glimpse much charisma in the small group setting where I met him. Because my parents refused to criticize the Temple in public, and declined to join other relatives who opposed Jim Jones, they were granted extraordinary access to my sisters. They even visited Jonestown in May of 1978. I regret that I did not go with them.

We never witnessed any of the problems that insiders reported, but that’s because we were outsiders. We weren’t allowed to see beatings or abuses. When news reports came out about mass deaths occurring in Guyana on November 18, we were as shocked and horrified as everyone else. The difference is that we knew those who died were not crazy cultists. They were human beings with names and faces who deserved more respect and dignity than they were given.

The first week after the deaths, my family made the decision to go public. By that I mean we decided that we would talk about my sisters with the news media and try to humanize those who had been part of Peoples Temple. We began to collect all of the information about the group that we could. That was thirty-five years ago.

In 1998 we launched the website called *Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple* as a venue to digitally publish the information we had gathered, and to provide a forum for discussion and analysis. If you surf the Internet, though, you will find that some people call us “cult apologists,” which I assure you is not a compliment. A cult apologist is someone who *studies* new religions, as opposed to someone who *condemns* them. So when I talk about what happened in Jonestown, I am not defending it; I am trying to understand and interpret it.

Introduction

Sociologists and historians have explained Peoples Temple as a New Religious Movement. A New Religious Movement is a fancy way of saying a cult. But scholars don’t like to use four-letter words like “cult” because implicit in the very word is a criticism. *We* never belong to a cult. We only call religions we don’t like a cult.

Peoples Temple appeared to fulfill some of the criteria of being a New Religious Movement, or NRM as we shorten it. Like many new religions emerging in the 1960s, it had a charismatic leader. It attracted young white college-educated adults. It required intense commitment.

But Peoples Temple really doesn't fit the cult paradigm very well, since it also attracted African Americans of a much broader range in age and class than typically associated with an NRM. They were young, old, middle-aged, middle-income, poor, working class, highly educated, illiterate. And, there were many more of them than of whites. Eighty to ninety percent of the 5,000 members of the Temple in San Francisco were African American. Seventy percent of the 900 people who died in Jonestown were African American. These statistics alone subvert the traditional way of viewing both cults and Peoples Temple.

In the book *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America*, I argue along with my co-editors Dr. Anthony Pinn and Dr. Mary Sawyer, that it is more productive to examine Peoples Temple in light of African American culture and religious experience. Rather than focus on the religious aspects of the organization, however, this evening I would like to discuss the Temple as a political movement that emerged out of the matrix of Black Power in the 1960s and 1970s. The radical idiom that dominated black activism in the fifteen years preceding the deaths in Jonestown has been ignored in most analyses of Peoples Temple. A discourse asserting the positive need to fight, and even to die, for the cause infused Peoples Temple as early as the late 1960s in northern California. It permeated daily life in Jonestown, especially when Jim Jones, the group's leader, arrived in mid-1977 to make his permanent home in the community.

This discourse was framed in the vocabulary of martyrdom. Given the times in which the Temple arose, when political murders in the United States seemed commonplace, this rhetorical move was eminently rational. Huey Newton, a leader in the Black Panther Party, called the militant activism of the era "revolutionary suicide," in recognition of his belief that "the revolutionary must always be prepared to face death."¹ Jim Jones reinterpreted revolutionary suicide to mean actual suicide, rather than suicidal action. He viewed mass death as a form of resistance in which a strong protest was made through the lives, and bodies, of those courageous enough to take the step.

In this paper I want to compare the revolutionary rhetoric used by Black Power movements in the U.S. with the language used by Peoples Temple. I especially want to consider the black political group active in Oakland, across the San Francisco Bay from Peoples Temple—namely, the Black Panther Party. The discourse of both movements emphasizes a willingness to die fighting persecution and repression, and reveals an expectation that this will indeed happen. I will be arguing that the members of Peoples Temple saw themselves as true martyrs in the cause of African American liberation.

