

This transcript, as well as much additional information on Jonestown, is available at the following website: <http://altreligion.miningco.com/>

## "Suicide Tape Transcript"

by Mary McCormick Maaga

Shortly after November 18, 1978 a tape emerged from the ruins of Jonestown. It appeared to be an audio recording of the actual death scene. Because of gaps in it, however, and some unclear references, its authenticity is not airtight, although it is generally presumed credible. This transcript is made from a tape recording produced by the International Home Video Club, Inc. of New York, an operation which has since ceased to exist. It is not clear how IHV got the tape in the first place. This transcript was made by Mary McCormick Maaga in *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), by permission of the author.



**JIM JONES:** How very much I've tried my best to give you a good life. But in spite of all of my trying a handful of our people, with their lies, have made our lives impossible. There's no way to detach ourselves from what's happened today.

Not only are we in a compound situation, not only are there those who have left and committed the betrayal of the century, some have stolen children from others, and they are in pursuit right now to kill them because they stole their children. And we are sitting here waiting on a powder keg.

I don't think it is what we want to do with our babies--I don't think that's what we had in mind to do with our babies. It is said by the greatest of prophets from time immemorial: "No man may take my life from me; I lay my life down." So to sit here and wait for the catastrophe that's going to happen on that airplane--it's going to be a catastrophe. It almost happened here. Almost happened when the congressman was nearly killed here. You can't steal people's children. You can't take off with people's children without expecting a violent reaction. And that's not so unfamiliar to us either--even if we were Judeo-Christian--if we weren't Communists. The world (*inaudible*) suffers violence, and the violent shall take it by force. If we can't live in peace, then let's die in peace. (*Applause.*)

We've been so betrayed. We have been so terribly betrayed. (*Music and singing*) But we've tried and as (*inaudible*) ... if this only works one day it was worthwhile. (*Applause.*) Thank you.

Now what's going to happen here in a matter of a few minutes is that one of those people on that plane is going to shoot the pilot--I know that. I didn't plan it, but I know it's going to happen. They're gonna shoot that pilot and down comes that plane into the jungle. And we had better not have any of our children left when it's over because they'll parachute in here on us.

I'm going to be just as plain as I know how to tell you. I've never lied to you. I never have lied to you. I know that's what's gonna happen. That's what he intends to do, and he will do it. He'll do it.<sup>1</sup>

What's with being so bewildered with many, many pressures on my brain, seeing all these people behave so treasonous--there was too much for me to put together, but I now know what he was telling me. And it'll happen. If the plane gets in the air even.<sup>2</sup>

So my opinion is that you be kind to children and be kind to seniors and take the potion like they used to take in ancient Greece and step over quietly because we are not committing suicide; it's a revolutionary act. We can't go back; they won't leave us alone. They're now going back to tell more lies, which means more congressmen. And there's no way, no way we can survive.

Anybody. Anyone that has any dissenting opinion, please speak. Yes. (*Inaudible.*) You can have an opportunity, but if the children are left, we're going to have them butchered. We can make a strike, but we'll be striking against people that we don't want to strike against. What we'd like to get are the people that caused this stuff, and some, if some people here are prepared and know how to do that, to go in town and get Timothy Stoen, but there's no plane. There's no plane. You can't catch a plane in time.

He's responsible for it. He brought these people to us. He and Deanna Mertle.<sup>3</sup> The people in San Francisco will not--not be idle. Now, would they? They'll not take our death in vain you know. Yes, Christine.

**CHRISTINE MILLER:** Is it too late for Russia?<sup>4</sup>

**JONES:** Here's why it's too late for Russia. They killed. They started to kill. That's why it makes it too late for Russia. Otherwise I'd say, yes, sir, you bet your life. But it's too late. I can't control these people. They're out there. They've gone with the guns. And it's too late. And once we kill anybody-- at least that's what I've always--I've always put my lot with you. If one of my people do something, it's me.

And they say I don't have to take the blame for this, but I don't live that way. They said deliver up Ujara<sup>5</sup>, who tried to get the man back here. Ujara, whose mother's been lying on him and lying on him and trying to break up this family. And they've all agreed to kill us by any means necessary. Do you think I'm going to deliver them Ujara? Not on your life. No.

**MAN 1:** I know a way to find Stoen if it'll help us.

**JONES:** No. You're not going. You're not going. You're not going. I can't live that way. I cannot live that way. I've lived with--for all. I'll die for all. (*Applause.*) I've been living on hope for a long time, Christine, and I appreciate you've always been a very good agitator. I like agitation because you have to see two sides of one issue, two sides of a question.

