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REVOLUTION THROUGH REVELATION: JIM JONES AND THE PEOPLES TEMPLE IN AMERICAN CULTURAL HISTORY

BY

ALEXANDRIA RYAN SOWERS

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ALEXANDRIA RYAN SOWERS

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

2018

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the influence of American culture on Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple. While most scholarship applies a religious, sociological, or psychological approach to understating the Jonestown tragedy, this paper endeavors to understand the man, his church, and the event through the lenses of American cultural history. Specifically, this analysis looks at the influence of Pentecostalism, egalitarianism, and socialism as well as cultural events such as the civil rights movement on the Reverend Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple church. Using FBI documents gathered during the investigation into the murder of the congressman Leo Ryan at Jonestown, audio recording of Jim Jones' sermons and speeches, and secondary works relating to the Peoples Temples and broader themes in American cultural history, this thesis provides an in depth historical analysis of Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple.

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Introduction

On November 18, 1978, nearly fifty years of history became condensed into one singular moment. This event, which overshadowed all that came before it, left almost one-thousand members of the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project face down on the jungle floor after succumbing to self-inflicted cyanide poising or brute force. The news helicopters that circled the bodies of the Jonestown dead, broadcasting the images of the lifeless men, women, and children, to the nation they had fled, established their history in the minds of the public. The graphic images and disturbing details that emerged from the Jonestown complex in the jungles of Guyana, became entrenched in the shared consciousness of the American people. As the single greatest loss of American civilian life, up to this point in history, the Jonestown massacre made shocking headlines all over the country. Those who had not yet heard of the Peoples Temple or its leader, the Reverend Jim Jones, suddenly, and horrifically, became aware of their existence.

Reports of the "death orgy" which took the lives of the murderous "cultist" leader and his fanatical following, came flooding in immediately after the news broke of the tragedy. The sensationalism of an already sensational moment created a collective memory of Jim Jones and the Peoples temple that mostly ignored the history of the event, the people, and their leader. At the heart of the Jonestown commune, above the bodies scattered on the stage where they once gathered to hear the word of Jim Jones, a sign hung that read, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Jim Jones and his people did not just appear in the jungles of Guyana in 1978. Instead, a series of historical processes, taking place over several decades, led them to their famously tragic fate in Jonestown.

The history of Jonestown actually began in 1931, in the rural town of Crete, Indiana, with the birth of James Warren Jones. Growing up in Indiana and feeling particularly different from the others around him, Jones pictured himself as an outsider. This self-perception of isolation would go on to influence many aspects of his life. Practically abandoned by his parents he found home in the disdained Oneness Pentecostal church. While seemingly exiled by his community, he befriended others who felt the same alienation. These elements of his life led him to feel a connection to other outsiders and marginalized groups in American culture at the time, such as Pentecostals, African Americans, and communist. All three of these disenfranchised groups would go on to have substantial influence in Jones life and the creation of the Peoples Temple.

The temple itself also grew from a series of cultural influences. Created in 1954, at the start of the modern civil rights movement, the Peoples Temple reflected elements of the larger social, cultural, and political environment of the time. The church served as a racially inclusive, socialist enterprise that offered an alternative to the racism and fascism that characterized American culture. Peopled flocked to the Reverend Jim Jones and his temple in hopes of finding an answer to the oppressive social conditions that surrounded them. By targeting vulnerable communities in a time of social unrest, fueled by significant cultural developments such as the civil rights movement, Jim Jones used religion as a platform to create a substantial and devoted following of socially minded people willing to embrace his message of racial equality and socialism. These people, the ones who found hope through Jim Jones, are the ones who followed him to jungles of Guyana. Only after they became convinced by Jones himself that no hope remained, did they take their lives. By framing Jim Jones' movement in the broader context of American cultural history, a better understanding of the culminating event of Jonestown can be gained.

Because so much attention in the form of scholarship, FBI investigations, and media coverage has been paid solely to the death of the temple, this thesis places a stronger emphasis on its life within a broader historical context as a means to bring Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple in line with the core understanding of American cultural history. Approaching the 40th year anniversary of the massacre, the historical memory of the event appears all the more distant and faded. Much of what is remembered today exists only in the popularized phrase, "Don't drink the Kool-Aid." Though stemming directly from what transpired at Jonestown, many do not, or cannot, make the connection between the phrase and the cyanide-laced drink that ended the lives of so many in 1978. Furthermore, the connection between the dim memory of Jonestown and the history that let to its fateful end proves to be nearly non-existent in the popular understanding of the tragedy.

This tendency to distance one's self from things that appear to outside of the norm can account for much of incomplete memory of Jonestown. Though practically constant scholarship has been written about the event since 1978, the popular memory of Jones and his people proves to be lacking. In his religiohistorical work, *Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, The Peoples Temple, and Jonestown*, David Chidester argues that marginal movements, such Jonestown, are classified in the mainstream consciousness as fundamentally "other."[1] Therefore, they do not make their way into dominant cognition of society resulting in cognitive distancing between the movement and the core of society which accounts for the lapse in memory. In his work, Chidester endeavors to make the “otherness” associated with Jim Jones and his people familiar by finding its meaning in the context of a broader religious history. While Chidester’s work does contain a historical element, it is more firmly rooted in the discussion of historical religion than cultural history.

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[1] David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003).

Much of the scholarship on Jones and his following is placed within a religious context with particular focus on New Religious Movements. Rebecca Moore, Anthony B. Pinn, and Mary R. Sawyer’s anthology, *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America*, also serves as a religious examination of the movement.[2] However, this composed work places the focus on the role of black religion within the temple. The editors compiled essays that structured the movement within the framework of black religious studies in order to provide a more rounded understanding of a movement that relied so heavily on black participation. While not in complete agreement with one another, the essays argued for the importance of the study of African American religious elements within the Peoples Temple movement as a means to bring the event into the purview of scholars of black religion. Though this work does employ history within broader arguments, these essays not provide an extensive examination of the role that cultural history played in Jim Jones’ movement. Since most of the scholarship on Jones and his people is structured in a framework of religion, sociology, or psychology, there are not many strictly historically based narratives.

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[2] Rebecca Moore, Anthony B Pinn, and Mary Sawyer, *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America* (Boomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

This thesis endeavors to provide an in depth historically based account of Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple. Divided into two parts, this analysis traces the historical processes that shaped Jones and the temple. Part one is dedicated to Jim Jones life before the birth of the Peoples Temples church. In examining Jones' early influences, namely Pentecostalism, egalitarianism, and socialism, a better comprehension of his beliefs and motivations revealed throughout his movement can be reached. A large portion of the paper is given to this area of analysis because of its important role in understanding the Reverend Jim Jones as an individual and its tendency to be neglected in Jonestown scholarship. Part two focuses on the creation, life, and death of the Peoples Temple. This portion of the analysis focuses largely on how the cultural history effected the creation and growth of Jim Jones' Peoples Temple as a movement.

The examination of Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple through the lens of cultural history reveals important elements about the charismatic leader and his following. Firstly, by tracing the history of Jones and the Peoples Temple within a broader history, a series of parallels can be identified which reveal that Jim Jones and his temple emerged as a product of American culture and are therefore not anomaly. Secondly, understanding that the Peoples Temple formed as a cultural movement alongside the dominant American history reveals that the temple served as more than a church or religion. The Peoples Temples acted as a social, political, and religious organization that expressed and adapted to the cultural climate in which it existed. As time progressed and Jones and the temple became increasingly concerned with the social and political elements of the organization, the religious aspect of the church began to fade. By the time Jones and his people relocated to Jonestown in South America, socialism had replaced religion and Jim Jones had replaced God.

As a man concerned with his place in history, much of the story of Jim Jones life reflected in this thesis, has been told by Jones himself. Fearful that history would not give him a fair story, Jones took it upon himself to construct his own history as he saw it. Through recorded remembrances of his past produced in Jonestown, just before his death, Jim Jones told his story as he wanted it remembered. The rest of the history of Jim Jones and the Peoples temple can be traced through hundreds of hours of recorded sermons and speeches, a massive vault of FBI files collected during the investigation in to the Murder of Congressman Leo Ryan that took place at Jonestown and led to the mass suicide, and scholarship created by historians as well as people with personal connections to Jim Jones and his temple. With these sources, along with supplementary sources that trace American cultural history, I endeavor to provide an in depth, historical analysis of Jim Jones and the Peoples temple.

Part One:

The Reverend Jim Jones

Pentecostalism, Egalitarianism, and Socialism

Chapter One:

The Little Reverend

From his early childhood he looked in the sky
and decided there's nothing there to hear me when I cry.
Because he accepted the truth, and was not deceived
He declared it's only in me will I ever believe.[3]

Fresh flowers always adorned the alter situated on the second story of the Jones' family garage where little James Warren Jones built his first church. The humble loft decorated with a few small tables swathed in white sheets, scattered candles, and stacked books served as the little reverend's very own place of worship and ministry. Though modest in structure, with bare walls and wooden floors, the loft served as a house of God in the eyes of Jones and the children he ministered to. Able to command the attention of the young church goers with flamboyant gestures and a diverse vocabulary, Jones preached the teachings of bible for hours at a time.[4] Within the loft Jones made the rules and the children of Lynn, Indiana, who attended his services followed them out of respect for his ministry and the Lord's house.[5] Though no older than the children he preached to, Jones commanded a sense of admiration within the loft amongst his small congregation of boy and girls. The knowledge of scripture and ability to amass an audience that Jim Jones demonstrated in the loft served him well even as a young child. Though Jones denounced God and the Christian religion as a whole later in life, his capability to collect and captivate an audience under the appearance of religion played an important role in his life and the lives of many others.

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[3] The Ballad of the Jim Jones Movementby Lynetta Jones, 1975, in FBI Records: The Vault, *The Leo Ryan Murder – Jonestown Investigation,* compiled by the Jonestown Institute, http://jonestown.sdsu.edu, (hereafter cited RYMUR 89-4286 followed by file number), x-3-f.

[4] Tim Reiterman, *Raven: The Untold Story of the Rev. Jim Jones and His People* (New York: Penguin Group, 1982), 18.

[5] Index of Stories Written by Lynetta Jones, 1975, RYMUR 89-4286-BB-18-Z.

Before his days in the loft, James Warren Jones, referred to as “Jimmy” in his younger years, expressed an intense fascination for religion. While other children his age undoubtedly experienced the institution of religion under the supervision of their parents, Jones relied on his own devices. Unlike most residents of the small town of Lynn, Jones’ parents did not attend church. His father, “Big Jim”, spent most of his time at the local pool hall while his mother, Lynetta worked long hours as the sole bread winner of the household.[6] Neither had time to invest in Jones’ religious education. Instead, Jones looked to another Lynn resident to serve as his first spiritual advisor.

Mrs. Myrtle Kennedy lived just across the street from the Jones’ family residence. The Jones’ neighbor staunchly believed that children in their early years of life should never be deprived of religious education gained through attending church or Sunday school.[7] After seeing the curious boy wandering the streets during the day, becoming aware that he did not attend church with his parents, Mrs. Kennedy took him under her wing. A devoted member and supporter of the Nazarene church, Mrs. Kennedy ensured that four-year-old Jimmy Jones received the religious experience she believed he deserved.

Jones’ religious education began on the front porch of the Kennedy home. Jones’ spiritual mother read to him from the Bible, or what she called the “good book”, often as he sat eating a piece of her homemade pie. Jones proved to be a quick learner and showed off his skill by reciting bible passages from memory. Impressed by the young boy’s ability to absorb the word so quickly, Mrs. Kennedy hoped that he would one day become a Nazarene preacher. In order to further his religious grooming, Jones began attending church with his spiritual advisor and under her care he never missed a church service or a Sunday school lesson.[8] The Nazarenes held quite conservative beliefs that prohibited drinking, dancing, or cursing and established that women should never wear clothing that showed the shoulders or revealed too much of the leg.[9] The devoted Mrs. Kennedy believed that the Nazarene church provided the only way to heaven and all other paths led away from salvation. The Nazarene church services led by Orville Kennedy, Mrs. Kennedy’s husband, served as young Jim Jones first interaction with an established religious institution. Mrs. Kennedy’s front porch services and the trips to the Nazarene church ignited a curiosity about religion in Jim Jones and the ripe age of four.

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[6] Index of Stories Written by Lynetta Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-BB-18-Z.
[7] Index of Stories Written by Lynetta Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-BB-18-Z.

In an interview with Jeff Guinn, author of *The Road to Jonestown,* Max Knight remembered the times in his youth when he witnessed Jones’ peaking interest in the practice of religion. As Knight recalled, on more than one occasion he came across Jones in the woods, standing on the stump of a tree, preaching the word of God to an invisible audience. From the stump, Jones spoke of the love of Jesus and the need to believe in him in order to be granted access to heaven. After being discovered delivering sermons in the woods, Jones confided in his childhood friend his aspirations to become a preacher. Max offered his blessing and told the aspiring minister, “Do what you want. Don’t let people stop you. Be your own man.”[10] Jim, as he preferred to be called later in his youth, found his calling from a young age and perused it fervently.

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[8] Index of Stories Written by Lynetta Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-BB-18-Z.

[9] Jeff Guinn, *The Road to Jonestown: Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017) 29.

[10] Guinn, 29.

Though Jones continued to attend Nazarene services with his adoptive spiritual mother, his curiosity about the practice of religion led him to explore churches of different denominations. Jones skipped about town attending as many church services as he could fit into a Sunday afternoon. To Jones' distress, he found himself feeling unaccepted by many of the churches he attended. Jones recalled the frustration he felt while trying to, "meet the norm, and still not being accepted…going to all the churches and still not being accepted."[11] Without the knowledge of his mother and to the dismay of Mrs. Kennedy, Jones began attending services at a local Pentecostal church on the outskirts of town with a woman referred to as Mrs. M. and her sons. The Gospel Tabernacle Pentecostal church existed in contrast to the conservative manner of the Nazarene church. While the Nazarenes looked down on behavior such as dancing, the Tabernacle congregation often stomped, danced, and shouted as loud worship music played. Jim Jones recalled in his youth that he found himself drawn to the "freedom of emotion" felt during a Pentecostal service.[12] The rambunctious characteristics of the Tabernacle service did not exist as novel elements in the Pentecostal religion; much of what took place at the Gospel Tabernacle Church in the 1930s, found its roots a few decades earlier at the turn of the century.

The Pentecostal religion arose at the beginning of the twentieth-century and quickly grew to become one of the largest religious denominations in the world.[13] Though not an entirely new spiritual doctrine, Pentecostals developed several unique doctrinal characteristics.[14] Along with baptism in the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals believed in the use spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, divine healings, and prophecies.[15] Early Pentecostals proclaimed, “We teach old-time repentance, old-time conversion, old-time sanctification, old-time baptism with the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of power on the sanctified life, and God throws in the gift of tongues.”[16] Pentecostals also participated in the practice of revivals which amassed large gatherings of believers eager to hear the word of God, experience the religious fervor of group worship, and bear witness to spiritual healings.

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[11] An Untitled Collection of Reminiscences by Jim Jones, 1977, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[12] Jones' Autobiography, Jonestown Tape Recordings, in FBI Records: The Vault, *The Leo Ryan Murder – Jonestown Investigation,* compiled by the Jonestown Institute, http://jonestown.sdsu.edu, (Hereafter Identified with a Q and following file number), Q134.
[13] David K. Bernard, *A history of Christian Doctrine: The Twentieth Century A.D. 1900- 2000* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1999), 9.

The most famous of these revivals took place between 1906, and 1909, in Los Angeles, California led by the black Holiness minister William J. Seymour.[17] For three years the Azusa Street Mission held daily services in which many baptisms, miracles, and divine healings took place. Reports from the revival claimed that, “much strange phenomena” occurred at the services including members raising their hands and speaking aloud during prayer, loud boisterous music, individuals leaving their seats to run around or jump about, and instances of people speaking in tongues.[18] Known as the Azusa Street Revival, this event served as the catalyst for the spread of Pentecostalism throughout the world.[19] Much of what occurred at the Azusa Street Revival appeared in the practices of the Pentecostal church Jones attended in his youth.

Jones enjoyed attending the lively services at the Gospel Tabernacle Pentecostal church which existed as a part of the Oneness doctrinal division of Pentecostalism. The name “Oneness” originated from the belief that that God existed as one singular being in the form of Jesus Christ and not as a trinity of beings which set the branch apart from other doctrinal division of Pentecostalism.[20] As a result of Jones’ vast knowledge of scripture and the faith, he started ministering during the services at times even leading for the entirety of the meeting.[21] Jones quickly became a commodity as his youthfulness and biblical knowledge attracted large audiences to the Gospel Tabernacle. The young orator travelled with the church to other counties to preach and serve as a type of traveling attraction.[22] Lynetta Jones later came to believe that the Pentecostals used little Jones to attract not only large gatherings, but large offerings for the church. Acting as his first experience preaching at an established church, the Gospel Tabernacle greatly impacted Jones’ relationship with religion. However, on one occasion, his interaction with the Pentecostals proved to be somewhat harmful to his spiritual growth.

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[14] Bernard, 9.
[15] Bernard, 12.
[16] “Pentecost Has Come,” *The Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles, CA), September 1906.
[17] Bernard, 22
[18] Bernard, 25.
[19] Bernard, 23.

Jones began having intense night terrors after attending services at the Gospel Tabernacle. His mother sought out the source of the nightmares and discovered that her son had been attending Pentecostal services with Mrs. M and her sons. Upon realizing what Jones had been up to, Lynetta became convinced that the Pentecostals had ignited the nightmares in the boy. She blamed Jones frightening dreams of snakes on the Pentecostal’s talk of serpents and the devil himself. Lynetta spoke about the matter to Jones spiritual mother, Mrs. Kennedy, who expressed her sadness that her future Nazarene preacher had chosen the Pentecost over the Nazarenes. However, assuming Mrs. Jones had consented to the arrangement, Mrs. Kennedy believed she had no right to comment on the situation. In order to experience for herself what afflicted Jones, Lynetta accepted an invitation to attend a service at the church. During the meeting she witnessed the hysteria of the church-goers and quickly became overwhelmed by the music, shouting, and relentless noise. Seeing for herself the overzealous character of a Pentecostal meeting, Lynetta refused to let Jones continue to attend church with Mrs. M. or her sons. Angered by her experience with the Pentecostals, the next time Mrs. M. came to pick up Jones for service, Lynetta threw her out of the house.[23]

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[20] Bernard, 59.
[21] Index of Stories Written by Lynetta Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-BB-18-Z.
[22] Index of Stories Written by Lynetta Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-BB-18-Z.