This paper first looks at the narratives of revolution and sacrifice that prevailed in the 1960s and 1970s. Then it examines the idea of revolutionary suicide and how that term was used and understood in Peoples Temple. It then addresses counter arguments and alternative narratives; that is, some of the hard questions raised by Jonestown. The paper concludes by observing that the promise of Peoples Temple, with its vision of an integrated and egalitarian society, makes the pathos of the final day all the more tragic.

Narratives of Revolution and Sacrifice

The idea of revolutionary suicide provides the best description of the cultural and emotional context that existed in Jonestown. Civil rebellions and antiwar protests in America's cities provided the backdrop for the rapid expansion of the Temple from rustic northern California in the late 1960s to urban San Francisco and Los Angeles in the early-1970s. In addition, anti-

colonial movements sweeping throughout Africa and Asia, and the establishment of socialist governments in Latin American countries, created a global awareness that African Americans were part of a larger struggle for justice and equality. The Temple's move to Guyana solidified the commitment that members had to the global struggle for freedom. By immigrating to a co-operative socialist republic, they saw themselves as comrades-in-arms in the great fight against capitalism.

The specter of violent death at the hands of agents of the state was an ever-present reality for radicals in the Sixties. This could be seen in the assassinations of black leaders, Civil Rights workers, and student protestors, as well as in the deaths of hundreds in the civil rebellions that swept through American cities during that decade. Coupled with the loss of thousands of American soldiers in Vietnam, not to mention millions of Vietnamese, death loomed large in all sectors of society. While radical rhetoric may have exaggerated the extent of the crisis, social activists nonetheless could see that the apparatus of government clamped down harshly when its interests were challenged.

This repression engendered a narrative that emphasized resistance to oppression, even at the cost of one's life. We find appeals both to armed struggle and to sacrificial death in speeches, newspapers, essays, sermons, poetry, literature, and drama from that time. An eerily prescient poem titled "Revolution!!"—written by Richard W. Thomas and published in 1968—reads:

We will not die for nothing.

Not anymore.

Our deaths shall be noisy and beautiful to the last swing...

We shall die properly, all at once!²

Many additional examples of the revolutionary language African American writers employed in the Sixties appear in the 1968 anthology *Black Fire*, where Thomas's poem was re-printed. An essay by Calvin C. Hernton titled "Dynamite Growing out of Their Skulls" predicts that African Americans will explode in violence, while whites "will be at a complete loss to understand why so many black people have gone mad." The essay concludes that "nothing will stop the blacks except to kill them."³ Another illustration of the militant style of expression is the one-act play "Black-Ice," in which a group of radicals kidnap a congressman and hold him hostage in exchange for the release of a prisoner on death row. The plot is foiled, three of the schemers are killed as they attempt to escape, and a woman revolutionary is left with the congressman, who begs for his life.

CONGRESSMAN: All of you will go free.

MARTHA: How can you promise that? You're just a Congressman.

CONGRESSMAN: You'd be surprised at the power a Congressman has. We run this country.

At the end of the play, Martha shoots the congressman. The last line is: "You didn't die very well!"⁴

The clearest and most confrontational articulation of the priorities and programs of Black Power came from the Black Panthers. Founded in 1966 in Oakland, California, the Black Panther Party—originally the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense—directly challenged police brutality against African Americans. In contrast to the practice of nonviolent resistance, the Panthers encouraged armed resistance, especially against the police who carried out state-sponsored

oppression of African Americans and other people of color. They argued that “all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self-defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.”⁵ This provocative stance led to lethal showdowns between the Panthers and the police, which in turn fed the belief that death was always just around the corner. It was.