But what those people are gonna get done once they get through will make our lives worse than hell. Will make us--will make the rest of us not accept

it. When they get through lying. They posed so many lies between there and that truck that we are--we are done--in as far as any other alternative.

**MILLER:** Well, I say let's make an airlift to Russia. That's what I say. I don't think nothing is impossible if you believe it.

**JONES:** How are we going to do that? How are you going to airlift to Russia?

**MILLER:** Well, I thought they said if we got in an emergency, they gave you a code to let them know.

**JONES:** No they didn't. They gave us a code that they'd let us know on that issue; not us create an issue for them. They said that we--if they saw the country coming down they agreed to give us the code. You can check on that and see if it's on the code. Check with Russia to see if they'll take us in immediately, otherwise we die. I don't know what else you say to these people. But to me death is not--death is not a fearful thing. It's living that's cursed. (*Applause.*) I have never, never, never, never seen anything like this before in my life. I've never seen people take the law and do--in their own hands and provoke us and try to purposely agitate mother of children. There is no need, Christine; it's not--it's just not worth living like this. Not worth living like this.

**MILLER:** I think that there were too few who left for twelve hundred people to give them their lives for those people that left.

**JONES:** Do you know how many left?

**MILLER:** Oh, twenty-odd. That's a small ...

**JONES:** Twenty-odd, twenty-odd.

**MILLER:** Compared to what's here.

**JONES:** Twenty-odd. But what's gonna happen when they don't leave? I hope that they could leave. But what's gonna happen when they don't leave?

**MILLER:** You mean the people here?

**JONES:** Yeah. What's going to happen to us when they don't leave, when they get on the plane and the plane goes down?

**MILLER:** I don't think they'll go down.

**JONES:** You don't think they'll go down? I wish I would tell you you're right, but I'm right. There's one man there who blames, and rightfully so, Debbie Blakey for the murder--for the murder of his mother<sup>6</sup> and he'll--he'll stop that pilot by any means necessary. He'll do it. That plane'll come out of the air. There's no way you can fly a plane without a pilot.

**MILLER:** I wasn't speaking about that plane. I was speaking about a plane for us to go to Russia.

**JONES:** How ... to Russia? You think Russia's gonna want--no, it's not gonna, it's, it's, it's--you think Russia's gonna want us with all this stigma? We had some value, but now we don't have any value.

**MILLER:** Well, I don't see it like that. I mean, I feel like that--as long as there's life, there's hope. That's my faith.

**JONES:** Well--some--everybody dies. Some place that hope runs out because everybody dies. I haven't seen anybody yet didn't die. And I'd like to choose my own kind of death for a change. I'm tired of being tormented to hell, that's what I'm tired of. Tired of it. (*Applause.*)

I have twelve hundred people's lives in my hands, and I certainly don't want your life in my hands. I'm going to tell you, Christine, without me, life has no meaning. (*Applause.*) I'm the best thing you'll ever have.

I want, want, I have to pay--I'm standing with Ujara. I'm standing with those people. They are part of me. I could detach myself. I really could detach myself. No, no, no, no, no, no. I never detach myself from any of your troubles. I've always taken your troubles right on my shoulders. And I'm not going to change that now. It's too late. I've been running too long. Not going to change now. (*Applause.*)

Maybe the next time you'll get to go to Russia. The next time round.<sup>7</sup> This is--what I'm talking about now is the dispensation of judgment. This is a revolutionary--a revolutionary suicide council. I'm not talking about self--self-destruction. I'm talking about that we have no other road. I will take your call. We will put it to the Russians. And I can tell you the answer now because I am a prophet.<sup>8</sup> Call the Russians and tell them, and see if they'll take us.

**MILLER:** I said I'm not ready to die.

**JONES:** I don't think you are.

**MILLER:** But, ah, I look about at the babies and I think they deserve to live, you know?

**JONES:** I agree. But also they deserve much more; they deserve peace.

**MILLER:** We all came here for peace.

**JONES:** And we've--have we had it?

**MILLER:** No.

**JONES:** I tried to give it to you. I've laid down my life, practically. I've practically died every day to give you peace. And you still not have any peace. You look better than I've seen you in a long while, but it's still not the kind of peace that I want to give you. A person's a fool who continues to say that they're winning when you're losing. (*Inaudible.*) What? I didn't hear you ma'am. You'll have to speak up. Ma'am, you'll have to speak up.