After this incident Jones recoiled from religion and proclaimed agnosticism for a short period of time. He no longer held service in the loft or laid flowers on the homemade alter. Lynetta became worried about Jones' rejection of religion and sought advice from a doctor who asserted that the practices of the Pentecostals, such as the jumping and stomping witnessed by Lynetta at the church, could prove to be "very harmful to a sensitive child such as Jim."[24] In time the night terrors subsided, and Jones returned to the little second story garage chapel to preach to the young boys and girls of Lynn. Though the incident with his mother and Mrs. M. shook him, Jones still maintained a feeling of warmth for the Pentecostal church till the end of his days.[25]

Throughout his adolescence Jones preserved the relationship he had formed with religion as a young child. Empowered by deep scriptural knowledge and experience gained from speaking at Pentecostal services, Jones began evangelizing his neighbors.[26] Nearing the end of his middle school years, Jones occasionally dawned his holy robes, a white sheet wrapped around him in a manner that resembled Mahatma Gandhi, and strolled down the streets of Lynn toting a large black bible.[27] From the street corner of the small downtown, Jones offered every passerby salvation through the acceptance of the Holy Spirit into their heart.[28] The young self-proclaimed evangelist existed as an oddity in Lynn, but as Jones matured he sought a higher degree of acceptance amongst the community. Entering into his high school years he abandoned his holy robes in an attempt to fit in, but he never relinquished his bible which he continued to carry on his person at all times.[29]

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[23] Index of Stories Written by Lynetta Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-BB-18-Z.
[24] Index of Stories Written by Lynetta Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-BB-18-Z.
[25] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[26] Reiterman, 23.

Stripped of his holy robes, Jones continued to preach on the street corner in tidy everyday dress. Finding that Lynn residents expressed little interest in listening to his ministry, the young preacher traveled to the industrial city of Richmond, Indiana, which laid south of Lynn, where he continued his street corner sermons. Jones often traveled to Richmond to preach and work part-time at the hospital; however, not until the divorce of his parents, did Jones and Lynetta move to the city full time. At the age of sixteen, the teenager found himself able to attract a small yet attentive and gracious audience of working adults to his pulpit by the railroad tracks.[30] The skill for ministry Jones demonstrated years before in the loft served him well as he continued his mission on the streets of Richmond.

During his younger years, Jones maintained a fluid relationship with religion as he never initially settled on one church or particular denomination. Unlike Mrs. Kennedy who declared a staunch commitment to the Nazarenes or other Lynn residents who attended the same service every Sunday, Jones held no strong commitment to any one church. Jones appeared to be intrigued by the practice of religion but expressed no ridged belief in the dogma of any particular denomination until he found the Pentecostals. However, Jones felt a commitment to the group for reasons other than acceptance of a religious doctrine and an admiration for their expression of emotion.

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[27] Reiterman, 23.
[28] Reiterman, 23.
[29] Reiterman, 25.
[30] Reiterman, 26.

In 1977, many years since his days in the loft, Jim Jones reflected on his relationship with religion in his youth. Jones recalled that his attraction to the Pentecostal church came from their non-conformity. He admitted that he purposefully sought out the "most extreme Pentecostal church" because the community despised them the most.[31] As the reverend remembered, in the small town of Lynn, Indiana, the Oneness Pentecostals suffered extreme persecution for their beliefs. Regarded as Holy Rollers and looked down upon as a low-brow religion, the Pentecostals existed on the fringe of society.[32] As whole, early Pentecostals encountered opposition and criticism from other denominations. The highly respected Twentieth Century preacher Dr. G. Campbell Morgan scathingly referred to the Pentecostal movement as, "the last vomit of Satan."[33] Though criticized heavily in the early years, Pentecostalism did gain a significant amount of respect in the second half of the twentieth century. However, in the 1930s, non-Pentecostal Lynn residents rejected the doctrine vehemently.

The stance on Pentecostalism taken up by the citizens of Lynn proved to be analogous to the historical view of religion in Indiana. Throughout its history the Hoosier State expressed firm conservative political and religious beliefs. In response to increased urbanization and immigration from Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the Indiana General Assembly considered legislation proposed to diminish the issues that arose from these processes.[34] Namely, the Assembly took into consideration an assortment of bills that sought the protection of Protestant values such as hard work, church attendance, and temperance.[35] Some more staunchly conservative advocates of these measures also sought to honor the Sabbath by banning baseball on Sunday and making it law that all children had to attend church.[36] In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan held substantial control over the Indiana Government and they sought to instill Protestant values in the state and in the schools. In addition to the religious education children gained through attending church, the Klan called for daily reading of the King James version of the Bible in school and time devoted to religious instruction outside of school as a way to further instill Protestant ethics.[37] Though very little of the proposed legislation intended to protect Protestantism in Indiana ever became law, the attention devoted to these issues by lawmakers and citizens illustrated the commitment to keeping Indiana a conservative, Protestant state. In rejection to the religious conservatism of the state, Jones found acceptance with the Pentecostals who existed on the margins of religious society in Indiana.

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[31] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[32] Reiterman, 17.
[33] Synan Vinson, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 146.

In the same tone of the Pentecostals, Jones admitted he felt rejected by the community as a child and pictured himself a rebel and non-conformist. Jones stated that through the Pentecostal church he found acceptance amongst an equally despised entity.[38] Referring to himself as a child “born on the wrong side of the tracks”, Jones found comfort in belonging to a group he could relate to.[39] As a child practically abandoned by his parents with no brothers or sisters to call family, the Pentecostals quickly became a surrogate for Jones in his youth. Within the walls of the Gospel Tabernacle he found what he remembered as "immediate acceptance" and "as much love as [he] could interpret love."[40] The "expression of warmth" and open acceptance of a self-proclaimed reject led Jones to find comfort in the Pentecostal religion.

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[34] Rebecca S. Shoemaker, "THE INDIANA BILL OF RIGHTS: Two Hundred Years of Civil Liberties History," in *The History of Indiana Law*, edited by Bodenhamer David J. and Shepard Randall T., 193-212 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 198.

[35] Shoemaker, 198.

[36] Shoemaker, 198.

[37] Shoemaker, 198.

[38] Jones’ Autobiography, Q134.

Reflecting on his religious upbringing, Jones stated, "I'd had my religious heritage in Pentecostalism, deep rooted emotions in the Christian Tradition, and a deep love which I shared to this day for the practical teachings of Jesus Christ."[41] Though Jones accepted many of the teachings of the church in his youth, his attraction to Pentecostalism relied heavily on their open expression of emotion, non-conformity, and acceptance of out-siders. Jones asserted he intellectually outgrew Pentecostalism later in life, however, much of his early church doctrine found its roots in his experience with them.

Jim Jones' experience with the Pentecostal religion served as one of three foundations on which the early formation of Peoples Temples stood. The Nazarene bible lessons led by Mrs. Kennedy may have ignited his interest in the practice of religion, but his experience with the Pentecostals provided him with doctrinal practices he later implemented in his own church. Elements retained from the Gospel Tabernacle such as faith healings, divine prophesies, and exuberant sermons became hallmarks of the Peoples Temple church. Though Jones ministry evolved over the years, the roots of Pentecostalism remained woven throughout the Peoples Temple.

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[39] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[40] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[41] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.

Chapter Two:

Ku Klux Klan Bandit

He took note of the oppressed, their pain and sorrow,
And longed for the day when they would have a brighter tomorrow.
He knew that the racism and injustice they endured mustn't always be.
These were his people and they would be free! [42]

Being from "the wrong side of the tracks", Jim Jones claimed to feel connection with those on the margins of society. Just has he found comfort in the non-conformity of the Pentecostal church, Jones found kinship in those despised by the community for reasons other than their religious beliefs. Jones asserted that early in life he had formed, "a sense of egalitarianism…a sensitivity through need of others."[43] He felt as if his fight against unequal treatment of others served as another form of rebellion. Because he did not feel accepted by society, Jones spurned what he believed to be societal norms. Jones felt the need to reject the conformities that he experienced growing up in a small Indiana town that held firm ideas about religion, race, and politics. This rejection of society came first with his membership in the Pentecostal church and then expanded into his political ideologies. Indiana's racial climate informed Jones' views on race from an early age and served as a catalyst for his commitment to racial equality.

Jim Jones home state of Indiana served as a hub for racial and religious tension well before his birth. In the 1920s, Indiana found itself home to one of the largest Klan organization in the country.[44] First established in 1920, the Klan held a small presence in Indiana, but between 1922, and 1924, Klan membership swelled to enormous proportions. Throughout the state thousands of men swarmed to the organization. Just between 1922, and 1923, Klan membership in the state of Indianan mushroomed from a mere 445 members to nearly 120,000 Klansmen.[45] In Evansville alone, 23 percent of all white men native to Indiana and living in Evansville joined the county's Klan.[46] The Klan quickly became a strong presence and political force in Indiana. Formed as a part of the Klan's national expansion, the Indiana chapter initially existed as an outpost, but once it gained popularity the Indiana chapter gained power in the state and became leaders in the movement.[47]

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[42] RYMUR 89-4286-x-3-f

[43] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.

[44] Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 13.

Just as the Klan chapters in the South, Indiana Klan chapters espoused a rhetoric of racial and religious intolerance that Klan recruiters spread throughout the state with hateful speeches and bigoted literature. In 1922, the Ku Klux Klan in Indianapolis began publishing a weekly newsletter tilted, "Fiery Cross" that served as an informative piece of propaganda. With titles such as, "Indianapolis Klan Brings Christmas Cheer", the newsletter attempted to paint an appealing picture of the organization while espousing their hatred.[48] On the issue of race, the first ever published "Fiery Cross" newsletter read, "It is almost an anomalous situation to have the black man of Africa, incapable of development either mentally or morally that would qualify him for citizenship in the great white man's Republic, clothed and vested with all the rights and privileges that the white man can claim and are solely the white man's heritage."[49] While an inherently racist organization, they also feared foreign influence that could potentially pose harm to the white Protestant Anglo-Saxon majority. A statement in their flagship newsletter about the dangers facing Anglo-Saxon civilization read, “The dangers were in the tremendous flux of foreign immigration, tutored in alien dogmas and alien creeds, flowing in from all climes and slowly pushing the native-born white man into the center of the country, there to be ultimately overwhelmed and smothered.”[50] The statements made within the newsletter reflected the beliefs, ideologies, and aims of the Indiana Klan. The Klan thrived through their ability to incite the discriminatory, nationalistic, and racist attitudes of the white Indiana Protestants who sought hegemony.[51]

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[45] Jeff Guinn, 17.

[46] Moore, 13.

[47] Moore, 16.

[48] "Indianapolis Klan Brings Christmas Cheer," *Fiery Cross* (Indianapolis, Indiana), December 29, 1922.

[49] "Indiana Takes Convention at Atlanta by Storm," *Fiery Cross* (Indianapolis, Indiana), December 8, 1922.

Though present in the dogma of the Klan, the Indiana chapter focused less on preserving the racial status quo than their brothers in the South because of a reduced threat to white supremacy. The fear of white power being overthrown by a minority race presented itself less in Indiana because of the small minority population. The 1920, and 1930, Indiana censuses revealed that during height of the Klan’s reign the average black population accounted for less than five percent of the total population within seven major Indiana cities.[52] However, the reduced threat to white supremacy did not equate to a diminished feeling of white superiority amongst Klan members. The Indiana Klan still firmly held racist attitudes, but they less often had to defend their beliefs and dominant position in the racial hierarchy. Though not necessarily as violent as their Southern counterparts, the Indiana Klan gained power through persuasion and fear. The ballot-box served as the Klan's main weapon.[53] Because the Klan held so much influence in the government very few groups or organizations spoke out against them. Many Indiana churches, newspapers, and politicians chose to remain quite on the matter while only a few expressed anti-Klan sentiments. By 1924, the Klan had secured its position in the Indiana government by completely replacing any official that opposed them and ensuring others would offer their support or remain silent.[54]

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[50] Moore, 16.
[51] Moore, 19.
[52] 1920 U.S. Census, https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/twps0076.pdf

Born in 1931, almost a decade after the initial establishment of the Indiana Klan, Jim Jones did not experience the height of the Klan's reign. However, in Jim's youth, the Klan's influence remained prominent in the state and in his personal life. According to statements made by Jones, he believed his father to be an active member of the Ku Klux Klan. Though no substantial evidence existed to support the validity of his claims, Jim Jones never retracted his assertion.[55] When speaking about his fathers supposed involvement in the KKK, Jones stated, "My father was a Ku Klux Klan bandit, but I'm the greatest humanitarian, the greatest savior…the greatest savior that this universe has ever known, but my father was a murderer."[56] The juxtaposition Jones created between himself and his father went to further prove his commitment to rebellion against bigoted attitudes inherent in "macho-type racists" such as his father.[57] By painting his father as a abhorrent racist, Jones highlighted his own humanity. Jones stated that he "had early developed a sensitivity for the problems of blacks," likely due to his feelings of rejection and in reaction to his fathers supposed racism.[58]

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[53] Richard K. Tucker, *The Dragon and the Cross: The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in Middle America* (Camden, NH: Archon Books, 1991), 6.

[54] Tucker, 27.

[55] David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, The Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 2.

[56] Jones Speaking, 1973, Q1057-2.

[57] Q134

Jones used an incident he witnessed between his father and a black man to illustrate his father's racism and emphasize his own compassion. Jim recalled a time when he brought the only young black man in town to visit his father at his home. Upon arrival Jim's father denied the black man access to his home. Outraged by his father's actions, Jim stood in solidarity with the young black man and refused to enter the house as well. According to Jones he did not see his father for many years after the incident.[59] This story told by Jones, helped to draw a distinction between the ideologies and beliefs of his father and his own. This distinction would later serve him well as he went about establishing his church and forming a integrated congregation. He used the story of his father's involvement in the Ku Klux Klan and his total rejection of his father's beliefs to further establish his non-conformity, commitment to equality, and rebellion against what he believed to be the traditional white Protestant way.

Jones often told stories of personal heroism in the face of racism. Marceline remembered the stories Jones told her in the early years of their relationship that made her aware of the race problem. As Marceline recollected,

> He [Jones] was a HS basketball I star and quit the team because the coach referred to black players on an opposing team with racial epitaphs. He left a barber shop with an unfinished haircut because a barber said he wouldn't cut a black man's hair. He was hitchhiking between college and home, when a man who picked him up spoke of blacks in a derogatory manner and he demanded to be let out in an isolated area.[60]

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[58] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[59] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[60] Transcription of Marceline Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-BB-18-z.

Jones used the narrative of his heroic devotion to equality as a means to self-construct the image he wanted presented to the public. Jones sought to present himself as a savior, a messiah like figure, that could lead the marginalized population to salvation in order to draw them into his inclusive congregation.

Jones' commitment to equality and racial integration in the Peoples Temple resulted from Jones' personal experience with racism as well as his involvement with Pentecostalism. Jones not only mirrored some of the practices carried out by the Pentecostal church, he also appeared to have adopted some of their non-religious ideologies. Early Pentecostals, amongst the characteristics explored in the previous chapter, also professed a commitment to racial equality. The Azusa street revival responsible in large part for the global spread of Pentecostalism, led by the black Holiness minster William Seymour, boasted a racially integrated audience.[61] Reports from the revival commented on the diversity of those in attendance. Famously, the Holiness evangelist Frank Bartleman, who chronicled the Azusa Street Revival, proclaimed, "the color line was washed away in blood", presumably in reference to the blood of Jesus Christ.[62] Bartleman's statement reflected the racial harmony demonstrated at the revival. Though Bartleman asserted, "there were far more white people than colored coming", this proved the level of racial integration exhibited by the movement because the white population came to attend black man's church.[63] In reference to the migration of white religious leaders coming from the south to Azusa

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[61] Iain MacRobert, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (Macmillan Press, 1988), 55.
[62] Frank Bartleman, *How the Pentecost came to Azusa Street: As It Was in the Beginning* (Los Angeles, 1925), 59.
[63] Frank Bartleman, 59.

Stree, Alexander. A. Boddy, an Anglican clergy member and one of the founders of British Pentecostalism, stated

> It was something very extraordinary, that white pastors from the south were eagerly prepared to go to Los Angeles to the Negros, to have fellowship with them and receive through their prayers and intercessions the blessings of the Spirit. And it was more still more wonderful that these white pastors went back to the South and reported to the members of their congregations that they had been together with the Negros, that they had prayed in one Spirit and received the same blessings as they.[64]

During this time in the United States racially integrated worship and collaboration between white and black religious leaders proved to be unusual and quite revolutionary.[65] Not only did the races mingle in fellowship at the revival, so did people from all nationalities. As the September issue of *The Apostolic Faith* reported, "Multitudes have come. God makes no difference in nationality, Ethiopians, Chinese, Indians, Mexicans, and other nationalities worship together."[66] This type of interracial and international worship stood apart from other mainline churches of the day and garnered a fair amount of criticism because of it.

Later in the history of the religion, a split amongst some Pentecostal factions occurred which resulted in a division among racial lines.[67] Some argued that the split did not result from prejudice, but from societal obstacles that hindered the functionality of the religion.[68] While others argued there had been prejudice from the start.[69] However, the Oneness Pentecostals, as a group, vehemently denounced racial inequality. For longer and more vehemently than any other doctrinal organization of

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[64] Iain MacRobert, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (Macmillan Press, 1988), 122.

[65] Iain MacRobert, 55.

[66] "The Pentecost has Come," *The Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles, CA), September 1906.

[67] Bernard, 93.

[68] Bernard, 94.

[69] Bernard, 94.

Pentecostalism, the Oneness strived to overcome societal racism that applied pressure to the organization.[70] The Gospel Tabernacle Pentecostal Church that Jones attended in his youth claimed to be part of the Oneness doctrinal division of Pentecostalism that professed racial equality. Whether or not Jones childhood church professed the teachings of egalitarianism proved to be unknown, but the church had its roots in egalitarian principles that Jones avowed throughout his life.

The Pentecostal church of Lynn, Indiana in all likelihood had little reason to preach the message of equality in the small Indiana town due to the miniscule minority population. In the loft and on the street corner of Lynn, Jones felt little need to espouse an egalitarian rhetoric. However, when he took his curbside ministry to the City of Richmond, Indiana his sermons changed with the surroundings. In the racially diverse industrial city, Jones mixed his knowledge of evangelical religion with the message of racial equality when ministering to pedestrians on the street.