Huey Newton, co-founder of the Black Panthers, served three years in prison on charges of killing a police officer and wounding another, before winning an appeal and being released from San Quentin in 1970. His theory of revolutionary suicide, and his persona as a persecuted political figure, served as the model for discourse in Peoples Temple. In the essay “Revolutionary Suicide,” Newton writes that, “[a]lthough I risk the likelihood of death, there is at least the possibility, if not probability, of changing intolerable conditions.”⁶ He contrasts “reactionary suicide”—what he calls the self-murder of those who are crushed by the fascists—with revolutionary suicide, in which “we must move against these forces, even at the risk of death.”⁷ Newton then goes on to cite a number of revolutionaries, such as Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and Mikhail Bakunin, who argued that revolutionaries are essentially doomed men. He compares the 1960s radicals with the American colonists, the dispossessed of the French Revolution, the Russians of 1917, the Jews of Warsaw, and other heroic radicals. These revolutionaries were not suicidal, nor did they actively seek death, yet they knew that their lives were at stake.

In a 1970 interview Newton describes the program of the Panthers as one of armed struggle. “We have hooked up with the people who are rising up all over the world with arms, because we feel that only with the power of the gun will the bourgeoisie be destroyed and the world transformed.”⁸ In response to the 1971 uprising at New York’s Attica State Prison, in which 39 prisoners and guards were shot and killed by State Police, Newton asserts that “Prison Warden [Richard] Nixon...leaves no alternative but violent, armed resistance.”⁹ His eulogy for Jonathan Jackson and William Christmas, who were killed in a shoot-out in California’s Marin County Courthouse in 1970, includes the statement: “If the penalty for the quest for freedom is death, then by death we escape to freedom.”¹⁰ In essence, Newton’s concept of revolutionary suicide unmistakably required dying in the heat of battle.

Revolutionary Suicide in Peoples Temple

While the fiery rhetoric of Newton, the Black Panthers, and those in the Black Power movement may appear overblown and self-aggrandizing today, it is vital to remember that activists at the time believed that they were engaged in a life and death struggle for freedom and equality in America. Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and other public records suggest that this belief was *not* mere paranoia.¹¹

The members of Peoples Temple used the same language. Why? Because its young progressive members understood the Temple to be part of a larger political movement responding to the social turmoil raging in the United States and around the world in the 1960s and 1970s. Duchess Harris and Adam John Waterman argue that many Temple members deliberately utilized Black Power rhetoric, “because it was an available and appealing syntax of revolutionary social and political change.”¹² Perhaps more to the point, African Americans comprised the vast majority of the group’s members. Black Power was not empty rhetoric for Peoples Temple: it was something to be lived.

Jim Jones expounded a political message that radicalized the young and exhorted a social

gospel message that offered spiritual hope to the elderly. The Temple offered “survival programs,”¹³ to use Panther language, such as health services for senior citizens and welfare advocacy for poor people. Members also volunteered as activists in a variety of political protests that included opposing the 1978 Bakke decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, which rejected the principle of affirmative action; joining the California Coalition against the Death Penalty; and participating in Gay Rights rallies. The Temple sponsored anti-colonial events, such as the 1976 African Liberation Day celebration, which hosted speakers from liberation movements throughout Africa. Temple members circulated petitions against the incarceration of South Africa’s Nelson Mandela. Refugees from the 1973 military coup in Chile—like Orlando Letelier and Laura Allende—spoke at the Temple.

Jones himself was “an obscure socialist thinker,” according to Harris and Waterman. He blended “elements of atheism, Christianity, Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, and Third World revolutionary rhetoric into a complicated brew of political sentiments.”¹⁴ Audiotapes recovered from Jonestown feature Jones reading news from Soviet and Eastern Block sources about liberation movements around the world. In the news from November 6, 1978, Jones highlighted several items: protests in the Arab world against the Camp David Peace Agreement; the handover of power from the Rhodesian government to black majority rule; and the decision in the Philippines to release those detained under martial law.¹⁵

Peoples Forum, the newspaper of Peoples Temple, also printed news of radical leaders and events. The first issue, published in April 1976, featured Dennis Banks, the co-founder of the American Indian Movement, who was fighting extradition in connection with the Wounded Knee Uprising of 1973. An article on intimidation against the Temple from the December 1976 edition focused on spies identified at a talk which civil rights activist Unita Blackwell Wright gave at the Temple. “This country must be maintained on the road to social democracy,” the article reads. “It is beginning to appear that our corporate state has gotten out of touch with the needs of its people.” It concludes by warning all those attempting to:

circumvent the Constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, that we will not stand idly by while these freedoms are smothered... We would be prepared to do so even if it meant our death, because we firmly believe that liberty is worth that price.¹⁶

This was in 1976, two years before the deaths in Jonestown.