**WOMAN:** (*Inaudible.*)

**JONES:** That's a sweet thought. Who said that? Come on up and speak it again, Honey. Say what you want to say about... *(inaudible)*.<sup>9</sup> No plane is taking off. Suicide. Plenty have done it. Stoen has done it.<sup>10</sup> Somebody ought to live. Somebody... *(inaudible)* I'll talk to San Francisco--see that Stoen does not get by with this infamy--this infamy. He has done the thing we wanted to do. Have us destroyed.

**MILLER:** When you--when you--when we destroy ourselves, we're defeated. We let them, the enemies, defeat us.

**JONES:** Did you see--did you see, "I will fight no more forever?"

**MILLER:** Yes, I saw that.

**JONES:** Did you not have some sense of pride and victory in that man? Yet he would not subject himself to the will or whim of people who tell them they want to come in whenever they please and push into our house. Come when they please, take who they want to, talk to who they want to--does this not living? That's not living to me. That's not freedom. That's not the kind of freedom I sought.

**MILLER:** Well I think where they made their mistake is when they stopped to rest. If they had gone on they would've made it. But they stopped to rest.<sup>11</sup>

**JIM MCELVANE:**<sup>12</sup> Just hold on, *(inaudible)* would have made that day. We made a beautiful day, and let's make it a beautiful day. *(Applause.)*

**JONES:** We win when we go down. Tim Stoen has nobody else to hate. He has nobody else to hate. Then he'll destroy himself. I'm speaking here not as the administrator, I'm speaking as a prophet today.<sup>13</sup> I wouldn't *(inaudible)* talk so serious if I didn't know what I was talking about. Has anybody called back? The immense amount of damage that's going to be done, but I cannot separate myself from the pain of my people. You can't either, Christine, if you stop to think about it. You can't separate yourself. We've walked too long together.

**MILLER:** I know that. But I still think, as an individual, I have a right to--

**JONES:** You do, and I'm listening.

**MILLER:** --to say what I think, what I feel. And think we all have a right to our own destiny as individuals.

**JONES:** Right.

**MILLER:** And I think I have a right to choose mine, and everybody else has a right to choose theirs.

**JONES:** Mhm.

**MILLER:** You know?

**JONES:** Mhm. I'm not criticizing.... What's that? (*Inaudible woman's voice.*)

**MILLER:** Well, I think I still have a right to my own opinion.

**JONES:** I'm not taking it from you. I'm not taking it from you.

**MCELVANE:** Christine, you're only standing here because he was here in the first place. So I don't know what you're talking about, having an individual life. Your life has been extended to the day that you're standing there because of him.

**JONES:** I guess she has as much right to speak as anybody else, too. What did you say, Ruby? (*Inaudible.*) Well, you'll regret that this very day if you don't die. You'll regret it if you do, though you don't die. You'll regret it.

**WOMAN 1:** (*Inaudible.*) ... You've saved so many people.

**JONES:** I've saved them. I saved them, but I made my example. I made my expression. I made my manifestation, and the world was ready, not ready for me. Paul said, "I was a man born out of due season." I've been born out of due season, just like all we are, and the best testimony we can make is to leave this goddamn world.<sup>14</sup> (*Applause.*)

**WOMAN 1:** You must prepare to die.

**MILLER:** I'm not talking to her. Will you let--would you let her or let me talk?

**JONES:** Keep talking.

**MILLER:** Would you make her sit down and let me talk while I'm on the floor or let her talk?

**JONES:** How can you tell the leader what to do if you live? I've listened to you. You asked me about Russia. I'm right now making a call to Russia. What more do you suggest? I'm listening to you. You've yet to give me one slight bit of encouragement. I just now instructed her to go there and do that. (*Voices.*)<sup>15</sup>

**MCELVANE:** Alright now, everybody hold it. We didn't come--hold it. Hold it. Hold it. Hold it. Let law be maintained. (*Voices.*)

**JONES:** Lay down your burden. I'm gonna lay down my burden. Down by the riverside. Shall we lay them down here by the side of Guyana? What's the difference? No man didn't take our lives. Right now. They haven't taken them. But when they start parachuting out of the air, they'll shoot some of our innocent babies. I'm not lying--I don't wanna (*inaudible*). But they gotta shoot me to get through to some of these people. I'm not letting them take your child. Can you let them take you child?

**VOICES:** No, no, no, no.

**WOMAN 2:** Are we gonna die?

**JONES:** What's that?

**WOMAN 2:** You mean you want us to die ...

**JONES:** I want to see (*voices shouting*) ... please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please.

**WOMAN 3:** Are you saying that you think we could have smaller blame than other children were? Because if you're saying ...

**JONES:** Do you think I'd put John's<sup>16</sup> life above others? If I put John's life above others, I wouldn't be standing with Ujara. I'd send John out, and he could go out on the driveway tonight.