Jones set up shop near the railroad tracks on the North Side of Richmond, in a primarily black working and residential neighborhood. Jones positioned himself purposefully between two intersecting roads that workers frequented due to the taverns situated on either corner.[71] Located in a place he knew he would be seen, Jim pulled out his bible and began preaching the tenants of Christianity and equality to all in shouting distance. Because Richmond held a one-fifth black population that often suffered at the hands of racism and poverty, Jones egalitarian message went over well with those passing by.[72] Jones wove the message of brotherhood supported by biblical passages into his street sermons and before long small integrated crowds of twenty or thirty formed around the young fresh faced boy with slicked back hair who appeared wise beyond his years.[73] Some in attendance even gave an offering to the young preacher.[74] With a few coins in his pocket and an engaged audience, Jones kept his mission moving.

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[70] Bernard, 98.
[71] Reiterman, 26.
[72] Reiterman, 26.

On the streets of Richmond, Jones demonstrated two of the fundamental elements that would come to characterize the Peoples Temple; evangelical Christianity rooted in Pentecostalism and egalitarianism preached through racial equality. For the first time, Jones ministry proved to be somewhat successful. From the loft to the street corner, Jim Jones demonstrated a unique ability to be able to bring people together in the word of God. Now that Jim had a platform that worked for him he continued working to grow and expand his mission.

By the time Jones began preaching the message of equality in Richmond, he had already formed much of what his ministry would come to be. Only one major element present in the Peoples Temple ministry remained to be seen. The third and final tenet on which Jones structured his ministry came, like the rest, from childhood experiences and grew from his commitment to non-conformity and his already established view of egalitarianism.

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[73] Reiterman, 26

[74] Reiterman, 26.

Chapter Three:

I Shall Call Myself a Marxist

Many had tasted of that bitter cup – racism, injustice and poverty.
But never enough to have the courage to be lifted up….
But he lifted up his head in the socialist sign,
And shouted give me the burden and the victory shall be mine.[75]

The story of Jim Jones relationship with communism unfolded in much the same manner as his relationship with Pentecostalism. It began with a child who stood out as a self-perceived oddity amongst the rest. Just one year before his suicide, Jones recalled the times as a child when he pretended as if he "were a Russian Soldier, rushing through the snow and killing Nazis."[76] Jones remembered grabbing an old, out of commission shot gun and marching about "defending Russia from invasion."[77] Jones allegedly felt a strong connection to the Soviets from a young age and while reminiscing about his life he stated, "the Soviets are what turned me on… I identified strongly with the Soviets."[78] Jones attributed his youthful desire to identify with "something outside of the American scene" to his belief that American society did not accept him.[79] Just as Jones found acceptance in the ostracized Pentecostal church and those marginalized because of their race, he also found acceptance amongst the Communists.

Jim Jones marked his growing interest and admiration for the Soviets to have occurred specifically between the years 1941 and 1945.[80] Ten years old at the time of America's entrance into WWII, Jones expressed that he held a stronger connection with the Soviet troops than that of his own country. In reference to his admiration for Soviet actions in the War, Jones stated, "Stalingrad became my ideal. I knew more about what was going on than my folks. The Battle of Stalingrad became intensely important to me. When the Soviets were under siege, it was intensely personal to me."[81] News coverage about the battle fought between Nazi Germany and The Soviet Union from 1942 to 1943, over control of the city of Stalingrad, caught the attention of the adolescent Jones and informed his view on the Soviets. According to Jones the Battle of Stalingrad marked where his "interest in the Soviet Union Started. So That Led to Communism."[82]

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[75] RYMUR 89-4286-x-3-f.
[76] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[77] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[78] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[79] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[80] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

The alliance formed between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1941, likely served as an influence in Jones' newfound appreciation for the Soviets. Though Jones attributed his admiration of the Soviets to his ability to personally identify with them in his youth, the propaganda produced during the time of the alliance likely played a substantial role in his respect for the Soviet Union. In the years before the United States and the Soviet Union alliance, relations between the governments stood on uneasy ground. As late as 1939, the USSR had entered into a Nazi-Soviet Pact with Germany which hindered relations with the United States.[83] Therefore, during the alliance, the U.S. government pushed pro-Soviet propaganda as a means to promote the Soviets as allies to the American people. Jones recalled hearing the praises of the Soviet army on the news as a child which likely influenced his view on the Soviets.[84] Along with the news, movies and posters propagating the friendly alliance with Russia began to emerge during the years that Jones identified with his emerging interest in the Soviet Union. Hollywood movies such as the 1943, classic *Mission to Moscow,* a film produced in response to a requested by Franklin D. Roosevelt, painted a rosy picture of the USSR while also justifying the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939.[85] Additionally, propaganda images such as the poster produced by the U.S. Government Printing Office in 1942, that depicted a smiling Russian soldier along with the text, "This is your FRIEND, he fights for FREEDOM", served as a means to promote a positive relationship with the USSR.[86]

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[81] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[82] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[83] Ronald K. Huch, *A View of the United States Since 1877: America After Reconstruction*, (San Diego: Congnella, 2014), 44.
[84] RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B

Only eleven years old at the height of pro-Soviet propaganda in the United States, Jones inevitably felt its influence which informed his positive view of the Soviets and led to his inclination toward communism. Later in life Jones lamented, "How in the hell could all of a sudden everybody turn against Russia after the alliance we'd had?"[87] A question which served to express his dedication to the soviets after the U.S.-Soviet alliance ended. Though Jones presented little true evidence of his Soviet affection as a child, he used the narrative of his early relationship with the USSR and the tale of tromping through the snow hunting Nazis to bolster his standing as a communist later on in life.

By the time he reached his final year in high school, seventeen-year-old Jim Jones began expressing an interest in politics. In 1948 Jones campaigned for former vice president and Progressive Party presidential nominee, Henry A. Wallace. Jones spent his afternoons "tramping through the neighborhood in Richmond, Indiana, trying to get people to vote the Progressive ticket."[88] Jones supported the Wallace campaign because he believed him to be a communist based on his ideologies. Running in opposition to Thomas E. Dewey on the Republican ticket and Harry S. Truman on the Democratic ticket, Wallace stood little chance of victory in the 1948 election. Many of those in opposition to the Progressive Party believed that Moscow had organized the third party and selected Wallace as a candidate in order to gain influence in American politics.[89]

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[85] Alexander Fedorov, "Positive Image of the USSR and Soviet Characters in American Films in 1943 –1945," *Journal of Advocacy, Research and Education,* 1, no. 2, (2014): 4.
[86] "This man is your friend: Russian He fights for freedom," (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942), https://www.loc.gov/item/2009634186/.
[87] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

Those opposed to the Wallace campaign because of ties to communism argued that, "Mr. Wallace embarked on a course which, for an independent political leader, baffles any straight forward explanation. At every turn he operates as to give tactical advantages to the Soviet Government whenever possible, and to embarrass the United States Government…."[90] Finally, those against Wallace concluded, "A vote for Henry Wallace is certainly *not* a vote for peace."[91] What turned many Americans away from the Wallace campaign, attracted the newly communist Jim Jones. Though Jones campaigned passionately for Wallace, he lost to Harry Truman with a total of 1,157,172 popular votes and zero electoral votes.[92] Illustrating Indiana's commitment to anti-communism and traditional Protestant values, Wallace only generated 9,649 total votes in the Hoosier State.[93]

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[88] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

[89] Thomas W. Devine, *Henry Wallace's 1948 Presidential Campaign and the Future of Postwar Liberalism* (North Carolina: North Carolina University Press, 2013), 1.

[90] Vincent Sheean, *Saturday Evening Post*, October 18, 1948, 23.

[91] Vincent Sheean, *Saturday Evening Post, October* 18, 1948, 155.

[92] *Presidential Elections: 1789 – 1996* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1997), https://www.archives.gov/.

[93] National Election Results 1948, *Presidential General Election Results* (2016), uselectionatlas.org

Jones' political activism did not end with the 1948 election. Upon entering into university, Jones became an activist for the Communist Party. Jones referred to himself as a party organizer but stated, "[I] didn't being to the Party but I organized people to join the party. Did a lot of work for the Party. It was decided, I guess by party leadership that I was not to join the Party."[94] A member of the Communist Party leadership allegedly instructed Jones not to join the Party because he "could do more good by not joining."[95] Instead of becoming a member, Jones worked for the Party getting signatures for petitions and recruiting party members.

Later in life Jones reflected on one of the first Party members he met at University. Jones believed himself to have intellectually outgrown Pentecostalism; however, he found this Communist to be beyond him "in term of intellect."[96] Still young and fairly new to the Party, Jones admitted that he did not understand all the arguments put forth by Communism. Jones claimed to have perused the study of communism on his own terms by reading books on the subject; however, some historians have argued that Jones never appeared to fully grasp the concept. Being self-taught in the philosophy, Jones claimed to have formed his very own version of Marxism. Jones professed, "I shall call myself a Marxist, because certainly no one taught me by brand of Marxism."[97] Though Jones claimed to have studied the teachings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, his own "brand of Marxism" did not strictly adhere to the teachings expressed in the *Communist Manifesto*. Mark Lane, a member and survivor of the Peoples Temple, stated in his work *The Strongest Poison*, "From my one philosophical and political exchange with Jones, I had concluded that his scholarship in Marxist ideology was so deficient that he might have experienced difficulty in distinguishing between the words of Karl Marx and Groucho Marx."[98] Nonetheless, Jones drew inspiration from Marxism, Socialism, and Communism which he came to strongly support well before the creation of the Peoples Temple.

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[94] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[95] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[96] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[97] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.

Jones befriended the communist with an intellect that outdid his own. Referring to his new-found companion, Jones professed, "This communist, though, apparently cold, befriended me in a way that no one had ever befriended me." Feeling endearment for his new friend, Jones quickly began to "champion some of his communist ideology." Already holding his own "controversial stance on race" and a belief in equality for all, Jones found that the communist's ideas were not far off his own.[99] As time progressed, Jones sought out more individuals sympathetic to the communist cause. Jones remembered upon his return to University meeting a few communists who were gracious enough to invite him into their home. As Jones recalled he sought out those with communist sympathies because he "was shown a great deal of friendship by those types." According to Jones, he only ever encountered one communist "who was very gross."[100] Yet again, as with the Pentecostals, Jones found warmth and love amongst a group of outsiders.

Communists during this time in American history existed on the fringes of society not only in Indiana, but across the country. Expressing any ties or sympathies to the communist movement in the 1950s, proved to be hazardous. Jim Jones came into his

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[98] Mark Lane, *The Strongest Poison* (New York, NY: Hawthorn Books, 1980), 106.
[99] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[100] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.

Marxism during the McCarty Era; a time in history in which hundreds of Americans were accused of subversion or treason if suspected of having communist ties. Following World War II, especially in the time of McCarthy, the activities of communist and subversives captured the attention of many Indiana natives. So weary of subversive movements, in 1949, the Indiana General Assembly made it illegal to be a communist.[101] Only one member of senate, Senator Von A, Eichorn, sated his objection to the bill calling it unconstitutional because of its actions against the constitutional rights of freedom of speech and assembly.[102] Though challenged multiple times due to the question of constitutionality, the Indiana Supreme court ultimately supported the law.[103] The 1965, ruling to uphold the law reflected the States commitment to anti-communism.

Additionally, many Indiana lobbyists and legislators fought for the creation of a committee dedicated to the investigation of un-American activities which they hoped to function like a state level version of the 1938, House Un-American Activities Committee. Though they campaigned at every General Assembly for the creation of the committee in the 1950s, legislators only approved an anti-subversive committee in 1957.[104] Jones claimed that he once "was about to be drug up before the Indiana Committee on Subversive activities" because of communist connections but they cancelled the meeting.[105] Furthermore, citizens and political groups in the state became concerned that Indiana University professors who taught courses on communist countries expressed communist sympathies in the classroom. In reaction, groups such as the American Legion, called for an investigation into the professors in question.[106] As a college student at Indiana University, the young communist experienced the result of his states paranoia in one of his own classes. As Jones claimed,

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[101] Rebecca S. Shoemaker, "The Indiana Bill of Rights: Two Hundred Years of Civil Liberties History," in *The History of Indiana Law*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and Randall T. Shepard (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 199.
[102] Shoemaker, 199.
[103] Shoemaker, 199.
[104] Shoemaker, 200.
[105] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

> The thing that stuck out in my mind more than anything in college was this class I had with a professor Minton. He was, I later learned, a conservative, who was trying to teach political science objectively. And he would come into class and say, "Greetings students, and to the FBI." Electronic surveillance was not very sensitive in those days. Two f---ers in his class were FBI. I thought "this is too much." It made me project my views even more forcefully. Right in the goddamn class.[107]

Jones also alleged that the FBI agents followed him personally and kept a folder on his actions. The claim that the FBI infiltrated the classroom found validity in the actions of the state as well as in Marceline's own testimony. Jones future wife and classmate remembered, "We were students at Indiana University during the peak of the McCarthy years, and the FBI sat right in the social studies classes listening to what the professors were saying."[108]

Jim Jones also claimed to have experienced the consequences of McCarthyism first hand after attending a Paul Robeson event. Robeson, an actor and singer of the age, found himself a target of the McCarthy Era due to his suspected ties to communism. Jones claimed that after attending a Robeson show he too became a target of harassment and that he described as "unpleasant and painful."[109] Jones claimed that because of his actions his mother, "was questioned by the FBI for several hours…she took the Fifth Amendment. In those days, you did not do that. That was tantamount to admission of being a communist." Jones asserted that, "She knew nothing at all of politics. She was as apolitical as can be…but she defended [him]. She said ah, I refused to testify on the grounds it might tend to incriminate me or my son."[110]

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[106] Shoemaker, 200.
[107] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[108] Transcription of Marceline Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-BB-18-z.
[109] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.

Just as Jones story about his father's involvement in the Ku Klux Klan provided him with grounds to empathize with those racially discriminated against, the stories of Jones fight against anti-communism in Indiana served as a way to empathize with those effected by the prejudice against communism. In the peak of the McCarthy era Jones continued to attend communist rallies. Jones claimed that he "found the same type of spirit in the communist rallies" that he did in the "warmth of a Pentecostal setting."[111] Jim's wife, Marceline, contended that at the time of their 1949, marriage, several years before the birth of the Peoples Temple, Jim Jones already expressed a firm commitment to communism.[112]

Jones' devotion to communism, which he claimed to have held since childhood, eventually caused tension between he and his wife. Marceline held very strong religious beliefs and trusted that Jones did as well. However, as his dedication to communism grew his commitment to religion began to falter. Jones began to express greater compassion for those mistreated by society. Jones lamented, "It seemed gross to me that one human being would have so much more than another. I, I couldn't come to terms with capitalism in any way."[113] Jones believed major problem existed in the world for minorities and that the hypocritical segregated churches only served to contribute to the problem.[114] Jones also experienced the suffering of the poor on the streets and in the hospital in Richmond, and he felt that no merciful God could allow his people to suffer in such a manner.

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[110] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.

[111] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.

[112] David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 4.

[113] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.

Growing more enraged about the hypocrisy of the church, Jones moved closer to atheism. Jones and Marceline often fought about his rejection of the Christian religion. As Jones recalled, "We had some hulluva rows over my ideology. Hellish Rows. She believed in God and I started devastating him. I tore that motherf--er to shreds and laid him to rest. She just cried, and we'd fight, and she'd cry." Thought talk of his atheism led to fights, Jones felt it his responsibility to share with Marceline that he had discovered, intellectually, God did not exist.[115] Jones chose a commitment to Marxist and socialist ideologies over continued dedication to the Christian religion in the years before the formation of the Peoples Temple Church.

As a fully committed Communist in the McCarthy Era, Jones asked the question, "How can I demonstrate my Marxism?"[116] Jones found an arena to espouse his own brand of Marxist inspired philosophy in an unlikely place. Though he claimed to be an atheist, Jones agreed to attend a Methodist church service with Marceline one Sunday morning in 1952. On the church bulletin board hung a copy of the Methodist Social Creed which outlined the social ideologies of the church. Along with the dedication to workers' rights, eliminating poverty, and provisions for the elderly, the creed stated, "We stand for the rights of racial groups, and insist that the above social, economic, and spiritual principles apply to all races alike."[117] The twenty points outlined in the creed proved to be compatible with Jones social and revolutionary goals. Jones began considering the ministry as a way to espouse his own ideologies while making use of his religious knowledge and ability to draw and captivate a crowd. Jones decided that in he would "infiltrate the church" in order to spread the word of Marxism under the shroud of religion.[118]

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[114] Reiterman, 37.
[115] Reiterman, 37.
[116] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[117] *The Social Creed of the Methodist Church* (Chicago, Illinois), 1948.

For Jones, his early ministry and the Peoples Temple served as a tool used to spread his Marxist message. Regarding the start of his ministry Jones proclaimed, in "the early years, I'd approached Christendom from a communalist standpoint, with only a mention of my Marxist Views." Jones noted, "Not only in my brand of Marxism, but in Pentecostal Tradition, I saw that when the early believers came together, they sold their possessions and had all things in common." Jones admired this communalist ideology and early on he preached the message of coming together as one. At first Jones remained cautious to not publically announce his communism for fear of repercussions for himself and his people, however, as Jones stated, "In the later years, there wasn't a person that attended any of my meetings that did not hear me say, at some time, that I was a communist."[119]

The origins of the Peoples temples church rested on the three tenets of evangelicalism, egalitarianism, and communism expressed by Jim Jones. Through the careful use and implementation of these ideologies along with effective manipulation of black evangelical religion, Jim Jones found himself able to attract a large and eager audience desperate to hear the word of God spoken through the message of equality and social harmony. Wielding religion as a powerful tool, Jones used the political and social climate to draw people into his church. Once inside members found themselves immersed in a non-traditional church atmosphere that diverged more and more from orthodox Evangelical Christianity with each passing day. However, the first expression of Jim Jones ministry did not come through the Peoples Temple.

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[118] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.
[119] Jones' Autobiography, Q134.

Part Two:

The Peoples Temple

Creation, Life, and Death

Chapter Four:

Ye Shall Begin Your Ministry

He cared for all people, but nobody wanted to understand,
But his chosen people were the poor oppressed man.
They were so helpless, tired and alone
Because nobody seemed to care how much they were being wronged.[120]

After his break with Christianity due to conflicting ideologies, Jones made a return to the religion. His visit to the Methodist church changed his mind set about what the Christian religion could be. Though he believed that hypocrisy existed on a large scale in religious institutions, he found the Methodist creed compatible with his ideologies. After his realization that his social agenda could be spread though the church, Jones made the decision to enter into the ministry. Jones began his preaching career as a student pastor and would then go on to form his own church. In his ministry he espoused what he believed; integration, egalitarianism, and socialism. Jones' ministry proved to be very different from other churches of the time especially in the religiously and politically conservative state of Indiana. Not only did he fill his sermons with anti-war, pro-integration, pro-communist rhetoric, but he did so in a particular style. Jones made and endeavor into the practice of spiritual healings which he once witnessed as a young boy in the Pentecostal church. Quickly and effectively learning the ways of prominent evangelical healers and ministers, Jones own ministry began to take off.