A review of *Peoples Forum*, audiotapes, and other primary source documents reveals that the discourse of Peoples Temple was neither as cogent, coherent or radical as that of the Black Panthers or other Black Power movements. The expression of a willingness to die, however, is noteworthy. Six months after my sister Annie Moore joined the Temple in 1972, she wrote a letter in which she stated: “I want to be in on changing the world to be a better place and I would give my life for it.”¹⁷ In her last letter to me, from October 1978, Annie described various conspiracies against the group that she believed had been uncovered. “What’s interesting,” she wrote, “is that it is all coming out before we are all dead, not the case with JFK, RFK, and Martin Luther King.”¹⁸

The idea of suicide was not explicitly discussed by the residents of Jonestown until September 1977, when they thought they were under attack. Temple member Tim Carter writes that Jim Jones claimed that the situation was so dire that they needed to commit suicide in order to prevent the fascists from killing the people. Jones called for a vote, but only two people supported the suicide option; in a second vote the next day, three more joined the first two. All

were white women close to Jim Jones in the Temple's leadership group.¹⁹ Nevertheless, when Jones spoke to the Deputy Prime Minister of Guyana via shortwave radio, he reversed the outcome, saying that all but two supported "a vote that we would rather die than return to the United States."²⁰

A journal kept by Temple member Edith Roller, and an audiotape recording, indicate that revolutionary suicide was unambiguously and repeatedly discussed at a community meeting on February 16, 1978. Roller wrote that Jim Jones had said the political situation in Guyana was dangerous and that alternatives needed to be explored. Many residents proposed moving to Africa, and Roller herself publicly recommended "that instead of revolutionary suicide (which had been suggested), we seek to send our young people to some African country where they could be used in a revolutionary cause."²¹ Other people who spoke that night agreed, arguing that they should take a stand and fiercely resist any attacks. But Jones maintained that revolutionary suicide was preferable to being taken prisoner, becoming a slave, or returning to the United States. "There's no way to make any moral sense out of further fighting," he said, "because it'd be maybe black people having to kill black people that they'd use to come after us, and we would lose our moral impact."²² At the end of the discussion, Jones announced that there was no alternative to revolutionary suicide, and ordered residents to line up to take what they were told was poison.

This was one of about a half dozen suicide rehearsals that occurred in Jonestown. Jim Jones called the exercise a "White Night."

Discussions of revolutionary suicide intensified in Jonestown throughout 1978. Sometime between the end of 1977 and the middle of 1978, residents were asked to write down what they would do in a final White Night. Rose Sharon stated that, "I have given my life to you. [I] Don't care about my life." Shirley Baisy declared that, "I can give my life, my children[s] life or any member of my family. I don't think we were put here to live forever."²³ Some of the declarations were clearly bogus: people said what they thought Jones and the group wanted to hear. But others were undoubtedly sincere.

Whatever their private thoughts might have been, residents again affirmed their commitment to die on a tape made at the end of the summer of 1978. The statements clearly were intended to be made for posterity, as several speakers allude to those who will listen to the tape in the future. Although they did not agree on a single definition of revolutionary suicide, they did admit that death was the only way out. Some wanted to die to prove that they laid down their lives for something worthwhile. Some would rather die than live any other place in the world. Some wanted to make a statement in support of the communism practiced in Jonestown. Some were dying in solidarity with other freedom fighters around the world. And some were just tired of running. The declaration of Liane Harris perhaps rings truest of those made that night: "This is the only place where I found freedom—and if I can't have it here, I'd rather be dead."²⁴

Liane Harris died on November 18. So did Edith Roller, Rose Sharon, Shirley Baisy, and Annie Moore—all the people I have been quoting.