**WOMAN 3:** Because he's young.

**JONES:** I know, but he's no different to me than any of these children here. He's just one of my children. I don't prefer one above another. I don't prefer him above Ujara. I can't do that; I can't separate myself from your actions or his actions. If you'd done something wrong, I'd stand with you. If they wanted to come and get you, they'd have to take me.

**MAN 2:** We're all ready to go. If you tell us we have to give our lives now, we're ready--all the rest of the sisters and brothers are with me.<sup>17</sup>

**JONES:** Some months I've tried to keep this thing from happening. But I now see it's the will--it's the will of Sovereign Being that this happen to us. That we lay down our lives to protest against what's being done. That we lay down our lives to protest at what's being done. The criminality of people. The cruelty of people.

Who walked out of here today? See all those who walked out? Mostly white people. Mostly white people walked. I'm so grateful for the ones that didn't--those who knew who they are. I just know that there's no point-- there's no point to this. We are born before our time. They won't accept us. And I don't think we should sit here and take any more time for our children to be endangered. Because if they come after our children, and we give them our children, then our children will suffer forever.

**MILLER:** Do you mind if I get up?

**JONES:** I have no quarrel with you coming up. I like you. I personally like you very much.

**MILLER:** People get hostile when you try to...

**JONES:** Oh, some people do--but--yes, some people do. Put it that way--I'm not hostile. You had to be honest, but you've stayed, and if you wanted to run, you'd have run with them 'cause anybody could've run today. What would anyone do? I know you're not a runner. And I--your life is precious to me. It's as precious as John's. And I don't--what I do I do with (*inaudible*) and justice and (*inaudible*). And I've weighed it against all evidence.

**MILLER:** That's all I've got to say.

**JONES:** What comes now folks? What comes now?

**MAN 3:** Everybody hold it. Sit down.

**JONES:** Say. Say. Say peace. Say Peace. Say Peace. Say Peace. What's come. Don't let--Take Dwyer on down to the east house. Take Dwyer.<sup>18</sup>

**WOMAN 4:** Everybody be quiet, please.

**JONES:** (*Inaudible*) ... got some respect for our lives.

**MCELVANE:** That means sit down, sit down. Sit down.

**JONES:** They know. (*Groan.*) I tried so very, very hard.<sup>19</sup> They're trying over here to see what's going to happen (*inaudible*). Who is it? (*Voices*)

Get Dwyer out of here before something happens to him.\* Dwyer. I'm not talking about Ujara. I said Dwyer. Ain't nobody gonna take Ujara. I'm not lettin' em take Ujara. It's easy, it's easy... (*Inaudible.*)

Yes, my love.

\*What raises questions about the authenticity of the audiotape is that U.S. Embassy official Richard Dwyer was wounded at the Port Kaituma airstrip while the suicides were in progress.

**WOMAN 5:** At one time, I felt just like Christine herself. But after today I don't feel anything because the biggest majority of people that left here today for a fight, and I know it really hurt my heart because--

**JONES:** Broke your heart, didn't it?

**WOMAN 5:** Broke my heart completely. All of this year the white people had been with us, and they're not a part of us. So we might as well end it now because I don't see ...

**JONES:** It's all over. The congressman has been murdered. (*Music and singing.*) Well, it's all over, all over. What a legacy, what a legacy. What the Red Brigade doin' that once ever made any sense anyway? They invaded our privacy. They came into our home. They followed us six thousand miles away. Red Brigade showed them justice. The congressman's dead. (*Music only.*)

Please get us some medication. It's simple. It's simple. There's no convulsions with it. It's just simple. Just, please get it. Before it's too late. The GDF<sup>20</sup> will be here, I tell you. Get movin', get movin', get movin'.

**WOMAN 6:** Now. Do it now!

**JONES:** Don't be afraid to die. You'll see, there'll be a few people land out here. They'll torture some of our children here. They'll torture our people. They'll torture our seniors. We cannot have this.

Are you going to separate yourself from whoever shot the congressman? I don't know who shot him.



**voices:** No. No. No.

*(Music.)*

**JONES:** Let's make our peace. And those who had a right to go, and they had a right to--How many are dead? Aw, God Almighty, God. Huh? Patty Parks is dead?

**WOMAN 7:** Some of the others who endure long enough in a safe place could write about the goodness of Jim Jones.

**JONES:** I don't know how in the world they're ever going to write about us. It's just too late. It's too late. The congressman's dead. The congressman lays dead. Many of our traitors are dead. They're all layin' out there dead.  
*(Inaudible.)*

I didn't, but my people did. My people did. They're my people, and they've been provoked too much. They've been provoked too much. What's happened here's been since Tuesday's been an act of provocation.