Just two months after his decision to join the ministry, in June of 1952, Jones took on a student pastor position at the Somerset Methodist Church in Indianapolis.[121] The way in which Jones claimed to have come into the position, proved to be an interesting tale. Jones, reciting the evet, claimed he met a Methodist Superintendent named Martin in a used car lot. Because Jones thought of him as "a religious nut", he began bashing the church, but instead of becoming angry, Martin invited him to his office. For some "instinctive reason", Jones went to the meeting and there the Methodist Superintendent offered him a position at the church. Shocked, Jones retorted, "You giving me a church? I don't believe in anything I'm revolutionary." Reflecting on the event years later, Jones avowed, "he appointed me…a communist, to a goddamn church. And I didn't even meet him through the Party. I met him in a f---ing used car lot." Jones, now a student pastor at the Methodist church, still held on to his atheistic views. As Jones asserted, "I took this goddamn church as a communist who believed in nothing – that's how religious I was (and still am)."[122] However, the Methodist commitment to social issues led Jones to declare Methodism.

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[120] The Ballad of the Jim Jones Movement, RYMUR 89-4286-x-3-f.
[121] Reiterman, 41.

The creed that attracted Jones to the Methodist church and convinced him to peruse a path in the ministry, existed well before Jones became aware of it in 1952. The origins of the Methodist Social Creed dated back to May 1908. The adoption of the creed at the beginning of the twentieth century marked the entrance of the Methodist church into the field of social action.[123] Created in a response to the corruption that oozed from every sector of big business and politics in the era, the Methodist Creed, born form the Methodist Federation for Social Service, hoped to curtail the issues that plagued industrialized America.[124] As social issues in America continued to be exposed, the creed underwent revisions in order to respond to problems outside of industry, labor, and capital. By the time Jones saw the creed posted on the bulletin board of the Methodist church, it had undergone several alterations and had come to include provisions for equal social, economic, and spiritual rights for all racial groups. Though likely unaware of the history of the creed, Jones found the commitment to social issues the Methodists expressed in 1952, to be analogous to his beliefs and Ideologies.

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[122] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

[123] Donald K. Gorrell, "The Social Creed and Methodism Through Eighty Years," Methodist History 26/4 (1988): 213.

[124] Gorrell, 216.

During his first sermon at the church that seemingly fell into his lap, Jones preached moral lessons from the bible as well as integration. Though the Methodist creed espoused a rhetoric of equality of the races, Jones remembered, "Preaching the first day, I had people in turmoil."[125] He recalled a little old lady who became angered by his integrationist sermon and complained to Martin, the Superintend, about his actions. Unfazed by the criticism, Jones not only continued to preach about integration during his sermons, but he put his words into action. "I finally brought blacks into the church", Jones boasted.[126] At this time in Indiana few churches existed where blacks and whites congregated together.

For a long time in Indiana's history the majority white population, backed by laws upheld by the state's constitution, placed the black population in a separate and lesser sphere. Though the state made gains in equality by the 1960s, the establishment of equality amongst the races proved to be gradual instead of revolutionary.[127] Though the Indiana General Assembly passed the Indiana School Desegregation Act in 1949, five years before the *Brown* decision, many Indiana schools remained segregated due to widespread segregation in the state. School attendance based on school zones and housing patterns kept many Indiana schools in large cities segregated.[128] Methodist churches in the Hoosier state also tended to be separated along the color line.[129]

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[125] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

[126] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B

[127] James H. Madison, "Race, Law, and the Burdens of Indiana History," in *The History of Indiana Law,* ed. by Bodenhamer David J. and Shepard Randall T., 37-59 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 37.

The Methodist church possessed a lengthy history of race related issues. From its earliest days in America in the 1760s, the Methodist religion attracted white and black membership alike.[130] The religion began as an interracial fellowship; however, it struggled with matters regarding racism.[131] As the religion grew so did the issue of race. Eventually the major Methodist denomination suffered a split largely due to disagreement on the issues of race and slavery in America.[132] Upon reunification of the church, the issue of black membership played a role in how the divisions merged.[133] As a result of white southern Methodist's fear about merging with a denominational body that contained a large number of black membership, the reunited church created six jurisdictions that separated the church administration based on geography and race. Out of the six jurisdictions, five of them formed on the basis of geographical location, while the sixth formed on the basis of race.[134] The Central Jurisdiction held an all-black Methodist membership and remained segregated from the white Methodist fellowship.[135] The Central Jurisdiction accounted for only a little over 308,000 out of 7.3million, or 4.2 percent, of the Methodist Church Membership in 1940.[136] By 1950 that number rose less than one percent to a total of 5 percent of the entire Methodist membership.[137] Though Jones found himself attracted to the social consciousness prescribed in the Methodist creed, it appeared that the Methodists relied on a system of "separate but equal." They were willing to let the black fellowship practice the Methodist religion with autonomy as long as they didn't have to worship together.

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[128] Madison, 37.
[129] Madison, 49.
[130] Peter C. Murray, *Methodists and the Crucible of Race: 1930-1975* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 8.
[131] Murray, 9
[132] Murray, 16.
[133]Carolyn Renée Dupont, *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the civil rights Movement, 1945-1975* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 29.
[134] Dupont, 29.
[135] Murray, 38.
[136] Murray, 46.

Therefore, the attempt by Jones, a Caucasian preacher of a denominationally white Methodist church in a demographically white area of Indiana, to integrate his fellowship went against the historical actions of the Methodist Church. Jones, ignoring convention, actively sought out members of the black community to bring into the church. The process of integrating the Somerset Methodist church did not result from an organic movement of African Americans into the congregation. Instead, integration resulted from Jones proactively recruiting members. Harkening back to his days as a young boy in Lynn, Jones travelled around Indianapolis visiting black churches where he once again experienced the emotion he had found with the Pentecostals.[138] Jones became friends with some of those he met at services and in black neighborhoods of Indianapolis and invited them back to his church to meet with his congregation. This effort did not always sit well with white members of the church. The congregation's refusal to openly accept black members angered Jones because, as he professed, "Integration was a big, big issue…An inclusive congregation, that was the first big issue."[139] Unfortunately for Jones it proved to be a "hell of a battle."[140]

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[137] Dupont, 29.

[138] Reiterman, 42.

[139] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

[140] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

Jones focused heavily on integration because he wanted a united and receptive audience in which he could share his Marxist philosophy. As Jones asserted, “I’ll never make a revolution – I can’t even get these f---ers to sit together, much less get to any Communist philosophy. There’s no way I’m going to politicize these f---ers if I can’t get them to sit together.”[141] Jones finally had the platform he had been searching for, he just had to get the people to listen. Perhaps his devotion to integration also found some inspiration in the first success he found ministering to a crowd on the streets of Richmond. Before Jones began preaching equality and egalitarianism in a racially diverse area, he found it difficult to draw an attentive audience. It seemed that Jones attempted to capture the success of his street corner ministry on a larger scale through the church. Additionally, Jones likely felt that a black audience would be more receptive to his message of equality and racial harmony due to the circumstances of the era. In order to accomplish inclusivity in the congregation, Jones sought religious integration as an answer to racial segregation.

From his experience with the Pentecostals, Jones remembered their potential willingness to accept African Americans in to the church. “They seemed to be more accepting of blacks…at least I could get them to accept integration,” Jones hoped.[142] Apart from his expectation that the Pentecostals would help integrate the church, Jones also hoped they would help grow his membership. The Pentecostals and the evangelists were known for amassing the largest audiences at their churches and revivals.[143] Jones invited Pentecostals in to the church in hopes that it would drive out some of the more conservative Methodist and create a welcome environment for new black members. According to Jones, “Church was nothing, a handful of old bigots until [he] brought in some blacks.”[144] Jones molded the white, conservative, Methodist church to fit his ideologies and beliefs. The Somerset Methodist church acted as the predecessor to the Peoples Temple in many ways. The rhetoric of integration, equality, social issues, and communism Jones espoused as a student pastor only intensified with time. Jones owed his future success to the Methodist church and the Superintendent, Martin, who allegedly handed it over to him. Though some doubt existed as to the amount of integration Jones really introduced to the church and the power he actually held over the congregation, it remained that Jones’ preaching career began at the Somerset Methodist Church. Reflecting on start of his new-found profession as a radical preacher, Jones exclaimed,

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[141] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[142] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[143] Reiterman, 44.

> And that’s how the goddamn religious career got rolling. I was preaching integration, against war, mixing in a little Pentecostal crap – they’re all shouting and hollering and raising hell – and I’m preaching integration, against war, and throwing in some Communist philosophy. Got a bunch of Pentecostals in there and they were going crazy – because they hated integration, Communism, and people who preached against war. It was a circus.[145]

For Jones, the pandemonium did not end at the Somerset Methodist Church. In his quest to bring Pentecostals into the Methodist church, Jones began study elements of the evangelism, namely faith healings. Evangelical revivals, such as the famous Azusa Street revival, gathered people in mass to hear the word of god and witness the healing of the diseased and the lame walking aging though the power of Christ. The energy, emotion, and performance of miracles demonstrated at revivals generated large audiences as well as large donations. Seeing the popularity of revivals and the massive eager audiences that flocked to them, Jones tried his hand at evangelicalism and divine healings in an attempt to harness their powers for his own needs. Jones successful manipulation of the evangelical faith quickly propelled him to prominence in the religion.

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[144] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[145] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

Popular evangelists of the time, such as the late Billy Graham who Jones referenced on occasion in his sermons, likely served as influence in Jones' own ministry.[146] Born on a North Carolina dairy farm in 1918, Billy Graham achieved national prominence as an American evangelist by the 1950's and international acclaim by the 1960's.[147] Graham's success propelled him into the spotlight and he became known as the preeminent evangelist leader of the twentieth century. Complete with music, celebrity testimony, zealous preaching of the Christian faith, and the pastor's charisma; Graham's crusades led hundreds to flow down the aisles to the pulpit and commit their life to the faith.[148]

Graham's constituency mainly consisted of moderately conservative, middle-class, white, Protestants.[149] While, unlike Jones, Graham did not actively seek out African American members, he did express a somewhat wavering commitment to integration within the church. Graham first expressed integrationist ideas in 1952, at a crusade in Jackson, Mississippi. In reference to the racially mixed yet spatially segregated audience, Graham commented, "It touches my heart when I see white stand shoulder in shoulder with black at the cross."[150] In the years that followed, the minister made stronger commitments to anti-segregationist ideas. In 1953, during a four-week long crusade in Chattanooga, Graham violated Tennessee state law when he announced that he refused to preach with a rope separating the races. At one point during the crusade, Graham reportedly tore down the rope which acted as a physical manifestation of the color line. After that incident, with the exception of a crusade in Dallas, segregated seating arrangements never made another appearance in any of Graham's crusades.[151]

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[146] San Francisco Sermon (September 29, 1973), Q971.
[147] Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 5.
[148] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 12.
[149] Grant Wacker, "Billy Graham's America," *Church History* 78, no. 3 (2009): 489.

However, Graham adhered to the idea held by many evangelists, that social problems, including racism, "only reflect…individual problems" and did not speak to a larger societal issue.[152] Despite potentially having the capacity to promote large scale radical changes in race relations, evangelicals focused on individual change that ignored the institutional racism woven into the structure of society.[153] Though not necessarily considered a radical, Graham expressed a more ardent commitment to integration and racial equality than most prominent southern, white, evangelical leaders in his time.[154] During his career, Graham reportedly preached to over one-hundred million people in multiple countries.[155] Because of his worldwide acclaim, Graham likely influenced the young reverend who had just started his own ministry. Apart from taking a stance on integration, Jones likely felt an admiration for Graham's ability to preach to and influence the masses. Jones desired the type of acclaim and notoriety Graham had achieved in the evangelist arena and sought to accumulate the same type of devoted, large scale following. Though Jones aspired to be a prominent figure akin to Graham, the prolific minister denounced Jones ambitions. Commenting on the news of the tragic mass suicide in 1978, that brought to an end Jones' ministry and the lives of many of his followers, Graham referred to Jones as a "false Messiah."[156] According to Graham, "Mr. Jones was a slave of a diabolical supernatural power from which he refused to be set free. He was like a drug addict or an alcoholic who refuses to admit his need or seek help from the only one who could have set him free--God!"[157] Though Jones did have a history with drug addiction, he also found himself addicted to the power and dominance he held over his devoted following that worshiped him as God. Jones owed much of his eventual success in gaining a large, devout following to the lessons he learned from the evangelists.

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[150] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 123.
[151] Wacker, America's Pastor, 123.
[152] Dupont, 36.
[153] Michael O. Emerson, *Christian Smith, Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21.
[154] Wacker, America's Pastor, 123.
[155] Wacker, "Billy Graham's America," 490.

Jones dedicated himself to the study of the evangelical religion by attending revivals and healing services led prominent evangelist leaders.[158] The first attempts at faith healing resulted in little success, as Jones remembered, "I tried my first feat of healing…Didn't work out too well."[159] Motivated by the desire to grow his fellowship and an underlying psychological need to be worshiped, the determined young evangelist continued his study and "kept watching those healers."[160] Coming to the realization that he never actually saw anyone healed but the crowds kept coming, Jones thought, "There must be a way that you could do this for good, that you can get the crowd, get some money, and do some good with it."[161] In addition to amassing a following of devoted admirers, Jones held aspirations to help the disadvantaged in the community. One of his efforts came in March of 1953, when he launched a campaign to build a $20,000 interdenominational children's recreation center.[162] Evangelical faith healings became a means for bringing followers to the church as well as raising funds to take on social projects.

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[156] Edwin Clarke, "Billy Graham, on Satan and Jonestown," *New York Times,* December 5, 1978.
[157] Clarke, "*Billy Graham, on Satan and Jonestown*," 1978.
[158] Reiterman, 44.
[159] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September 1977
[160] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones September 1977

Beginning with a shaky start, Jones finally found his faith healing footing at a convention in Columbus, Indiana. A little elderly lady dressed in white called the student pastor over to her and said to him, "I perceive that you are a prophet and that you shall go around the world, you shall be heard around the world and tonight ye shall begin your ministry."[163] Jones alleged that the prophecy of this elderly woman led him to take the pulpit that night at the convention; however, as he stood in front of the crowd his mouth refused to open. Suddenly Jones began to call out names and people began "screaming and hollering." According to Jones he would, "call peoples out and they'd get healed of everything." Jones professed to not know how the healings happened he just knew that they did, or so he alleged. Jones admitted that the miracles came from his "gift" and the little notes of information he took down about the individuals he planned on healing.[164]

However, once word got out about the young student preacher able to heal the masses, they turned out in full force. Jones remembered on the second night of the convention, "you couldn't get into the goddam building," due to the massive audience in attendance. Always having a flare for the flamboyant, the showman put on a riveting performance for those who came out to see his miracles. By the end of his time in Columbus, Jones had upset convention organizers by upstaging their featured evangelist. The same type of charismatic leadership Jones demonstrated in the loft above the garage, he brought to the revival scene. From childhood, Jones possessed the ability to attract an audience. He enjoyed the attention and admiration expressed by those who came to see him heal and preach, but he became irritated by his inability to share the message of integration and communism with them. Jones lamented, "I could get the crowd together, but I couldn't get them politicized. Could not get the cadre of people politically."[165]

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[161] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[162] Reiterman, 44.
[163] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[164] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

At this time Jones still had allegiance to the Somerset Methodist church, but after finding success at the revivals and becoming more frustrated with the Methodist refusal to integrate, Jones left the church. However, some debate existed as to the true reason why Jones left the Methodist church. Jones claimed that he left in a rage after the Methodist became tired of his radical sermons and told him to get out. He claimed that on his way out he, "pulled out the song books, and damn near had the benches out," when the police came and told him to leave. In response Jones exclaimed, "I paid for it goddam it!" According to Jones he nearly got away with taking the organ.[166] However, this series of events appeared unlikely due to his low-ranking position as a student minister and the likelihood that Jones did not have the funds to furnish the church. Years later in an FBI interview, a former Somerset member came forward and said that Jones faced accusations by the church of theft and deception, but no other claims backed up the statement.[167] Bolstered by his experience at the revivals, Jones likely felt belittled by the position of student pastor and sought to gain more power and autonomy than he could achieve at the Methodist church. Nonetheless, Jones and the Somerset Church parted ways and Jones headed off to form his own church.

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[165] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[166] An untitled collection of reminiscences by Jim Jones, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

In 1954, after his split with the Methodist church, Jones rented a little building on Randolph street in Indianapolis to serve as the home of his ministry. Jones intentionally select a racially diverse area to establish his church so that members from every race would feel welcome. He called his first church, "Community Unity" which referenced the unification of all races and religions Jones hoped to accomplish in his fellowship. Jones reputation as a healer had attracted the attention of Reverend Russel Winberg from the Laurel Street Tabernacle who came to Jones church to see the young reverend in action. Upon witnessing Jones' miracles, Rev. Winberg invited him to be a guest minister at one of their revivals. Jones accepted the invitation and at the revival he performed his magic to the amazement of the crowd and the church administration. Overwhelmed by the young healer's ability to perform miracles and his charismatic preaching style, the church invited him back time and time again. Discussion commenced about the possibility hiring Jones to replace the pastor of the church, but they feared his fervent commitment to integration and his aggressive recruitment of blacks.[168] Jones reportedly told the Tabernacle, "Wherever I have a church, all people will be welcome," and then left Laurel Street with about one-hundred of its members on his heels.[169]

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[167] Guinn, 64.
[168] Reiterman, 49.
[169] Reiterman, 49.

Jones stayed true to his commitment to an inclusive church as he moved his congregation to a new building in a racially mixed inner-city neighborhood which he christened, "Wings of Deliverance."[170] Established in 1956, the church soon became the Peoples Temple; the most famous iteration of Jones ministry. One of the first official uses of the name "Peoples Temple" appeared in a newsletter produced by the church called, "The Open Door: To All Mankind." Published April 1st, 1956, the newsletter professed the beliefs and ideologies of the church while trying to attract people to the services. The publication proudly stated, "The door is open so wide that all races, creeds and colors, find a hearty welcome to come in relax, meditate and worship God." This statement remained in keeping with Jones ideology of racial equality in the church while also trying to cast a wide net. Also, in line with Jones' philosophy, the newsletter expressed, "The whole cause of all the distress that is in the world is all because of the condition existing in the church."[171] This statement reflected Jones' belief that the racial and religious hypocrisies of the church caused harm to society. Most of what the newsletter professed matched what Jones himself believed. However, the document addressed communism in a negative manner.