The audiotape made on November 18 as the deaths were occurring includes Jim Jones' pronouncement that they were not destroying themselves, but rather were committing revolutionary suicide:

One thousand people who said, we don't like the way the world is. [Tape edit] Take some. [Tape edit] Take our life from us. We laid it down. We got tired. [Tape edit] We

didn't commit suicide, we committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world.²⁵

Just as Huey Newton differentiated between reactionary suicide and revolutionary suicide, Jim Jones distinguished self-destructive suicide from revolutionary suicide. He condemned ordinary suicide, saying, "It's *immoral* to commit suicide for selfish reasons. It's *hostile*. It's an act of vengeance to do it."²⁶ He claimed that a suicide for selfish reasons would be reincarnated for 10,000 years. In contrast, revolutionary suicide was an unselfish act intended to resist the evils of capitalism.

Counter-Arguments and Alternative Narratives

I have set forth the evidence for arguing that members of Peoples Temple saw themselves within a larger framework of black liberation struggles. They used the rhetoric of Black Power and of anti-colonialism as they described their own movement. Throughout the course of the upcoming lectures, you will have the opportunity to hear other accounts of Peoples Temple: what happened there, why it happened, what it means. As historians engaged in the interpretation of past events, we are aware that there are a number of competing voices, all clamoring to be heard.

The dominant account of Peoples Temple and Jonestown was created by the news media within a few short weeks of the deaths in 1978. In that account Jim Jones was a racist madman who ran a prison camp and coerced his brainwashed followers into killing themselves. He was a power-mad charlatan who only intended to defraud people. His teachings were always a sham and his followers were pathetic losers. Worst of all, he was a white man who fooled black people by raising false hopes and then killing them.

The unfortunate reality is that members of Peoples Temple, and residents of Jonestown, participated in their own victimization. The victims were also the perpetrators. The victims castigated each other, abused each other shamefully, and participated in terrors and horrors that you will undoubtedly hear about in upcoming lectures.

It is certain, however, that Jim Jones was not the one who placed the order for the poison. He was not the one who tested it on the farm animals in Jonestown. He was not the one who mixed the cyanide that day. And Jim Jones did not administer the Kool-Aid to the children. These were the actions of people who were true believers.

I am neither minimizing the role of Jim Jones, nor am I blaming the victims. I am describing the process which Dr. Archie Smith Jr. identifies as "audience corruption," in his article on the implications Jonestown had for the Black Church. Audience corruption is the concept which states that interactions between leaders and followers are mutually destructive. "Followers learn to give the responses the leader wants them to learn; they feed them back to the leader on cue, who in turn believes even more in the power and rightness of his leadership."²⁷ Within a closed system, the leader is the sole authority because the people have given him, or her, that power. The audience corrupts the leader with its uncritical adulation, and the leader corrupts the audience by demanding obedience. Jones did not need any gunmen to enforce the behavioral controls in place at Jonestown. The residents themselves ran and operated them.

Nevertheless, the events of the final day remain in dispute. Was it murder or was it suicide? The unbelievable nature of the deaths have inspired a number of alternative narratives. Writers for the Black Panther Party newspaper asserted that the deaths were caused by a neutron bomb. Comedian and social activist Dick Gregory said that U.S. troops were stationed at the military

mortuary in Dover, Delaware to handle the influx of bodies *before* the deaths even occurred. An African American community broadcaster based in North Carolina believes that the victims in Jonestown were killed by poison gas. More generally, a number of people in the San Francisco Bay Area think that African Americans were lured into the Temple and to Jonestown as a way to destroy the most progressive elements of San Francisco politics in the 1970s.