**WOMAN 8:** What about Ted? If there's any way it's possible to, eh, have and to give Ted something to take then, I'm satisfied, okay?<sup>21</sup>

**JONES:** Okay.

**WOMAN 8:** I said, if there's anyway you can do before I have to give Ted something, so he won't have to let him go through okay, and I'm satisfied.

**JONES:** That's fine. Okay, yes. Yes. Yes.

**WOMAN 9:** Thank you for everything. You are the only. You are the only. And I appreciate you. *(Applause.)*

**JONES:** Please, can we hasten? Can we hasten with that medication? You don't know what you've done. I tried. *(Applause, music, singing.)*

They saw it happen and ran into the bush and dropped the machine guns. I never in my life.<sup>22</sup> But not any more. But we've got to move. Are you gonna get that medication here? You've got to move. Marceline,<sup>23</sup> about forty minutes.

**JUDY IJAMES OR JOYCE TOUCHETTE:**<sup>24</sup> You have to move, and the people that are standing there in the aisles, go stand in the radio room yard.<sup>25</sup> Everybody get behind the table and back this way, okay. There's nothing to worry about. Everybody keep calm and try and keep your children calm. And all those children that help, let the little children in and reassure them. They're not crying from pain. It's just a little bitter tasting. They're not crying out of any pain. Annie Miguel, can I please see you back ...

**MCELVANE:** ... Things I used to do before I came here. So let me tell you about it. It might make a lot of you feel a little more comfortable. Sit down and be quiet, please.

One of the things I used to do--I used to be a therapist. And the kind of therapy that I did had to do with reincarnations in past life situations. And every time anybody had the experience of going into a past life, I was fortunate enough through Father to be able to let them experience it all the way through their death, so to speak. And everybody was so happy when they made that step to the other side.

**JONES:** *(Inaudible.)* It's the only way to step. That choice is not ours now. It's out of our hands. *(Children crying in the background.)*

**MCELVANE:** If we have a body that's been crippled, suddenly you have the kind of body that you want to have.

**JONES:** A little rest, a little rest.

**MCELVANE:** It feels good. It never felt so good. Now, may I tell you. You've never felt so good as how that feels.

**JONES:** And I do hope that *(inaudible)* will stay where they belong and don't come up here.

What is it? What is it? They what? Alright, it's hard but only at first-- only at first is it hard. Hard only at first. Living--you're looking at death and it looks--living is much, much more difficult. Raising up every morning and not knowing what's going to be the night's bringing. It's much more difficult. It's much more difficult. *(Crying and talking.)*

**WOMAN 10:** I just want to say something for everyone that I see that is standing around or crying. This is nothing to cry about. This is something we could all rejoice about. We could be happy about this. They always told us that we could cry when you're coming into this world. So we're leaving it, and we're leaving it peaceful. I think we should be happy about this. I was just thinking about Jim Jones. He just has suffered and suffered and suffered. We have the honor guard, and we don't even have a chance to ... *(Inaudible.)* I want to give him one more chance. *(Inaudible.)* That's few that's gone. There's many more here. *(Inaudible.)* That's not all of us. That's not all yet. That's just a few that have died. I tried to get to the one that-- there's a kid *(inaudible)* I'm looking at so many people crying. I wish you would not cry. And just thank Father. *(Inaudible.)* ... *(sustained applause.)* I've been here about one year and nine months. And I never felt better in my life. Not in San Francisco. But until I came to Jonestown. I had a very good life. I had a beautiful life. I don't see nothing that I could be sorry about. We should be happy. At least I am. *(Inaudible.) (Applause, music.)*

**WOMAN 11:** ... Good to be alive today. I just like to thank Dad cause he was the only one that stood up for me when I needed him. And thank you, Dad.

**WOMAN 12:** I'm glad you're my brothers and sisters, and I'm glad to be here. Okay.

*(Voices.)*

**JONES:**<sup>26</sup> Please. For God's sake, let's get on with it. We've lived--we've lived as no other people lived and loved. We've had as much of this world as

you're gonna get. Let's just be done with it. Let's be done with the agony of it. *(Applause.)*

It's far, far harder to have to walk through every day, die slowly--and from the time you're a child 'til the time you get gray, you're dying.

Dishonest, and I'm sure that they'll--they'll pay for it. They'll pay for it. This is a revolutionary suicide. This is not a self destructive suicide. So they'll pay for this. They brought this upon us. And they'll pay for that. I leave that destiny to them.