As an alleged committed communist since his time in college, the "Open Door" newsletter directly contradicted Jones philosophy of Marxism and socialism. The letter stated, "If man could only see the folly of their sectarian walls they would gladly bring them down so that the Lord would not have to bring that heathen nation (communism) to perform his will." Additionally, it expressed, "The spirit of anti-Christ (communism) is sweeping the world, bringing the body of anti-Christ, (the communist party) together."[172] Referring to communist nations as heathens and a manifestation of the "anti-Christ," the newsletter professed anti-communist rhetoric that Jones personally did not hold. Based on his past negative experiences during his time with the communist party and the political climate of the time, Jones likely feared the repercussions that could arise from the public proclamation of communist support. Jones wanted to attract members with the publication and not scare them away. However, once inside the walls of the church, Jones preached the values of communism under the guise of religion. Early in the life of the Temple, Jones preached socialistic ideals but refrained from speaking about more radical communist views. Jones referred to his brand of socialism within the church as "religious communalism" in reference to the communal element he witnessed within groups of Pentecostals and communist. Jones vision for an integrated socialist commune began on a small scale within his congregation and would not reach its full potential until years later in the Jungles of Guyana.

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[170] Reiterman, 49.

[171] Jim Jones, *The Open Door to All Man Kind* (Indianapolis: Peoples Temple, 1956), http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/

In 1956, for the final time, Jones renamed the church to the "Peoples Temple of the Wings of Deliverance," forever immortalized as the "Peoples Temple."[173] The charismatic reverend now had a sizable, devoted, interracial and interdenominational following and a church of his own where he could preach his own philosophy without impunity. However, Jones always wanted more. In this case the eager minister sought to expand the Peoples Temple in terms of membership, funds, and notoriety. To do so the Peoples Temple need more members. Always actively trying to grow his fellowship, Jones often promoted the temple in local newspapers.

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[172] *The Open Door to Man Kind*, http://jonestown.sdsu.edu
[173] Ordination Certificate of Jim Jones into Independent Assemblies of God, RYMUR 89-4286-BB-17-cc.

Jones sold the church to the public as a place that welcomed all kinds no matter of race, religious creed, or social standing, while offering healings as an added incentive. Advertisements for the temple placed in the *Indianapolis Recorder*, an African American publication, often featured a picture of the young, white, raven-haired reverend sporting a small bowtie and a large grin alongside the written promotion for the church. The Temple's advertisements used interracial and interdenominational rhetoric to stand out amongst the rest of the promotions for other local churches. With headlines such as, "See an Inter-racial, Non-sectarian Church Win the Souls for the Unity of Faith in Christ," that promised a "Miracle Healing at 2:30pm," the Peoples Temple held a unique place among the multitudes of church service announcements in the Indianapolis paper.[174] Sold as, "The Miracle Church for All Groups or the One Human Race," the temple offered what others did not; inclusivity in a time of exclusivity. The temple's newspaper campaign ran consistent promotions for the church between the years 1955, and 1957, in hopes of attracting additional members. In conjuncture to newspaper publications, Jones actively harvested members where he could and even brought in other evangelists in an attempt to rustle up crowds.

Akin to Billy Graham, other evangelist leaders rose to fame through the evangelical circuit in the 1940s, and early 1950s. In 1956, Jones called on William Branham, a prominent evangelist leader and healer from Kentucky, who resided in Indiana, to headline a massive religious convention Jones organized to promote the Peoples Temple.[175] Taking place June 11th, through June 15th, in an Indianapolis Cadel Tabernacle hall, the monumental convention served as an effort to bring people into

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[174] "Peoples Temple Full Gospel Church," *Indianapolis Recorder*, December 24, 1955.
[175] Peter M. Duyzer, *Legend of the Fall* (Independent Scholars Press, 2014), 20.

Jones newly established church.[176] To ensure a large crowd at the conference, Jones invited the well-known and highly revered Reverend Branham to share his pulpit. Jones spread the word boasting that, "The Temple will be host to the great William Branham Brotherhood Healing Crusade."[177] With Branham's good name on the ticket, the Temple expected at least an audience of "10,000 from all over the nation."[178] Though Branham held national acclaim, he boasted a smaller interracial following than Jones and during the crusade only around one-fifth of the audience consisted of African American followers of the faith.[179] The two set about healing the masses in traditional Pentecostal style. As the faithful came forward, the divine healers laid their hands on their body and they quickly felt the spirit work in them. However, the sprit appeared to flow better through the expert hands of Branham than that of the novice Jones.[180]

William Branham, born 1909, began his ministry in 1946, less than ten years before Jones entered the evangelical arena.[181] Branham claimed at the age of thirty-seven an angle appeared to him in a celestial vision and bestowed upon him the gift of healing. Almost immediately after the holy encounter Branham began his ministry.[182] Many have credited Branham, along with another healing leader by the name of Oral Roberts, with initiating the post-World War II Healing Revival that exploded in 1947.[183] In the years before and during the war, miracles and spiritual healings had been on the decline in the church. However, immediately following the war, a longing for miracles and healings emerged and a new generation of healers and believers erupted.[184] William Branham found himself on the front line of the revival. The divinely inspired pastor consistently reaffirmed his gift and connection to God by claiming to have had nearly constant encounters with angles and the holy spirit throughout his life. Sharing stories of heavenly visions and godly gifts with the masses, Branham amassed an immense audience that clung to his every word and greatly desired to be touch by his gift.

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[176] "Peoples Temple Interracial-Interdenominational," *Indianapolis Recorder*, June 9, 1956.

[177] "Peoples Temple Interracial-Interdenominational," *Indianapolis Recorder*, June 9, 1956.

[178] "Peoples Temple Interracial-Interdenominational," *Indianapolis Recorder*, May 26, 1956.

[179] Reiterman, 51.

[180] Reiterman, 52.

[181] David EdwinJr. Harrell, *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 28.

[182] Duyzer, 21.

[183] Harrell, 22.

The revival exploded in the late 1940s, and by the early 1950s, and Branham found himself nearly suffocated by the surge of charismatic healers that began to launch their own large, prominent ministries.[185] Jim Jones stood among those who jumped on the healing bandwagon. Not only did Jones attempt to emulate what Branham had achieved through his message and healings; he attempted to use his name in order to gain prominence as an evangelical leader. Though Jones efforts proved to be somewhat successful, the prominence of the healing revival began to taper off in the late 1950's, and by 1960, very few revival leaders remained. Though Jones found success as a healer and would continue to use the gift in his ministry, he became frustrated about the large amount of people that came to the temple for the healings but didn't stay for the message.[186] Jones wanted the Peoples Temple to focus of brotherhood, communalism, and social issues. In order to accomplish his goals, Jones need a congregation that came to listen to his ideas rather than to experience his ability to heal.

Jones came to the realization that he needed more black influence in the church. By November or 1956, Jones claimed that members of the church had "knocked on

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[184] Harrell, 16.
[185] Harrell, 38.
[186] Reiterman, 53.

12,000 in two months in the negro community alone," in an attempt to boost black membership.[187] However, according to Jones, the adults in the community showed little interest. Jones also appointed a black man by the name of Archie Ijames to the position of associate pastor. Ijames remained with the church for many years and served as Jones "right-hand man."[188] This administrative appointment helped Jones convince the black population that he sincerely held integrationist beliefs which he had struggled to do previously.[189] Few integrated churches existed in Indiana in the 1950s, so some doubt amongst the black community existed that the white reverend genuinely held integrationist beliefs. A black man with a position of power in the church gave African American members a figure to look toward for reassurance. Furthermore, just as Jones studied white evangelist healers, he began to study a famous black minister that quickly became his teacher, idol, and eventually competition. Studying the ministry of Father Divine, Jones began emulating the practices of the prolific minister as a means to grow his integrated congregation.

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[187] "Peoples Temple is Completely Interracial and Interdenominational," *Indianapolis Recorder*, November 10, 1956.
[188] RYMUR-89-4286-HQ-3
[189] Reiterman, 53.

Chapter Five:

Give Honor to Whom Honor is Due

So he came to them with a plan.
He ministered to them in ways they could understand.
He showed them that he really cared,
and that his love and power, couldn't be compared…[190]

As an integrated church dedicated to socialist communalist ideals, the Peoples Temple held an unusual presence in Indiana. However, the Temple's mission did not exist as an anomaly either nationally or historically. Jones learned of a man in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with a mission similar to his own that had begun his undertaking years before Jones entered the ministry. While in search for ways to grow his congregation, Jones began to study the prominent minister who had already accomplished much of what he hoped to achieve. After extensively reading up on the famed minister, Jones drove to Philadelphia to meet the man behind the gigantic Peace Mission movement.[191] Jones looked to Father Divine with admiration and envy. His desire to possess what Divine had, led Jones to emulate his ministry and even attempt to appropriate the Peace Mission as his own. Father Divine's influence led to evident changes in Jones' ministry and impacted the course of his mission.

Though Divine kept much of his early life secret, declining to discuss his birth place, early childhood, and his real name, Jill Watts, author of *God, Harlem, U.S.A: The Father Divine Story,* claimed to have uncovered evidence of his past. According to Watts, Father Divine's tale began with his birth to a former slave in May of 1879, in

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[190] The Ballad of the Jim Jones Movement, RYMUR 89-4286-x-3-f
[191] Reiterman, 58.

Rockville, Maryland.[192] Named George Baker Jr., after his father, Divine spent most of his life growing up and working in the Mid-Atlantic state.[193] The political and social environment in Maryland during Divine's youth shaped much of what he believed as an adult. As an African American child growing up in Post-Reconstruction America, young Divine found himself susceptible to discrimination and segregation like millions of other black Americans. Unlike Jones, who claimed to have been empathetic to those who faced discrimination because of their race, Divine had experienced personal racial injustice throughout his life. This oppression, mixed with the political atmosphere of Maryland, and a strong, politically and socially active black community, led to Divine's commitment to social activism as an adult.[194]

The church served as another strong influence in young Divine's life. He attended the Jerusalem Methodist Church, a black Methodist church in Rockville that had split from the white fellowship over issues regarding civil-rights.[195] The intensity and spirituality expressed in within the African American congregation of the Methodist church attracted Divine in much the same manner as the freedom of expression in the Pentecostal services that young Jim Jones had become enamored by. Within the Methodist church Divine found a loving and accepting community. However, much like Jones, Divine delved into religious experimentation and came to manufacture his theology from a conglomeration of religious practices. Though widely influenced by various denominations of the Christian religion, Divine's roots remained in the black church and traditional African American Christianity which formed many of the theological ideas he held and religious rites he practiced.[196]

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[192] Other sources claim Father Divine's birth took place in Hutchinson Island, Georgia.
[193] Jill Watts, *God, Harlem, USA: The Father Divine Story* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 5.
[194] Watts, 5.
[195] Watts, 11.

Divine's true divinity came about in 1906, at the famous Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, California. Divine initially attended out of religious curiosity but ended up leaving newly created. Along with many others consumed by the spirt, Divine began speaking in tongues, known as glossolalia, which served as a significant identifier of a religious experience in the Pentecostal faith. Divine then claimed that the Holy Ghost came over him, expelled the mortal George Baker, and made him wholly divine.[197] At the time of his appointment of divinity, Divine had not yet adopted his famed name. After his experience at Azusa Street he became known as the Messenger in reference to the command he received from God to spread his holy message. By 1907, the Messenger professed to be the son of God and by 1912, Divine claimed to be the one true God.[198]

Taking his godly mission to the southern states in 1912, Divine sought to spread the message to black migrants suffering economic hardship in the Jim Crow South. His theology included the teachings that all should be allowed to hear the gospel no matter of financial status, equality should be established amongst the races, and heaven existed in eternal life here on Earth.[199] Divine firmly espoused the idea that his mission would never accept a single cent in the form of donations or collections from the offering plate. In regard to the economic element of his mission, Father Divine asserted, "It is not even slightly profiteering in our activates; for we abstain from every sense of an expression that will reflect profiteering and every sense of a reflection that would express graft and greed."[200] Divine sought equality among the social classes as well as the races and strove to provide religious wealth for those less fortunate. With these tenets firmly established in his ministry Divine traveled around the country evangelizing and slowly growing a following. Meeting trouble along the way from those who didn't agree with his mission or became concerned about his practices, especially in regard to his female following, Divine found himself incinerated a number of times.[201] However, the charismatic minister amassed a following despite holding a record.

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[196] Watts, 12.
[197] Watts, 25.
[198] Watts, 27.
[199] Watts, 32.

Divine's move to Harlem in 1932, catapulted his already successful mission into new territory. Within the racially diverse New York neighborhood, Divine's black membership swelled and the mission's commitment to social and political issues intensified.[202] Though not confident in the American government or political system, Divine became more politicized as time progressed. He and the mission held a strong commitment to civil rights and somewhat engaged in political measures to fight for equality. The mission engaged in a mutually beneficial alliance with the communists in 1934, based on their support for racial equality and civil rights. Divine disagreed with the communist focus on labor and unions in the 1930s, yet the mission accepted their endorsement which the communist continued to provide for several years in order to gain black support.[203] The mission remained mainly apolitical until news of a police officer killing a black teenager spurred protest and resulted in the Harlem Riot of 1935, which left four dead and the city in shambles. The racial injustice of the event pushed Divine and the to become more involved in politics.[204]

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[200] Father Divine, "How Can This Mission and Work be Considered Racketeering?" *The New Day,* August 11, 1938.
[201] Reiterman, 58.
[202] Watts, 87.
[203] Watts, 121.

In addition to taking a stand on racism and integration, Divine offered some assistance in the way of social relief in a time when the depression ravaged the lives of many. Though not an advocate for wide-scale social welfare, Divine's banquets provided food, clothing, and shelter for the hungry and homeless.[205] Seeing many welfare initiatives as handouts or a means to force dependency on the government, Divine became critical of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program that sought to aid those effected by the depression. Believing that a dole system would perpetuate the cycle of poverty, Divine did not endorse the president's plan.[206] Instead, Divine sought economic self-sufficiency through a capitalistic approach that resulted in he and his mission entering into business endeavors.

These businesses gained capital for the mission, by pooling profits, while providing low cost services for the community. Some of the business associated with Divine's mission included: The Father Divine Peace Mission barbershop which offered ten cent haircuts, a boot-black parlor with three cent shoe shines, a dress shop that boasted dresses priced at forty to seventy-five percent under their actual value, and restaurants that served meals for fifteen cents.[207] Hoping to wean his followers off social relief and instill a sense of independence and economic responsibility, by the late 1930s, many of the missions relief programs began to disappear. Because of his capitalistic beliefs, the mission businesses remained and continued to provide meals and services at low prices. Nearing the end of the depression, Divine's numbers began to drop because of reduced social programs and country wide financial recovery.[208] The move to Philadelphia in 1942, marked the of end of the prime years of Divine's Peace Mission.[209]

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[204] Watts, 130.
[205] Watts, 90.
[206] Watts, 108.
[207] Divine, "How Can This Mission and Work be Considered Racketeering?," 1938.

Though the Peace Mission still boasted a large national and international fellowship by the time Jim Jones reached out to Father Divine in 1956, it also held a poor public image. An incident in 1937, proved to be detrimental to the mission which had a hard time recovering its image thereafter. The thirty-six-year-old follower of Divine and eccentric millionaire, John Wuest Hunt, took a seventeen-year-old girl without her parents' permission, effectively kidnapping her, and began a sexual relationship with the girl he dubbed "virgin Mary."[210] After being returned to her parents, the family sought reparation which Divine refused though he did condemn Hunt's actions. The incident scarred the mission which faced additional negative press from legal battles, lawsuits, and fraud charges over the following years. The mission became known not for their efforts against racism and poverty, but for their financial schemes and sex scandals.[211]

Recalling his earliest memories of Father Divine's Peace Mission, Jones stated, "I had heard the usual opinions that it was supposed to be a harem run by a demonically possessed immoral person; in fact, I was almost wholly convinced that it was a complete fraud."[212] Though Jones initially claimed to believe in the sinister nature of the Peace Mission, he pursued the study of Divine and arranged to meet with him at his home in Philadelphia in 1956. Divine's ability to create an integrated congregation, communal living amongst his fellowship, and a devoted nationwide following attracted Jones who hopped to accomplish the same goals with his ministry.

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[208] Watts, 164.
[209] Watts, 166.
[210] Watts, 147.
[211] Watts, 165.

Jones' own reputation and religious credentials led Divine to accept the reverends request for a meeting.[213] Jones first trip to Philadelphia became a turning point in his religious career. Meeting for the first time, the reverends discussed their similar ideologies on integration and equality while Jones shared with Divine his own efforts to provide programs for his community. Jones discussed the nursing home the temple established which boasted, "lovely facilities for the aged and the physically handicapped."[214] Though the Peoples Temple ministry found success in Indianapolis, the young preacher came to Divine to learn how he built his mission and his following. Jones asked about the communal lifestyle Divine and his followers lived, the Promised Land farm project they started to feed the mission, and sought to understand how the social ministry provided for itself.[215] Jim Jones adopted Father Divine as his teacher and mentor who he began emulating in hopes of reaching the same type of monumental success. Over the next several years, Jones frequently visited the aging minister at his mansion to learn from him and plot his take over.

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[212] Jim Jones, "Jim Jones Meets Father Divine," (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1959) RYMUR 89-4286-BB-17-O pp 1-33.

[213] Guinn, 88.

[214] Peoples Temples is Completely Interracial and Interdenominational" *Indianapolis Recorder*, Indianapolis, Marion County, 10 November 1956

[215] Guinn, 88.

More than acquiring knowledge on how construct a mass following of dedicated believers, Jones intended on becoming the heir of Divine's mission. In 1958, "the Peoples Temples leader made no bones about his intention to eventually replace father divine."[216] Back in Indiana, the reverend concocted a plan to succeed Divine after his passing. He studied Divine's tape-recorded sermons and his personal writings in order to ready himself for when the time came to lead the mission.[217] Only two elements stood in his way. Firstly, Divine claimed to be immortal. For Jones to be able to assure Divine's followers that he deserved to inherit the mission, he would have perhaps needed to convince them that he served as the vessel for the reincarnated spirit of Divine. After the passing of his first wife, Divine began speaking of reincarnation in his sermons and convinced his congregation that Mother Divine's spirit willingly went into another vessel and she became the new Mother Divine.[218] With the rhetoric of reincarnation already established in the mission, Jones might have been able to convince the congregation that he served as Father Divine's vessel.