The fact that parents killed their children is probably the number one reason that alternative narratives have arisen. But let us look at this from a different perspective and ask: how did the parents who killed their children in Jonestown view their own actions? On a number of occasions the people of Jonestown openly discussed the possibility of killing their children. During one White Night on April 12, 1978, residents proclaimed their willingness to take the lives of their own children rather than leave them for the fascists to find. Jones elaborated, saying that they are already prepared to be “genuinely compassionate” in the case of such an emergency.²⁸

A literary example makes this same point. The character Sethe in Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* has been brutalized by slave owners. To prevent her daughter from facing the same fate, she cuts the throat of Beloved. “She had to be safe,” says Sethe,

and I put her where she would be... I’ll explain to her, even though I don’t have to. Why I did it. How if I hadn’t killed she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her. When I explain it she’ll understand, because she understands everything already.²⁹

Once the parents in Jonestown had killed their children, they had no reason to live. I don’t think we need any alternative theories to explain that fact.

A Dream Deferred

Members of Peoples Temple were immersed in the rhetoric of revolution. Resistance shaped the discourse they used to describe America, the Babylon of racism and capitalism.³⁰ The group worked on two fronts to oppose these evils. First, they worked for social justice in the urban areas of San Francisco and, to a lesser extent, Los Angeles. Second, they created an alternative society in Guyana in which the problems of America’s economic and political system no longer existed. The mean streets of the ghetto—with alcoholism, drugs, addiction, crime, juvenile delinquency, and other ills—were left far behind. Guyana was called the Promised Land, and the possibility of a new beginning, apart from America’s racist society, was palpable and real.

Self-sacrifice was required to participate in the struggle. This self-denial encompassed not only martyrdom at the hands of the oppressors, but also self-murder, if the death promoted a larger cause or purpose. In the case of Jonestown, the deaths served as a blow by the powerless against the powerful. Unlike their contemporaries, the people of Jonestown ultimately rejected armed aggression. They turned the violence upon themselves, thereby proving the righteousness of the cause for which they were willing to die. The revolutionary suicide of Jonestown was the best weapon that the weak could use against the strong. The people maintained their integrity by dying what they hoped would be a noble death in a cause greater than themselves.

The fact that their deaths seem to be a tragic waste to us is what introduces the pathos of Peoples Temple. What could have been, should have been, and ought to have been, was destroyed in a process that took years to prepare, but which appeared to happen in an instant. The dream of an egalitarian society exploded, and was deferred to another time.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, 1973), 7.
- ² Richard W. Thomas, "Revolution!!" in *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing*, ed. LeRoi Jones and Larry Neal (New York: William Morrow, 1968), 196.
- ³ Calvin C. Hernton, "Dynamite Growing out of Their Skulls," in *Black Fire*, 78, 104.
- ⁴ Charles Patterson, "Black-Ice," in *Black Fire*, 564, 565.
- ⁵ "March 1972 Platform," *The Black Panther Party Research Project*, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/blackpanthers/history.shtml>, retrieved 28 July 2012.
- ⁶ Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 5.
- ⁷ Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 5.
- ⁸ Huey P. Newton, "Repression Breeds Resistance: January 16, 1970," in *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton*, ed. Toni Morrison, pp. 197-204 (New York: Random House, 1972; New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, 1995), 198.
- ⁹ Huey P. Newton, "Attica Statement: October 16, 1971," in *To Die for the People*, 205. Part of original text appears in capital letters.
- ¹⁰ Huey P. Newton, "Eulogy for Jonathan Jackson and William Christmas: August 15, 1970," in *To Die for the People*, 221. Original text appears in capital letters.
- ¹¹ See, for example, Charles E. Jones, "The Political Repression of the Black Panther Party 1966-1971: The Case of the Oakland Bay Area," *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 18, no. 4 (1988): 415-434.
- ¹² Duchess Harris and Adam John Waterman, "To Die for the Peoples Temple: Religion and Revolution after Black Power," in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America*, ed. Rebecca Moore, Anthony B. Pinn, and Mary R. Sawyer, pp. 103-122 (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 105.
- ¹³ Harris and Waterman, 106.
- ¹⁴ Harris and Waterman, 106.
- ¹⁵ Audiotape Q168, *Alternative Considerations*, <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/Tapes/Tapes/TapeTranscripts/Q169.html>, retrieved 31 July 2012.
- ¹⁶ "Intimidation Won't Succeed," *Peoples Forum*, vol. 1, no. 13 (December 1976), 2.
- ¹⁷ Letter dated 30 March 1973, Rebecca Moore, "Letters from Annie Moore," *Alternative Considerations*, http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/PrimarySources/moore_annie.htm, retrieved 31 July 2012; excerpted from Rebecca Moore, *The Jonestown Letters: Correspondence of the Moore Family 1970-1985* (Lewiston N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 94.
- ¹⁸ Moore, *The Jonestown Letters*, 282.
- ¹⁹ Tim Carter, "Murder or Suicide: What I Saw," *the jonestown report*, vol. 8 (2006), <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/JonestownReport/Volume8/forumCarter.htm>, retrieved 1 August 2012.
- ²⁰ Audiotape Q 800, *Alternative Considerations*, <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/Tapes/Tapes/TapeTranscripts/Q800.htm>, retrieved 1 August 2012.
- ²¹ Edith Roller Journals, 16 February 1978, *Alternative Considerations*, <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/JTRResearch/eRollerJournals/Trns/ER7802Feb.html>, retrieved 1 August 2012.
- ²² Audiotape Q642, *Alternative Considerations*, <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/Tapes/Tapes/TapeTranscripts/Q642.html>, retrieved 1 August 2012.