*(Voices.)*

Who wants to go with their child has a right to go with their child. I think it's humane. I want to go--I want to see you go, though. They can take me and do what they want--whatever they want to do. I want to see you go. I don't want to see you go through this hell no more. No more. No more. No more.

We're trying. If everybody will relax. The best thing you do to relax, and you will have no problem. You'll have no problem with this thing if you just relax.

**MAN 4:** ... A great deal because it's Jim Jones. And the way the children are laying there now. I'd rather see them lay like that than to see them have to die like the Jews did, which was pitiful anyhow. And I just like to thank Dad for giving us life and also death. And I appreciate the fact of the way our children are going. Because, like Dad said, when they come in, what they're gonna do to our children--they're gonna massacre our children. And also the ones that they take capture, they're gonna just let them grow up and be dummies like they want them to be. And not grow up to be a person like the one and only Jim Jones. So I'd like to thank Dad for the opportunity for letting Jonestown be not what it could be, but what Jonestown is. Thank you, Dad. *(Applause.)*

**JONES:** It's not to be afeared. It is not to be feared. It is a friend. It's a friend ... sitting there, show your love for one another. Let's get gone. Let's get gone. Let's get gone. *(Children crying.)* We had nothing we could do. We can't--we can't separate ourselves from our own people. For twenty years laying in some old rotten nursing home. *(Music.)* Taking us through all these anguish years. They took us and put us in chains and that's nothing. This business--that business--there's no comparison to that, to this.

They've robbed us of our land, and they've taken us and driven us and we tried to find ourselves. We tried to find a new beginning. But it's too late. You can't separate yourself from your brother and your sister. No way I'm going to do it. I refuse. I don't know who fired the shot. I don't know who killed the congressman. But as far as I am concerned, I killed him. You understand what I'm saying? I killed him. He had no business coming. I told him not to come.

**WOMAN 13:** Right, right.

*(Music and crying.)*

**JONES:** I, with respect, die with a degree of dignity. Lay down your life with dignity. Don't lay down with tears and agony. There's nothing to death. It's like Mac<sup>27</sup> said, it's just stepping over to another plane. Don't be this way. Stop this hysterics. This is not the way for people who are Socialists or Communists to die. No way for us to die. We must die with some dignity. We must die with some dignity. We will have no choice. Now we have some choice. Do you think they're gonna allow this to be done--allow us to get by with this? You must be insane.

Look children, it's just something to put you to rest. Oh, God. (*Children crying.*)

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.

**WOMAN 14:** We're doing all of this for you.

**JONES:** Free at last. Keep--keep your emotions down. Keep your emotions down. Children, it will not hurt. If you'd be--if you'll be quiet. If you'll be quiet.

(*Music and crying.*)

It's never been done before, you say. It's been done by every tribe in history. Every tribe facing annihilation. All the Indians of the Amazon are doing it right now. They refuse to bring any babies into the world. They kill every child that comes into the world. Because they don't want to live in this kind of a world.

So be patient. Be patient. Death is--I tell you, I don't care how many screams you hear. I don't care how many anguished cries. Death is a million times preferable to ten more days of this life. If you knew what was ahead of you--if you knew what was ahead of you, you'd be glad to be stepping over tonight.

Death, death, death is common to people. And the Eskimos, they take death in their stride. Let's be digni--let's be dignified. If you quit tell them they're dying--if you adults would stop some of this nonsense. Adults, adults, adults. I call on you to stop this nonsense. I call on you to quit exciting your children when all they're doing is going to a quiet rest. I call on you to stop this now if you have any respect at all. Are we black, proud, and Socialist, or what are we? Now stop this nonsense. Don't carry this on anymore. You're exciting your children.

No, no sorrow--that it's all over. I'm glad it's over. Hurry, hurry my children. Hurry. All I think (*inaudible*) from the hands of the enemy. Hurry, my children. Hurry. There are seniors out here that I'm concerned about. Hurry. I don't want to leave my seniors to this mess. Only quickly, quickly, quickly, quickly, quickly.... Good knowing you.

No more pain now. No more pain, I said (*inaudible*). No more pain. Jim Cobb<sup>28</sup> is laying on the airfield dead at this moment. (*Applause.*) Remember the Oliver woman said she--she'd come over and kill me if her son wouldn't stop her? These, these are the people--the peddlers of hate. All

we're doing is laying down our lives. We're not letting them take our lives. We're laying down our lives. Peace in their lives. They just want peace.  
(*Music.*)

**MAN 5:** All I would like to say is that my, uhm--my so-called parents are filled with so much hate--

**JONES:** (*Clapping--not applause.*) Stop this, stop this, stop this. Stop this crying, all of you.

**MAN 5:**--Hate and treachery. I think you people out here should think about how your relatives were and be glad about that the children are being laid to rest. And all I'd like to say is that I thank Dad for making me strong to stand with it all and make me ready for it. Thank you.