Secondly, Jones feared the reaction of Mother Divine. He believed that she might stand in the way of his take over; for good reason. While Father Divine did not take Jones seriously upon hearing his plan to assume the leadership of the mission, Mother Divine, the true heir to Divine's throne, did not trust the once atheist and did not appreciate his boldness.[219] In 1971, several years after Father Divine's Death in 1965, Jim Jones and two hundred members of the temple headed to the Philadelphia estate.[220]

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[216] Mildred O'Neill, "Mother Divine Gave Jim Jones an Ultimatum," *Afro-American* (Baltimore), December 12, 1978.
[217] Reiterman, 59.
[218] Guinn, 89.
[219] Reiterman, 65.
[220] O'Neill, "Mother Divine Gave Jim Jones an Ultimatum,"1978.

After a few days of obnoxious behavior and trying to recruit members, Mother Divine kicked them out. In the months following the incident, “Jones and his followers… bombarded hotels, homes, churches and businesses of Mission followers with recruitment literature,” in order to persuade them to leave the mission for his movement of ‘apostolic socialism.’ Jones efforts proved to be only mildly successful as “some accepted the invitation and never returned to the peace mission.[221]

In 1972, Mother Divine forbade members of the Peoples Temple to return to the Peace Mission stating, “We have entertained angles of the other fellow! We no longer extend to them any hospitality whatsoever. Not a one of them is welcome in any church under the jurisdiction of the peace mission movement in Philadelphia or any other country.” Mother Divine denied the possibility that Jones, a man “born in sin and shaped up in iniquity according to his own testimony,” could have been Father Divine reincarnated. This Peace Mission never heard of Jones again “until a siege of madness destroyed his cult in the Guyana tragedy.”[222]

Though Jones’ proved to be unsuccessful in appropriating Father Divine’s Peace Mission, his visits to Philadelphia between the late 1950s and early 1970s, shaped his ministry in many ways. Changes made after Jones ventured to Divines mission included the act of recording Peoples Temple sermons. The tapes served as a catalog of church teachings and as a record for history. Preoccupied with his place in the history books, Jones adopted Divine’s practice of recording sermons for historical record.

Also seeing that Divine had no use for the offering plate and refused to take a single dime in donations, Jones claimed that the Peoples Temples would do the same. Writing to his congregation, Jones stated, "When I saw this group in action maintain their lofty vision without passing an offering plate, I was put under conviction. I decided we too, could live by faith and in the midst of financial adversity we stopped taking offerings for months."[223] According to Jones, "Rev. Divine stirred [him] to take this greater act of faith that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to provide." Though both leaders professed to not accept money for their missions, many have argued that Jones and Divine swindled funds and even social security checks out of the pockets of their congregations.

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[221] O’Neill, “Mother Divine Gave Jim Jones an Ultimatum,”1978.

[222] O’Neill, “Mother Divine Gave Jim Jones an Ultimatum,”1978.

Jones also claimed to have found a new salvation through Divine's mission in the form of celibacy. Jones claimed, "contrary to what has been circulated these people including their [renowned] leader live lives of total sexual abstinence."[224] Upon arrival at a mission hotel, the workers demanded that Jones and Marceline have separate rooms in order uphold their standard. After meeting with Divine, Jones declared his new life of celibacy and imposed the doctrine on his congregation. He urged married couples to adopt instead of having biological children, a practice which he and Marceline both did and did not adhere to. The couple adopted several children from different nations during their years of marriage, effectively creating what Jones called a "rainbow family." The couple adopted two Korean children in 1958, Stephanie and Lew Jones, and then in 1959, they adopted Jim Jones Jr., an African American infant. The Jones family became the first white family in Indiana to adopt a black child. For Jones the adoption served as a humanitarian effort.[225] However, Marceline also became pregnant in 1958, and delivered their only biological child, Stephen in 1959, effectively negating Jones claim of celibacy.

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[223] Jim Jones, "Jim Jones Meets Father Divine," (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1959), RYMUR 89-4286-BB-17-O pp.
[224] Jim Jones, "Jim Jones Meets Father Divine," RYMUR 89-4286-BB-17-O pp.
[225] Reiterman, 64.

Though Jones claimed to eagerly embrace many of Divine's conventions, in a pamphlet written by Jones in 1959, three years after his initial meeting with Divine began, Jones also claimed to be critical of some of the mission's practices. According to Jones, the willingness of the congregation to worship Divine as a human deity and his readiness to accept the adoration, served as a point of contention. In the booklet called, "Pastor Jones Meets Rev. M. J. Divine," Jones declared,

> I had always been extremely opposed to adulation or worship of religious leaders. In order to stop flesh exaltation which seemed to be developing in my own healing ministry I publicly insisted that no one even referred to me as Reverend. Naturally, one can imagine the revulsion I felt upon entering their church and hearing the devoted followers of Mr. Divine refer to him as Father.[226]

Jones statement proved to be contradictory to the practices he adopted after his interaction with the prolific reverend. Supposedly in opposition to adulation of religious leaders, Jones desired the same type of praise showered on Divine from his followers. Encouraged by Jones, his followers often referred to the reverend as "Father" or "Daddy" and to his wife as "Mother," a practice clearly borrowed from Divine, often found in African American Religion, and his congregation known as the "angels." Additionally, Jones adopted the term "angels" from Divine's mission and applied the title to the innermost members of the Peoples Temple.[227]

More notably, Jones and members of his following, as well as many other religious organizations, initially criticized Divine for claiming to be the one true God, yet the reverend took up the practice of his mentor. On multiple occasions, in numerous sermons, Jones claimed to be God on Earth. Exclaiming, “I'm going to be very much what I am. God, Almighty God,” Jones stood in front of his flock and expected to be worshiped as the Lord and Savior.[228] By claiming to be God in the flesh, Divine and Jones held a greater position of power over their congregation who worshiped them as such. Though Jones met criticism for claiming to be God, the examination of similarities between Father Divine and Jim Jones proved the reverend did not stand alone in his proclamation of divinity.

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[226] Jim Jones, "Jim Jones Meets Father Divine," (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1959) RYMUR 89-4286-BB-17-O pp 1-33.

[227] Guinn, 40.

Jones learned a great deal from his self-adopted teacher and applied many of his large-scale practices to his own church. Already interested in the ideal of communalism from what he experienced with the Pentecostals and the communists, Jones applauded Divine for his ability to put it into practice. Jones commented,

> It is refreshing to see that the Kingdom principles of cooperative communalism is no longer in the realms of Biblical theory. The Divinites have perfectly fulfilled the Scriptural principle…They have sincerely put into practice Acts 2 which required that the believers live together and hold all things common.[229]

The mission pooled their resources and shared food, money, and living spaces with every member of Divine’s following. The Peace mission acquired large amounts of communal property in Harlem, New York and even at one point became the largest land holder in the area. Spread throughout the country, the mission held 150 communal homes that housed thousands of Peace mission members.[230] They also initiated the Promised Land farm project which served as communal agricultural land organized into cooperative farms. The community worked together tending the land with communal tools and sharing the responsibilities of owning a farm. The farms provided food for the New York Mission and a place for those coming from the city to seek sanctuary.[231] Divine took great pride in the Promised Land project and felt a spiritual connection to the land.

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[228] San Francisco Sermon, 1973, Q1035.

[229] Jim Jones, “Jim Jones Meets Father Divine,” (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1959) RYMUR 89-4286-BB-17-O.

[230] Lucinda Carspecken, *An Unreal Estate: Sustainability and Freedom in an Evolving Community* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 50.

After seeing that communalism could be accomplished amongst a congregation, Jones became more committed to achieving the same goal with the temple. Hosting displaced followers in his home and asking members to surrender their material possessions to the church served as Jones' initial move to religious communalism. Jones also believed that total commitment and dependency could be won if members gave all they had to the church in return for their needs being met. Meeting some success with religious communalism in the states, Jones achieved his communal ideal when in 1977, he and his following moved to the Peoples Temples Agricultural Project in Guyana. Based on ideas gained from his time with Divine, Jones established a communal agricultural society in the jungles of Guyana. The agricultural project, famously known as Jonestown, served as Jones' final mission.

Though Jones idea of an agricultural commune seemed to be inspired by Divine's initiative, the overall concept of communal living and utopian societies held a sustainably longer history in the United States. Most commonly associated with the 1960s, and 1970s, communal societies existed well before peace and free love motivated an exodus from core American culture. Religious, non-religious, anarchist, socialist, and new wave hippie communes, the group most commonly identified with

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[231] Watts, 137.

communal living, have all held a presence in American history. In the late seventeenth century religious communes existed amongst the first communal societies established in the states.[232] Many religious communes formed out of a desire to escape persecution and live holier lives. Of the earliest and most successful religious ‘intentional communities,’ a German Seventh-Day Baptist sect led by Johan Conrad Beissel founded a commune in Ephrata, Pennsylvania in 1732. The members of the commune worked strenuously on the land and devoted themselves to lives of prayer.[233]
The organizational structure and purpose of the commune varied based on the communal group. While many religious communes focused on preservation and purity of their faith, other communal groups found different meaning in their community.

Secular socialist communes emphasized the importance of communal work and shared living spaces. Of the recorded socialist communes some have followed an egalitarian model, which called for the distribution of all the communities assets equally amongst its non-ruling members, while others have permitted some private ownership. Leadership and governance of secular communes varied from charismatic dictatorial leaders, to established democratic processes.[234] In 1847, the German communist Wilhelm Weitling took leadership of Communia, a socialist commune that promised to provide for its members after their retirement if they promised to surrender all of their wages to the commune for community use. Thought the commune ultimately failed, Weitling remained hopeful that someday a true communist society would exist.[235]

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[232] Clifford F. Thies, “The Success of American Communes,” *Southern Economic Journal* 67, no. 1 (2000): 186.
[233] Thies, 188.
[234] Thies, 186.
[235] Thies, 191.

Though other forms of communalist societies existed throughout history, the examination of religious and socialist communes provides a better understanding of the intentional communities of Jones and Divine. Claiming to be an amalgamation of both the aforementioned communal ideologies, the ministers founded their communes on the tenets of religion and socialism. The charismatic leaders established their communities when the number of communes formed in America began to rise as a result of social upheaval.

Founded in the 1930s, Divine’s Peace Mission, a religious socialist commune, existed in a time of economic turmoil resulting from the great depression. During this time the number of economically focused communes and cooperative efforts increased as an answer to financial struggles.[236] On a national scale, the Roosevelt administration looked into the prospect of cooperative farms to help cope with the economic issues of the depression. Though never implemented on a scale larger than religious or communal utopian societies, the mainstream government experimented with the concept communitarianism.[237] Between 1937, and 1939, the Roosevelt administration established around twenty-five cooperative farms. These farms met backlash from conservatives that believed them to be a socialist enterprise. The experiment did not last long, and the government quickly sold the farm land.[238] Though cooperative farming did not fare well on a national scale, the Peace Mission profited greatly from the venture and many of Divine’s followers found reprieve from the fiscal strains of the depression.

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[236] Carspecken, 49.

[237] Rebecca Thompson, “Deshee Farm: A New Deal Experiment with Cooperative Farming,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 381.

[238] Carspecken, 49.

For this reason, many flocked to movement, and as a result the Peace Mission reached its zenith during the great depression.

Jones established his communal society a little more than three decades after Father Divine, but also during a time of distress and a resurgence of communes in the United States. Reaching a lull in the 1940s and 1950s, during World War II, communes made a resurgence in the 1960s' and 1970s. According to a survey an estimated 1,000 to 10,000 communal societies exist in America in these decades which included religious sects, secular groups, and, perhaps the most famous classification, the "hippies."[239] With the civil rights movement in motion and continued fighting in Vietnam, many countercultural communities emerged in response to the dissatisfaction they felt with society.[240] Removing themselves from a society they believed failed to meet their needs, many formed groups of likeminded individuals to find a more compatible way of life outside of the core population.

Numerous strictly religious communes still existed in America during these decades, but countercultural movements focused on societal issues marked the era. Jim Jones' communalist society in the jungles of South America, known as Jonestown, existed, in theory, as a religious socialist commune. Unlike Divine's Peace Mission, the focus of the Peoples Temple began to shift away from religion as Jones became concentrated on creating a socialist utopia. Jones community reflected the ideas and aspirations of the countercultural communal movement of the 60s and 70s, to a higher degree than that of a purely religious commune. Though inspired by Divine's ability to create a religious communalist society amongst his followers, it took Jones several years to amass a following large enough and dedicated enough to the cause to create his utopia.

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[239] Carspecken, 50.

[240] Ruth Shonle Cavan, "Communes: Historical and Contemporary," *International Review of Modern Sociology,* Vol. 6, No. 1 (1976): 5.

Reportedly in opposition to several of Divine's teachings, Jones applauded the minister's success and praised the Peace Mission which he desperately sought to replicate or appropriate as his own. In an effort to refute some of the slanderous rumors spread about the Peace Mission and prepare his congregation for a potential merger that never came, Jones wrote about his positive experience with the mission and Father Divine in 1959. In response those who might criticize his propagation of Divine's teachings, Jones stated, "I must honestly state the facts; as the Holy Writ declares: 'give honor to whom honor is due.'[241] According to the reverend, the Peace Mission movement, with its errors, "influenced [him] to be a more honest person and a greater servant to the people."[242] As church leaders from mixed religious backgrounds that held commitments to integration, social programs, civil rights, communalism, and their own claims to divinity, the reverend Jim Jones and Father divine shared many commonalities. However, Jones still lacked one element that Divine held; a largescale membership of staunchly devoted followers.

Jones believed the key to Divine's success came from appealing to those who felt alienated from society and as a result suffered emotionally and financially.[243] As Father Divine's mission thrived during the financial strain of the depression, Jim Jones'

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[241] Jim Jones, "Jim Jones Meets Father Divine," RYMUR 89-4286-BB-17-O.
[242] Jim Jones, "Jim Jones Meets Father Divine," RYMUR 89-4286-BB-17-O.
[243] Guinn, 89.

Temple came to flourish in the chaos and turmoil of the civil rights movement.[244] Already a devoted integrationist committed to social and political issues, Jones interaction with the Peace Mission movement breathed new life into the reverend. Jones became even more devoted to integration and social programs after his time with the famed minister who he kept in contact with through letters and phone calls between visits.[245] Using Divine's practices as campaign techniques, Jones lobbied to bring membership, specifically black membership, to the Peoples Temple. Capitalizing on the feeling of dissatisfaction with American society, the church offered a place of belonging to the disenfranchised as a means to gain followers. Jones focused his recruitment efforts more pointedly on appealing to those who had the most to gain from an inclusive, integrated church, committed to social issues in the time of the civil rights movement; the black community.

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[244] Rebecca Moore, Anthony B Pinn, and Mary Sawyer, *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America* (Boomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 40.
[245] Reiterman, 66.

Chapter Six:

I know that I am Black

He let them know that he too had drunk from that bitter cup,
And that his body had been crucified, that he had been lifted up.
That his lifelong fight had been for justice and equality,
and strongly united, his people would be free.[246]

A pivotal year for the Reverend Jim Jones and America as a whole, 1954, marked a major transitional period in the country's history. Jones established the initial iteration of the Peoples Temple while the country became emerged in the first year of the "classical" civil rights movement. While the *Brown Decision* signaled the coming of change, systems of oppression meant to disenfranchise African Americans remained prevalent and persistent in the structure of society. The tumultuous years of struggle for racial equality led to a feeling of abandonment and a sense of displacement in American society for many African Americans. Within white-dominated American few places existed that accepted and celebrated black culture and heritage. Eager to build a following, Jones capitalized on the feeling of alienation and neglect felt by many and offered a place of acceptance. By marketing the Peoples Temples as a fully integrated church, emulating black worship practices, claiming to be a member of the African American race, and becoming actively involved in the civil rights movement, Jim Jones catered his ministry to the black population with intention of adding numbers to his ranks. Jones offered a sense of belonging and renewed hope to the disenfranchised and in return he hoped they would offer him their undying devotion.

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[246] The Ballad of the Jim Jones Movement, RYMUR 89-4286-x-3-f, pages 22a-b

Upon relocating to California in 1965, African Americans made up nearly 50% of the Peoples Temples congregation.[247] By the time Jones and his followers left America for the jungles of Guyana, black members constituted between 70% and 80% of the following.[248] Many have mused as to why so many African Americans willingly followed the white charismatic leader.[249] Jones continued emphasis on catering to and targeting the black community through the structure and style of his ministry provided, in part, the answer to the question of inflated African American membership.

Historically, the black church served as "the social center for Negro life in the United States."[250] Black members of society gathered at these centers for social events, political reasons, and religious worship. civil rights activist, W.E.B Du Bois, wrote in 1903, "Thus one can see in the Negro church to-day, reproduced in microcosm, all that great world from which the Negro is cut off by color-prejudice and social condition."[251] This observation remained true decades later in the time of the classical civil rights movement. The black church offered what society denied; a place of acceptance and hope. Jones attempted to recreate the feeling of a black church within the integrated Peoples Temple. Drawing upon elements of traditional black worship style, Jones aimed to recreate the experience of black religion through his ministry in hopes of it resonating with African Americans.[252]

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[247] Rebecca Moore, "Demographics and the Black Religious Culture of Peoples Temple," in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America*, ed. by Rebecca Moore, Anthony B. Pinn, and Mary R. Sawyer, 57-80 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 59.

[248] Mary McCormick Magga, *Hearing the voices of Jonestown: Putting a Human Face on an American Tragedy* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 9.

[249] Milmon F. Harrison, "Jim Jones and Black Worship Traditions," in Moore, Pinn, and Sawyer, 123.

[250] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 193.

[251] W. E. B. Du Bois, 194.

[252] Harrison, 128.

The term "Black Church," used to encompass all sectors and denominations of black religion, has proven to be difficult to define because of its complexity.[253] To say that Jones emulated the practices of the "black church" as a whole would prove to be inaccurate for multiple iterations of black religion existed that expressed many different ideologies and practiced different religious rites. However, through the style and content of his ministry, Jones did replicate certain elements of traditional black religion in the Peoples Temple.[254]

Growing up with Pentecostal influence and coming up as a preacher in the revival circuit, Jones encountered the roots of traditional black worship early on in his religious career. The Pentecostal faith owed much of its success to the black minister, William Seymour and his Azusa Street revival. The Pentecostal movement that flourished in the latter half of the twentieth-century and gave way to the preceding Charismatic movement, expressed many elements of traditional black religion where they found their start. Though many white Pentecostal denominations abandoned their black religious origins, their roots can be traced back to Seymour, Azusa Street, and interracial worship.