²³ “What I Would Do If There Was A Final White Night,” *Alternative Considerations*, <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/PrimarySources/FinalWhiteNight1.html>, retrieved 1 August 2012; original document in the FBI files RYMUR 89-4286-c-5-a, pp. 1-29.

²⁴ Statement of Liane Harris, Audiotape Q 245, *Alternative Considerations*, <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/Tapes/Tapes/TapeTranscripts/Q245.htm>, retrieved 1 August 2012.

²⁵ Audiotape Q 42, *Alternative Considerations*.

²⁶ Audiotape Q 833, *Alternative Considerations*, <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/Tapes/Tapes/TapeSummaries/833.htm>, retrieved 1 August 2012. Italics in transcript.

²⁷ Archie Smith Jr., “An Interpretation of Peoples Temple and Jonestown: Implications for the Black Church,” in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America*, ed. by Rebecca Moore, Anthony B. Pinn, and Mary R. Sawyer, pp. 47-56 (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004).

²⁸ Audiotape Q 637, *Alternative Considerations*, <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/Tapes/Tapes/TapeTranscripts/Q637.html>, retrieved 2 August 2012.

²⁹ Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 200.

³⁰ Members referred to the U.S. as Babylon. See, for example, Audiotapes Q182, Q 217, Q673, Q933 *Alternative Considerations*.

I lectured about the joy of life, about how much I appreciated life, even with so little of my own left. I talked about honesty, integrity, gratitude, and other things I hold dear. And I tried very hard not to be boring. And yet, I couldn't let go of the idea of the lecture. I had come to see it as the last moment of my career, as a way to say goodbye to my work family. I also found myself fantasizing about giving a last lecture that would be the oratorical equivalent of a retiring baseball slugger driving one last ball into the upper deck. I had always liked the final scene in *The Natural*, when the aging, bleeding ballplayer Roy Hobbs miraculously hits that towering home run. Their dreams are our dreams; and their success will be our success. We share one heart, one home, and one glorious destiny. The oath of office I take today is an oath of allegiance to all Americans. We will get our people off of welfare and back to work rebuilding our country with American hands and American labor. The Jonestown conspiracy theories are conspiracy theories centering on the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project and the Jonestown massacre. Many proponents of such conspiracy theories contend that outside forces were involved in what occurred at the commune, including the massacre. These theories often include the assertion that the events in Jonestown represented CIA efforts in mind control or similar modes of social experimentation, often believed by proponents of such theories to be a covert example