**JONES:** All they do is taking a drink. They take it to go to sleep. That's what death is, sleep. You can have it (*inaudible*) I'm tired of it all.

**WOMAN 15:** Everything we could have ever done, most loving thing all of us could have done, and it's been a pleasure walking with all of you in this revolutionary struggle. No other way I would rather go to give my life for socialism, communism, and I thank Dad very, very much.

**WOMAN 16:** Right. Yes, eh. Dad's love and nursing, goodness and kindness and bring us to this land of freedom. His love--his mother was the advance --the advance guard to socialism. And his love (*inaudible*) will go on forever unto the fields of--

**JONES:** Where's the vat, the vat, the vat? Where's the vat with the Green C on it? The vat with the Green C in. Bring it so the adults can begin.<sup>29</sup>

**WOMAN 16:** Go on unto the sing, and thank you Dad.

**JONES:** (*Inaudible.*) ... Don't, don't fail to follow my advice. You'll be sorry. You'll be sorry. If we do it, than that they do it. Have trust. You have to step across. (*Music.*) We used to think this world was--this world was not our home--well, it sure isn't--we were saying--it sure wasn't.

He doesn't want to tell them. All he's doing--if they will tell them-- assure these kids. Can't some people assure these children of the relaxation of stepping over to the next plane? They set an example for others. We said --one thousand people who said, we don't like the way the world is.

**VOICE:** Take some.

**JONES:** Take our life from us. 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.

(*Music.*)

The members of the Peoples Temple were not the only ones with this ambiguous nature. The Concerned Relatives who sought to destroy the organization used some of the very methods of propaganda that they criticized the Peoples Temple for. They were worried and at a loss as to why

their family members would join such a group. They were willing to step beyond the law if necessary to rescue their loved ones who must have been brainwashed. It seems possible that the love the Concerned Relatives had for their families may have clouded their judgment and would not allow for the possibility that their relatives had made a rational choice to join the group on their own accord. Those who defected from Peoples Temple seem to indicate that people could indeed leave the organization if they so chose. But those defectors who in turn went on to passionately fight against the very group they had once supported wholeheartedly appear to be denying any responsibility for their previous actions. They apparently did not want to admit that they may have found the group appealing when they first joined. They did not seem to allow room for the possibility that the ideals held by Peoples Temple were somehow compatible with their own. Instead they would rather claim that they had been tricked in some way beyond their better judgment and that the remaining members were still under the same deception.

Much of the news media seemed to have endorsed the idea that Peoples Temple was without merit. They heard and reported the story from the perspective of its critics without a significant attempt to look at it from the other side. The critics may have had some valid concerns about the nature of Peoples Temple, yet they could hardly be considered unbiased sources of information. Many of them had family or friends who had joined up with the group, something they were very much against and thus making it difficult for them to impartially judge the situation. But it is through the media that much of the public receives its information, and with this relative one-sidedness it is no wonder that people would simply condemn Peoples Temple as a deranged cult. There may have been evil, but there was probably good as well. The people who invested their lives in the group must have felt somewhere in their hearts that they were doing something worthwhile and even commendable.

## End Notes

1. Jones is referring to Larry Layton and the apparent plan to shoot the pilot of one of the airplanes that was to transport Ryan and his entourage, including the defectors, back to Georgetown from Port Kaituma. In fact, before the plane could take off, the men from Jonestown inside the tractor-trailer opened fire, and Layton never carried out the plan.
2. This line suggests that Jones was aware of the plan for the ambush at the airstrip. Perhaps Larry Layton was sent in case the trailer did not arrive in time, or maybe, Layton was sent as a "message" for his sister, Debbie Blakey, but his ability to carry out the murder(s) was enough in question that the gunmen in the trailer were sent as a backup plan. Given that Layton was not asked to come to Guyana until after his sister had defected, one wonders if he were sent for to participate in some activity (not necessarily this one) that would demonstrate to his sister and family that Larry Layton was more loyal to Peoples Temple than to his biological family.
3. Deanna Mertle, a.k.a. Jeannie Mills, along with her husband, Elmer, organized the Human Freedom Center after their defection from Peoples Temple in 1975 and were very active in the Concerned Relatives organization.