As an admirer of W.E.B. Du Bios who wrote extensively about African American history, Jones claimed to have read his work closely. In referencing the activist author Jones stated,

> W.E.B. Du Bois, who founded the NAACP and really gave black pride and unity to the USA, devoted his life to the liberation of Africa and to the study of black history. If one were to try to name the key figures in southern Africa support work in this century, W.E.B. Du Bois'… name would certainly be at the top of the list. An anti-racist, anti-imperialist, a Marxist-Leninist, Communist, Du Bois has written volumes of material.

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[253] Anthony B. Pinn, "Peoples Temple as Black Religion," in Moore, Pinn, and Sawyer, 4.
[254] Pinn, 14.

Among these volumes, Du Bois wrote about tradition African American religion and explained several aspects that he found typified the black religious experience. Du Bois stated, “Three things characterized this religion of the slave - the Preacher, the Music, the Frenzy.”[255] Jones and the Peoples Temple reflected, in some manner, elements found with in all three of Du Bois’ established characteristics.

“The preacher is the most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil. A leader, a politician, an orator, a “boss,” an intriguer, an idealist…. the center of a group of men.”[256] The Reverend Jim Jones fit the description of a preacher set forth by Du Bois. Jones tried to be all things to the members of the temple; a leader, mentor, father, and even their God. He became the peoples center and they looked to him for everything just as he had designed. His cleverness, skill, and earnestness “gave him his preeminence, and help[ed] him maintain it.”[257] Furthermore, Jones held a particular presence on stage that commanded attention. A skilled orator and proficient showman, Jones put on a passionate religious show for his audience using music and the “frenzy” at his disposal. Though many of these elements could be applied to religious leaders of any race, certain themes did typify the African American religious preaching style. Wanting to connect with a black audience, Jones styled himself and his sermons in the manner of African American preachers and black religious worship.

Stylistically Jones fashioned his sermons in the same manner as many of the prominent black preachers of the day. Though not exclusive to black religious leaders, these characteristics took full form in the black church.[258] Small nuances of black religion appeared in the Peoples Temple such as Jones tendency to change his cadence and rhythm while preaching to stir up excitement and evoke emotion. This practice of vocal manipulation, mixed with the use of singsong intonation of his voice, proved to be characteristic of black worship traditions.[259] When coming to a particularly significant point in a sermon, Jones raised his voice to match the escalating emotion of the room. When he began shouting from the pulpit Jones' congregation responded with thunderous applause. Freedom of emotion, which had initially drawn Jones to the Pentecostal church in his youth, played a significant role in the traditional black church. Music became a method of expressing and amplifying emotion in a religious setting.

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[255] W.E.B. Du Bois, 190.

[256] W.E.B. Du Bois, 190.

[257] W.E.B. Du Bois, 191.

[258] Milmon F. Harrison, “Jim Jones and Black Worship Traditions,” in Moore, Pinn, and Sawyer, 132.

Within the Peoples Temple, music played a major role in worship services. Often the organist played a tune that matched the feeling of the room to help evoke an emotional response as Jones' sermon reached a climax. Becoming overwhelmed with emotion and the spirit, the reverend often began singing in the middle of the sermon while the congregation, taking his cue, joined in. The emotion felt during the sermons, aided by well-timed music, helped foster a feeling of emotional connection between the congregation and the reverend. Additionally, the music played, and the songs sang in the church reflected a celebration of African American religious heritage. Enamored by the musical traditions of Africa, Jones stated, "No people on earth has the beauty of drums and rhythm and dance like the Africans…and the great creative worship that is expressed in African dance and African song."[260] Because Jones disliked the synchronization and contrived nature of Anglo-Christian worship music, a number of the melodies from the temple's songbook come from African American spirituals and songs birthed in the time of the civil rights movement.

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[259] Harrison, 132.

[260] Los Angeles Sermons, 1974, Q612.

While some traditional Christian hymnals had their place in the Peoples Temple songbook, many of the tunes reflected the social and political ideas of the temple. Songs such as, "The civil rights National Anthem", which held the number one spot in the temple's list of worship songs, "Oh, Freedom!," and "I Shall Not Be Moved," replaced many standard Christian hymnals.[261] Furthermore, as the church progressed and became more politically driven and less committed to religion, the temple reworded some of the traditional Hymnals to reflect their motives and place higher praise on their father, Jim Jones. The church also penned their own original compositions such as "Brotherhood is our Religion," a Jim Jones original, and "When I Stand for Truth," which reflected the ideologies of the temple.[262]

The song selection of the Peoples Temple spoke to the African American experience and reflected a history of strife and hardship. However, many of the songs evoked a feeling of hope for a brighter future. The African American spirituals and songs of the civil rights movement that Jones employed in his ministry sent a clear message of hope, healing, a brotherhood while serving as a reminder of the oppression that could only be escaped through the church. As Du Bois wrote, black music "became the one true expression of a people's sorrow, despair, and hope." Through the music played during the Peoples Temples services, Jones found himself able to draw on all of the emotions encapsulated in black worship music and connect emotionally with his African American following.

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[261] "Peoples Temple Songbook," *The Jonestown Institute*, https://jonestown.sdsu.edu.
[262] "Peoples Temple Songbook."

Jones also heavily engaged in conversation with his congregation during sermons, an element of worship characteristically found within the Black Church. Rather than strictly preaching and communicating the teachings of the bible from the pulpit, the word of God became a religious performance in the church.[263] Attempting to make religious experiences real in the eyes of his followers, Jones called many members to speak and tell their stories as a part of the service. Believers coming forward to share tales of healings or godly experiences reaffirmed the reverend's teachings. Additionally, Jones expected engagement from all followers in the congregation whether the came forward to share a story or not. Another element of the Black Church known as "call and response," found a home in the Peoples Temple.[264] This form of traditional black religion expressed through shouts of "amen" and "hallelujah," resulted in a conversation between the congregation and the preacher. When the minister prompted the congregation with requests such as "can I get an amen?" the fellowship responded on cue with an enthusiastic, "amen!"

Jones expected passionate responses from his congregation and called out members who did not participate with enthusiasm in the ritual. Pointing out members who looked to be "feeling sorry," Jones exclaimed they had "something you can rejoice over…Don't come in here and crane your head at us. Cause this is our house…and we'll shake and rattle and roll, if we want to."[265] The enthusiasm Jones expected in his services resulted in the encapsulation of Du Bois third characteristic of the black religious experience: the "frenzy".

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[263] Harrison, 132.
[264] Harrison, 129.
[265] Los Angeles Sermon, 1973, Q 956.

According to Du Bois, the frenzy manifested when “the Spirit of the lord passed by, and, seizing the devotee, made him mad with supernatural joy.” He exclaimed, “Those who have not witnessed the frenzy of a Negro revival…can but dimly realize the religious feeling....”[266] Commonly, those taken over by the holy spirit shouted, clapped, cheered, danced, and ran through the aisles.[267] Jones encouraged this type of emotional out pouring in the church, at one time he even praised a woman running through the aisles. From the pulpit Jones exclaimed, “Just look at her run like that. I never get tired of seeing her dance…I’m glad she can dance.”[268] According to Jones, he had healed the woman by restoring her ability to walk and therefore the act of the once crippled woman running, and dancing served as a testament to his power.

Susceptible himself to the frenzy, at times Jones began speaking glossolalia when he felt particularly moved by the spirit. While preaching or preforming healings, the spirit moved through Jones and manifested itself through the speaking of tongues, singing, and shouting. The frenzy, or the holy spirit entering the body, manifested itself through various expressions. According to Du Bois, it varied from the “silent rapt countenance or the low murmur and moan to the mad abandon of physical fervor.” No matter how the physical interaction with the spirit expressed itself, Du Bois argued that, “many generations firmly believed that without this visible manifestation of the God there could be no true communion with the Invisible.”[269] In the traditional black church the frenzy and outpouring of emotion when confronted with the Holy Spirit played a vital role in which Jones tried to emulate in his services.

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[266] Du Bois, 190.
[267] Harrison, 130
[268] Los Angeles Sermon, 1973, Q 956.
[269] Du Bois, 191.

Jones appeared to be drawing inspiration from prominent African American religious leaders of the time. A black preacher by the name of J. Alfred Smith, writing about his personal interactions with Jim Jones in California, stated,

> I don't know who influenced Jones…but he must have been around some black preachers, and he must have listened, and he certainly listened. There's a difference between the Anglo style preaching and the black style, and you can't learn it form a book or a classroom, you have to experience it. [270]

Smith argued that Jones used the same type of theological language and vocabulary that he personally used in his sermons and that Martin Luther King Jr. used in his prolific speeches. Jones' passionate sermons proved to be reminiscent of another well-known civil rights era religious leader. Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, a civil rights activist and Birmingham minister, found a place in history not only for his role in the civil rights movement, but for his famously fiery sermons. For some, Shuttlesworth exemplified what it meant to be an African American religious leader.

Born as Freddie Lee Robinson on March 18, 1922, to a family of intense personalities and quick tempers, Shuttlesworth's strong character became established form a young age.[271] Growing up in Montgomery County, Alabama, Shuttlesworth experienced hardship within his personal life and society that helped prepare him mentally and emotionally for what he would come to experience as a central figure in the civil rights movement. Interested in the ministry as a young man, Shuttlesworth sought to become ordained by the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), however, after attending several Methodist services, Fred found himself unmoved by the sermons calling them “cold and uninspired.”[272] Making the decision to attend a service at the Corinthian Baptist church, Shuttlesworth felt as if something led him to join the Baptists. He acted on the feeling and subsequently became baptized in the faith in 1944. Shortly after, Shuttlesworth received a preaching license and immediately took to the pulpit filling in for the pastor of the church which served as the beginning of his religious career. [273] The skill he demonstrated at the pulpit led him to quickly gain reputation and Baptist churches began vying for him to lead their ministry. Shuttlesworth’s preaching style raised some eyebrows but encapsulated many of the elements Du Bois argued typified African American religious worship.

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[270] J. Alfred Smith, "Breaking the Scilence," in Moore, Pinn, and Sawyer, 139.
[271] Andre Manis, *A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 16.

Though somewhat restrained in his early religious career, Shuttlesworth preached with passionate and fiery conviction. Particularly in Birmingham, Shuttlesworth used something referred to as the “whoop” which appeared, like the “frenzy,” as an increased expression of zeal and fervor during a sermon.[274] Elevation in tone and rhythm, increased volume of voice, and chanting or singsong type delivery of an emotional sermon characterized the heightened energy of the “whoop.” Shuttlesworth also demonstrated religious fire through moving openly on stage and bursting out into song when consumed with the spirit. Like Jim Jones’ sermons at the Peoples Temple church, this overt expression of religious enthusiasm elicited an emotional response from the audience. Known as “a thin intense man,” Shuttlesworth could reportedly “play on the emotions of a meeting like a Heifetz bowing and fingering the string of a violin.”[275]

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[272] Manis, 40.
[273] Manis, 40.
[274] Manis, 57.
[275] “Insistent Integrationist Fred Lee Shuttlesworth,” *The New York Times,* May 11, 1963.

Though a charismatic and loquacious preacher, Shuttlesworth also held strong convictions about integration and civil rights.

At the start of his ministry, surrounded by black preachers that mostly kept quiet on the issue of race, Shuttlesworth expressed a more fervent commitment to the cause that occasionally rustled the feathers of other black religious leaders.[276] His civic-mindedness and sense of social and racial injustice led him to become active in civil rights issues.[277] Shuttlesworth believed that, "racism [would] destroy the church if the church [did] not destroy racism…racism [would] destroy our democracy."[278] His oratory skills mixed with the mindset of civil rights activism made him "one of the most articulate and fastest talking, leaders of the Negro drive for equality in the South."[279] May 17, 1954, Shuttlesworth saw a news headlined that breathed life into him. The *Brown* decision, as the preacher described, made him feel like he found religion all over again.[280] The most passionate leg of his civil rights journey had begun.

In Birmingham, Shuttlesworth increased his involvement in the NAACP and devoted himself to public and civic service. His reputation amongst the black community grew rapidly.[281] Introduced to Martin Luther King Jr. in 1955, Shuttlesworth reportedly stated that he initially didn't see leadership potential in the reverend. Though never great friends the two ministers worked together toward a common goal particularly after they, along with other black leaders, founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).[282] Remembering his time with

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[276] Manis, 56.
[277] Manis, 76.
[278] "Alabama Minister Speaks in Harlem," *The New York Times*, May 18, 1964.
[279] "Insistent Integrationist Fred Lee Shuttlesworth," *The New York Times*, May 11, 1963
[280] Manis, 79.
[281] Mains, 86.
[282] Manis, 88.

King, Shuttlesworth stated, “I think Martin was God’s spokesman to the country. His task was not mine. I’m a battlefield type gentleman. I need to battle. Martin had to be pushed, he was very slow…he agonized.”[283]

The same type of fiery spirit demonstrated in his sermons, Shuttlesworth brought to the movement. Though a believer in King’s message of non-violence, perhaps to a lesser degree than King, Shuttlesworth became impatient with the slow progression of the movement and called for more direct action in the assault against Jim Crow. Shuttlesworth wrote to king exclaiming that “flowery speeches” could only accomplish so much and the time for serious action had come.[284] His assertiveness and prodding of King, led to Shuttlesworth’s major role in the Birmingham campaign, which according to Jones, “seemed at press time to’ve been won, at least temporarily.”[285] Andrew M. Manis argued in *A Fire You Can’t Put Out*, that Fred Shuttlesworth epitomized the fiery and “combative spirituality” that resided at the core of African American religion more than any other civil rights leader.[286]

Though some have drawn comparisons to Jim Jones and Martin Luther King Jr. based on their charismatic leadership style and civil rights activism, Jones also embodied many of the characteristics of Shuttlesworth. Drawing on the charisma of King and the heavenly fire and combative nature of Shuttlesworth, Jones manufactured the persona of a black civil rights religious leader. With careful and expert use of skilled oration and showmanship, once demonstrated in his childhood loft, Jones crafted a worship experience that emulated themes of traditional black religion in an attempt to identify with the African American community. According to the racial demographics of the Peoples Temple it appeared that Jones stylistically black church and preaching style steeped in civic-mindedness did indeed bring in African American membership.

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[283] Fred Shuttlesworth, interviewed by *The National Visionary Leadership Project*, March 22, 2010, http://www.visionaryproject.org/shuttlesworthfred/.
[284] Manis, 222.
[285] News and Commentary, Q 441.
[286] Manis, 8.

"Was Rev. Jim Jones Black?" This question, posed by the *Baltimore Afro-American* newspaper reporting on the Guyana tragedy in 1978, reflected a trend in Jones' ministry. Unsure of his true heritage, the newspaper claimed that, "Details on the racial background of Jim Jones…remain[ed] cloudy" and "confusing." According to the *Baltimore Afro-American*, "Early Associated Press reports stated that Jones was the son of a black farmer in Indiana and white mother."[287] Though clearly false, the reports of Jim Jones African American heritage could have spawned from Jones himself who claimed to be black. Jones manufactured a shared heritage and history with the African American community and used his fabricated past in order to establish a sense of common identity.

In addition to styling himself as a black minister and his temple as a black church, Jones began identifying himself as a black man in his sermons. Furthermore, he attributed black heritage to all temple members even though many came from European or Hispanic descent. Speaking of his wife, Marceline, a white woman with blonde hair, Jones declared, "She's a blonde, and certainly she has a *black* heart."[288] Jones exclaimed, "I believe you can be a nigger and be as white as milk."[289] For the white reverend, being black resulted not from the color of a person's skin, but the realization of their oppression. According to Jones race served as an artificial construct based on societal structures of black and white identity. A person could become “black” by accepting that they too had been cheated and used by society. By sharing in a constructed memory of oppression, the members of the temple shared a collective identity. Jones attempted to establish this group identity and historical memory amongst his congregation by arguing that every member had been subject to a history of oppression starting with the institution of slavery.[290]

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[287] "Was Rev. Jim Jones Black?" *Afro-American* (Baltimore), November 21, 1978.
[288] San Francisco Sermon, Q1027.
[289] Sermon, Q1057-5.

Claiming to have known of his blackness for a long time, the white minister declared, “I know that I’m black, and I’ve got a little bit of this and I’ve got a little bit of that, I got a little Indian, I got a little Jewish…but I recognize that I couldn’t begin to identify what I am.” Knowing that he could not outwardly prove to be a member of the African American race based on his fair complexion, Jones argues that, “black is a consciousness. Black is a disposition. To act against evil. To do good.”[291] Identifying on a conscious level with the African American race, Jones appropriated their history as his own and claimed to share in their oppression which he exploited in his ministry.

Some members of the temple related Jones sermons to history lessons. These teachings linked the oppression of the past and present and created a communal history that served as a motivating factor in the church.[292] If everyone shared the same history of persecution then the likelihood of coming together as one to break the cycle of abuse increased. Beginning his lesson in Africa, Jones told his congregation of their collective history and declared, “they took our sons…the pride of Africa, princes, Kings, they took the best of our people, [and] brought them in chains."[293] Jones expressed to his followers his despair that their, "brothers and sisters…came over in the times of slavery and indentured servitude" and begged, "Father, have mercy…Father have mercy."[294] Jones ability to empathize with the plight of the black community helped allow him to gain their trust, while the shared history of oppression imposed in the Temple helped him revolutionize his people against a common enemy.

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[290] David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 116.
[291] San Francisco Sermon, Q974.
[292] Chidester, 116.

Unlike his mentor Father Divine, who sought to distance himself from his race, Jones adopted the African American race as his own and celebrated it openly. Like Jones, Divine believed in the consciousness of race and professed the idea that race did not exist except within the mind. However, Divine demanded members of his congregation to abandon racial labels and reprimanded those who identified themselves as black. Divine argued that taking claim of the black race also meant the acceptance of the negative connotations associated with the race propagated by society. [295] Society often associated blackness with negative images of an evil or sinister nature, while whiteness reflected positive images of purity and benevolence.[296] Divine chose to negate these classifications by dismissing race as a category in which people could be identified. On the other hand, Jones took the classifications and used them to his advantage. By way of inverting the meanings associated with the categories of white and black, Jones began using "black" to denote positive images, while "white" became sinister. Jones exclaimed,

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[293] Chidester, 118.

[294] Jones Speaking, Q 705.

[295] Jill Watts, preface to *God, Harlem, USA: The Father Divine Story* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), xii.

[296] Chidester, 69.

> There's been a lot of this…fear of darkness, back to primitive man that has caused black bad. Dark. Evil…this type of imagery of black being bad and white being good, we've got to change that around. Because we've found black to be very, very good and very, very beautiful.