4. Miller was a sixty-year-old black woman who was born in Texas and who joined Peoples Temple out of Los Angeles. She had worked as a clerk before she moved to Jonestown and had some college education. She was among those "single residents" at Jonestown.
5. Don Sly, the man who attacked Congressman Ryan with a knife, was known as "Ujara" within the Peoples Temple community.
6. Jones is referring to the death of Lisa Layton, the mother of Debbie Blakey and Larry Layton. She had died of cancer the previous summer, several months after her daughter had left Jonestown. Jones is here asserting the idea that grief over her daughter's defection had hastened Lisa Layton's death and that her son, Larry, wanted revenge for it.
7. The belief in reincarnation was part of the Peoples Temple theology.
8. Jones is asserting his authority as charismatic leader in opposition to the logic of Christine Miller.
9. Jones's speech begins to sound slurred and garbled at this point.
10. Timothy Oliver Stoen represented the worst form of villainy and betrayal for Peoples Temple because he had been at the highest levels of the inner circle, had defected, and had been at the forefront of the efforts of Concerned Relatives to disband Jonestown. In essence, the community's "revolutionary suicide" was seen by Jones and the leadership as an act of murder by Stoen.
11. Miller is apparently referring to the people in the film Jones had just mentioned.
12. Jim McElvane was a black man who had arrived in Jonestown only two days earlier (John R. Hall, John R. 1987. *Gone from the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 279.) He was among a small group of blacks, including Rev. Archie Ijames, whose authority was respected throughout Peoples Temple. He had served as security chief during the California years. He had not moved to Jonestown with the rest because he was involved in running the stateside operation (Reiterman, Tim, with John Jacobs. 1982. *Raven: The Untold Story of the Rev. Jim Jones and His People*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 322).
13. Jones is appealing to the role as prophet (charismatic leader) that he had fulfilled in California in an attempt to gain the authority to ask people to kill themselves. He is attempting to distance himself from his role as administrator (bureaucratic functionary) that he had increasingly shifted into at Jonestown.
14. Jones has a strength of delivery in his speech, starting with his quote from St. Paul, not present previously.
15. Jones has exhibited impatience with Christine Miller for the first time. Unintelligible female voices in the background are arguing, probably the woman arguing with Miller and Miller herself. From this point on in the tape many inaudible, high-intensity, conversations are going on in the background.
16. John Victor Stoen, the child in the midst of the custody battle between Jones and Tim and Grace Stoen.
17. This man's statement, delivered with tears in his voice, changes the mood of the group. The next words of Jones are spoken with solemnity.
18. Richard Dwyer worked for the U.S. embassy in Guyana and had accompanied Congressman Ryan's entourage to Jonestown earlier in the day. He had visited Jonestown several times before 18 November

and was seen by the leaders of Peoples Temple as a supporter. Jones was interested in getting Dwyer out of the way so that he could not interfere with the suicides; nor could he be harmed.

19. Jones voice again is slurred.
20. Guyanese Defense Force.
21. This is a young woman obviously talking about her son.
22. Jones sounds incoherent.
23. I am not 100 percent certain that Jones addresses Marceline here, but that's the most likely interpretation of the word. There is a pause just before he says this answer. I suspect that she had just asked him how long the whole process would take, and his answer was "about forty minutes."
24. Stephan Jones speculates that the voice was that of Indiana-born Joyce Touchette, because he was told by one of the people who escaped into the jungle that Larry Schacht and Joyce Touchette were involved in readying and distributing the poison. John Hall identifies the voice as Judy Ijames, Indiana sect member and nurse at Jonestown, based upon the testimony of eye witnesses (Hall, 285). Whether it was Joyce Touchette or Judy Ijames, either one would have had authority both with the Indiana sect and the black church members: Joyce Touchette because she and her husband Charlie had been two of the original pioneers of Jonestown and Judy Ijames because she had provided health care for the elderly in the community.
25. In my view, there were two pivotal moments during the suicide meeting when events could have turned another direction had people with authority not spoken in support of Jones and the decision to commit suicide. The first was when Jim McElvane intervened with Christine Miller (see above) and the other is here when Judy Ijames or Joyce Touchette organizes the process for committing suicide. Jones's speech right before her instructions is slurred, and he sounds incoherent. These instructions focused the mood of the gathering. The suicides began just moments later.
26. Jones speaks here and later with renewed energy and clarity.
27. Jim McElvane.
28. Jim Cobb was one of the "Gang of Eight" who had defected in 1973. He was not, in fact, dead.
29. The suicides were so well organized that the potion for the children was prepared in a different container (at a lesser strength, I assume) than the potion for the adults.