Jones worked his re-tooling of the language into his ministry. While singing *Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*, Jones replaced the traditional lyrics that praised being "white as snow," with "What can make us black– our black to glow? Nothing but the blood of Jesus." When asked about the alteration Jones replied, "we're changing it because black isn't bad, darling. Black is beautiful!"[297] Additionally, Jones restructured familiar sayings in order to reclaim them for his appropriated race. Commonly used in negative sense, Jones embraced the term "black magic" by stating, "Jim Jones practices black magic. You bet I do…ain't no white magic going on in here, but there's black magic going on in here."[298] While 'black' took on a positive nature in the temple, all things associated with 'white' became negative. Jones used this reasoning when applying the term "White Night" to denote the practice of preparing for the ritual suicide that eventually claimed the lives of the temple members.

Jones also took one of the most racially charged words used against the African American race and inverted its meaning. The term 'nigger', typically used in hatred to insult and degrade an entire race, became an expression openly used and accepted in the temple. Telling the story of his adopted black son coming home crying after being called a "nigger", Jones claimed, "I turned that word around in my home, and I made it the proudest word for the chosen people. I said, yes we're niggers and we're proud…that's the best word in the world." Jones used the same application of the word within the temple to reclaim the power of the word from the oppressive white society. In Jones' mind, white outsiders could not use the word, but within the Peoples Temple the word took on a transformative meaning and therefore became a form of revolution instead of oppression.[299] Jones asserted, that he and his congregation "were a bunch of niggers," that coalesced "to make a heaven out of hell."[300] Outwardly boasting about the pride he felt being black, Jones exclaimed, "When I look at all those unhappy honkies, I'm glad I'm a nigger."[301]

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[297] San Francisco Sermon, Q1027.

[298] San Francisco Sermon, Q1053-4.

Jones tendency to promote black pride and the connection he attempted to make to African roots proved to be reminiscent of the teachings of the revolutionary, Marcus Garvey. Many of Jones older followers, who made up a significant percentage of the fellowship, recalled the mission of Marcus Garvey and his Back-to-Africa movement in the 1920s.[302] Originally from Jamaica, Garvey came to Harlem, New York and established a base where he launched the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey quickly achieved success with his organization and by the early 1920s, the UNIA boasted tens of thousands of members.[303] Garvey's organization stood on the tenets of pan-Negro unity, education of politics, and racial pride.[304] The slogan "Race First" summarized the movement as racial unity and solidarity served as the underlying motivation to the goals Garvey hoped to achieve. Seeking a unified consciousness of race amongst all people of African descent, economic self-determination through large-scale black owned business enterprises, and a black-governed nation within Africa that stood for the rights of all black individuals, Garvey placed race, specifically the negro race, first.[305] The movement gained momentum at an expedited rate and came to its pinnacle in early 1920, but soon met hardship. Mail fraud charges placed against Garvey in 1922, led to his arrest, imprisonment, and finally, in 1927, his deportation to Jamaica. Even after deportation Garvey held frim to his beliefs. Marcus Garvey's commitment to Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism sparked a movement that motivated others for decades after his exile.

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[299] Chidester, 71.
[300] San Francisco Sermon, Q1059-1.
[301] Los Angeles Sermon, Q1057-5.
[302] Guinn, 290.
[303] Adam Ewing, *The Age of Garvey: How A Jamaican Activist Created a Mass Movement and Changed Global Politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 1.
[304] Ewing, 5.

The polarity between the views of Marcus Garvey and Father Divine, Jones self-proclaimed mentor, on race caused tension amongst the leaders and their following. Garvey accused Divine of "race suicide" for his belief that men and women should not engage in sexual activity even after entering the bond of marriage which Garvey argued would lead to an extermination of the black race in America.[306] While Garvey sought to build up the African race, Divine sought to deny its existence. Though the two influential men held very different visions of race in America, Jim Jones found inspiration in both. Cherry-picking ideas from the prominent leaders, a skill which Jones employed frequently, the reverend emulated their practices and showed great admiration for their leadership.

Jones spoke often of Garvey in his sermons, especially nearing the move to Guyana in the early 1970s. He praised Garvey's ambition and lamented his inability to accomplish his goal of a "racial empire" which he blamed on the United States. According to Jones, "Marcus Garvey, who represented the black "Back to Africa" movement, never once recanted, even though he died a lonely man, self-imprisoned in exile, forced by the United States government."[307] Jones blamed society for the demise of Garvey's movement, and wept for "Marcus Garvey, that's rotting in his grave, [with] a broken heart, 'cause his vision never got done."[308] Upon the temples relocation to the dense rainforests of Guyana, Jones remembered the revolutionary, Marcus Garvey and his movement. Though Garvey had failed, Jones took pride in his own ability to create a perceived racial utopia. Boasting, "We've done something that no other people in the United States have ever been able to do," Jones applauded his own achievement while remembering the effort of the black revolutionary, among others, that came before him.

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[305] Beryl Satter, "Marcus Garvey, Father Divine and the Gender Politics of Race Difference and Race Neutrality," *American Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1996): 44.
[306] Satter, 44.

By recreating themes of traditional black religion as well as claiming to be a member of the African race, Jones played to his target audience; the African American community. The reverend created a place that not only accepted black membership in a time when segregation inundated every element of American society, but a sanctuary that celebrated black heritage and the African American race. Within the Peoples Temples the disenfranchised found brotherhood, acceptance, and hope. As the African American author, Richard Wright penned,

> For it is only when we are within the walls of our churches that we are wholly ourselves, that we keep alive a sense of our personalities in relation to the total world in which we live...In our collective outpourings of song and prayer, the fluid emotions of others make us feel the strength in ourselves…Our churches are where we dip our tired bodies in cool springs of hope, where we retain our wholeness and humanity despite the blows of death…[309]

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[307] Jones Leads Jonestown Meeting, Q262.

[308] Jones Rehearses Community in Reporters' Questions, Q191.

[309] Richard Wright, *12 Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States* (New York: Viking Press, 1941), 131.

Jones hoped to recreate the feeling captured in Wight's description of the Black Church within the Peoples Temple to draw in members. Jones mission to attract select members of society to the church further expressed itself through his use of the civil rights movement as a platform of recruitment.

Chapter Seven:

The Last Hope of America

But his enemies have decided that his people shouldn't be free.
That they were never going to know the joy of having equality.
He jumped on the front line and shouted, no, take me.
But from the corners of the earth a united people gathered
Together greatly in battle readiness and declared, this can never be.
We have come this far in unity and united we'll stand to meet our enemy.[310]

From its inception the Peoples Temple acted as a force for social change within American society. Even before the establishment of temple and the famed 1954, court decision that set the modern civil rights movement into motion, Jim Jones advocated for societal change through his attempt to integrate churches within his sphere of influence and spread his message of race equality and socialism. Though initially unsuccessful in his mission, Jones continually perused the idea of integration and equality through a socialist mindset and eventually gained headway. As the movement took off in the 1950s and 1960s, the socially minded reverend became more involved in the processes of civil action. While Jones' efforts to inflict social change reflected his ideology, it also served as a means to attract members to the temple. Successful social programs, political appointments, and praise from the community bolstered the reverends reputation and the temple's numbers. Jim Jones became known not only for his miraculous healings and zealous sermons, but for his commitment to human rights and equality during the time of the modern civil rights movement.

The "modern" civil rights movement, a term applied to a specific set of years capped by landmark events in the struggle for civil rights, took place roughly between

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[310] The Ballad of the Jim Jones Movement, RYMUR 89-4286-x-3-f.

1954, and 1965. The term acknowledged the years of struggle for equality that took place before traditional understanding of the civil rights movement while marking a new era of civil rights activism. Some mark the new phase in the fight for equality as begging with the Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, which overturned the previous 1896, ruling in Plessy v. Ferguson and brought segregation to public schools to an end. While others contend that it began in 1955, with the actions of the infamous NAACP member, Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott that followed. This event ushered in a new era rooted in African American culture of social protest, the formation of grassroots movements, and nonviolent direct action.[311] The end of this classical phase of the movement has been marked by many as the passing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, or the death of the movements icon, Martin Luther King Jr., in 1968. Characterized by an increased commitment to social action and the realization of the power of the people, the civil rights movement flourished in these years and gained headway in the continuing fight for equality for all humankind.

Having established an openly integrated church in 1954, the pivotal year that marked the initiation of the modern civil rights movement, Jim Jones made his first move in his mission for social change. Jim Jones grew in his social activism in the mid 1950s and 1960s, but by the 1970s, Jones had practically abandoned religion to focus the issues of civil rights and social change. Jones' efforts to change society began in Indiana, thrived in California, and reached its zenith in the jungles of Guyana as the reverend and his followers abandoned the institutionalized structures of white supremacy that dominated America for their own social utopia.

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[311] Aldon Morris, "Centuries of Black Protest: Its Significance for America and the World," in *Race in America: The Struggle for Equality*, ed. Herbert Hill and James E. Jones Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 47

In Indiana, the reverend became more involved in public civil rights matters by aligning himself with the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as a supporter and friend of the movement. As one of the most prominent and important civil rights organizations in the twentieth century, the NAACP expanded throughout the nation with members and branches all over the country. The Indianapolis chapter of the organization, formed by an interracial and interreligious group of activists, came into being not long after the establishment of the NAACP as an organization.[312] The Indianapolis branch remained relatively inactive until Willard Ransom, an African American lawyer and war veteran, assumed a leadership position as state NAACP president in the 1940s, and set out to reorganize the branch.[313] Described as impatient and assertive, Ransom wanted the NAACP to take action. Ransom became known for his, "work in preparing a major portion of the Anti-Segregated School Law and other civil rights bills…and for fighting leadership of the civil rights movement on a score of fronts, national, state and local," as stated in the *Indiana Recorder's* 1950, "Honor Roll."[314] Like Willard Ransom, Jim Jones would also find a place on the *Recorder's 1958*, "Honor Roll" for his "civic-spirited, good Samaritan…neighborly and humanitarian spirit."[315] In Indianapolis, Jones "came in to local prominence…as civil rights activist."[316]

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[312] Madison, 52.

[313] Krista Kinslow, "The Road to Freedom Is Long and Winding: Jewish Involvement in the Indianapolis Civil Rights Movement," *Indiana Magazine of History*108, No. 1 (2012): 11.

[314] "The Recorder's Third Annual RACE RELATIONS HONOR ROLL: Hoosiers Who Build Tomorrow," *Indianapolis Recorder*, January 7, 1950.

[315] *Indianapolis Recorder*, January 4, 1958.

[316] "Bureau Teletype to all offices," November 20, 1978, RYMUR-89-4286-HQ-3.

The Indianapolis NAACP and Jim Jones shared a friendly relationship of amicable support. Jones campaigned for the NAACP and attempted to collect funds for their efforts. In 1956, while promoting his healing crusade with William Branham, the revered posted an ad in the *Recorder* requesting readers to "please join the NAACP and support Rev. King financially in his fight for equal rights in Montgomery, Al. as you good deed for this week."[317] The Montgomery Bus Boycott that began in 1955, in reaction to segregated seating on Montgomery busses and the now famous tale of Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat, would not come to an end till December of the following year. Jim Jones collected funds in support of the effort in Alabama against segregated seating that would catapult Martin Luther King Jr. to glory and bring about a new phase of civil rights activism.

Additionally, Jones offered a large portion of his own funds to the NAACP in 1957, but in an unusual manner. April 6th, 1957, a report emerged that stated, "Rev. James W. Jones, pastor of the Peoples Temple…before boarding a plane took out $25,000 worth of insurance and designated the NAACP as beneficiary." In reaction to this claim, the NAACP reportedly responded in jest saying, "It certainly would have solved our financial problems, but he is worth more to us alive."[318] Apart from funds, Jones also offered the Peoples Temples church located in Indianapolis as a place of assembly for the chapters NAACP meetings. The NAACP certainly valued Jones' support and accepted him among their ranks.

The organization amicably supported Jones and his mission. The NAACP reportedly lent personal support to Jones when he sought military draft exemption based on his position in the ministry. “The Indianapolis NAACP board…issued statements in his behalf…testifying that the Peoples Temple [was] a bonafide church and the Rev. Jim Jones [was] its legitimate, full time pastor.”[319] Only after the testament of the esteemed organization did the Selective Service Board grant Jones’ ministerial draft exemption. Further exemplifying the cooperative support between the white reverend who fought for racial justice, the preeminent civil rights organization, Jim and Marceline Jones both added their name to the list of “NAACP lifers” by 1959. Jones commitment of five-hundred dollars paid to the organization placed his name on a list that further established his devotion to the cause and the black community.[320]

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[317] "Great William Branham Brotherhood Healing Crusade," *Indianapolis Recorder*, June 9, 1956.
[318] "Local White Minister Makes out Plane Ins. To NAACP," *Indianapolis Recorder*, April 6, 1957.

Jim Jones reputation in Indianapolis only became heightened when in 1961, the reverend gained appointment to the Indianapolis Human Rights Commission. Lacking motivation to support the cause, Indianapolis did not appropriate enough funds to fully staff the commission until 1963.[321] In 1960, the Mayor of Indianapolis, Charles Boswell granted $7,000 to fund the Human Rights Commission, also known as the Mayor’s Commission on Human Rights. According to Tim Reiterman, only one person applied for the open position; The Reverend Jim Jones. Having knowledge of the minister from the religious section of the *Recorder* where the reverend advertised the commitment of his church to integration and the addition of his name to the *Recorder’s* “Honor Roll,” the committee nominated Jim Jones for the director of the Indianapolis Human Rights Commission.[322] The Mayor requested that Jones’ serve a three year term and expressed that, because of Jones’ commitment to the problems facing the commission, his

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[319] “Militant Pastor Wins Fight for Draft Exemption,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, March 2, 1957.
[320] “Cleo Black Burn Takes $500 Life Membership in NAACP,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, April 5, 1958.
[321] Kinslow, 11.
[322] Reiterman, 68.

"counsel and experience [were] needed for the trying days ahead."[323] In 1961, Jim Jones took on the position as the director of the Indianapolis Human Rights Commission. Mayor Boswell wished Jones, "continued success" in his "many endeavors to benefit the members of [the] community."[324] However, he also instructed Jones to keep and low profile and avoid agitating racial issues. [325] Not following orders, Jones did quite the opposite of the Mayor's request. He used his new platform to bolster his career and meet his social goals.

Gaining more press than Mayor Boswell, Jones used his new-found position of public power to the fullest in order to spread his message. After his appointment, Jones attend a meeting of civil rights groups including the NAACP. Instructed to speak about the city's efforts against discrimination, Jones went on a tirade about the cyclical history of black oppression and the evils of racism. Drawing from his sermons rooted in African American tradition, the skilled orator found himself able to bring out the emotions of the crowd. Becoming wrapped in the frenzy, Jones reached the climax of his speech and shouted, "Let my people go!" in which the audience responded with thunderous applause.[326] The reverend and activist had found acceptance among the civil rights organization in Indianapolis. Jones appointment to the Human Rights Commission, relationship with the NAACP, and growing public presence affirmed and propelled his reputation in the black community and enticed membership to the church.

While gaining prominence and political acclaim, Jones also began a more personal crusade in the community. Under Jones supervision, the Peoples Temple began initiating social welfare programs for the poor and disenfranchised in Indianapolis. This action by Jones and the temple served as a movement against white dominated forms of oppression that placed African Americans and the poor in a separate and lesser sphere. If society would not provide for the people, Jim Jones would. Poverty and unemployment plagued many urban centers in the 1960s, including Indianapolis.

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[323] Jim Jones, RYMUR-89-4286, BB-17.
[324] Jim Jones, RYMUR-89-4286, BB-17.
[325] Reiterman, 68.
[326] Reiterman, 69.

Serious studies performed by the Urban League, a civil rights organization that collected and compiled data on the status of black America, revealed the unequal conditions in urban areas.[327] The mass migration out of the South resulted in more African Americans living in the cities than ever before. In the 1960s, for the first time, urban cities boasted a higher percentage of African American residents than Caucasian residents.[328] As black migration to the cities increased so did the white exodus to the suburbs. By 1965, the majority of metropolitan residents lived in suburbs.[329] African Americans residing in the South moved to the industrial North for job opportunities and to escape harsh Jim Crow laws. Upon arrival they found themselves in a less than fertile job market and subject to the same type of oppressive infrastructure that existed in the South.

In 1960, the unemployment rate for black Americans stood at 10.2 percent, while the average rate for white Americans stood at only 4.9 percent.[330] In the words of Jim Jones, "Black families cannot live without both black and white working at the same time. Not only is black unemployment at its highest level, but the jobless gap between whites and blacks is the widest that it has ever been…"[331] Apart from job opportunity and availability, a large measure of wealth disparity existed between the races. In 1960, the median income of African Americans stood at 55 percent that of the median income of white Americans.[332] White American households averaged $5,835 yearly income where as black households averaged $3,230 yearly. Black household averaged less yearly income than any other race in the United States in 1960.[333] Denied jobs, education, and mobility, African Americans suffered economically within the Northern cities they migrated to in search of economic prosperity and hope.

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[327] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for civil rights in the North* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008), 253.
[328] Sugrue, 255.
[329] Micael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 45.
[330] Sugrue, 256.

Jim Jones responded to the needs of the community through social programs while using his initiatives to boost membership in the church. Jones and his "social family" began providing services for all people of any race, religion, or economic standing. This mission reflected not only the social needs of the time but what Jones had learned from his mentor, Father Divine. While assessing what led to Divine's ability to amass a large national following, Jones saw that peoples flocked to the Peace Mission for their social programs during the economic turmoil of the depression. Perhaps taking inspiration from his teacher, Jones followed suit.

Already having established a nursing home that provided treatment for the physically and mentally ill or unable to take care of themselves, Jones expanded the temples social ventures. In February of 1960, the church opened a soup kitchen to feed the poor members of the community and quickly began serving an average of 2,800 meals a month.[334] In the same year they opened a free restaurant that dished out one-hundred free meals to the poor daily. The temple provided food, clothing, shelter, and financial aid to the misfortunate. In advertising the programs, Jones boasted, "We have no color line, in our social family, or religious relation… We give clothing and food to the needy of all races and religions."[335] Always attempting to further identify with disenfranchised people, Jones claimed to have not owned any suits of his own, though he wore one regularly, as a means to be recognized as "common folk."[336] Growing up poor and disadvantaged in the small town of Lynn, Indiana, provided Jones a particular feeling of empathy for those suffering in poverty.

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[331] Jones Reads News, Q255.

[332] "Median Family Income: Median family income, by race/ethnicity of head of household: 1950 to 1993," https://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/yi/yi16.pdf

[333] Ibid.

In addition to Jones' humanitarian effort to provide for those suffering economically, the human rights director went about town responding directly to the call of social injustice and segregation. The Peoples Temple served as a successful example of integration in Indiana, and Jones sought to restructure every other segregated establishment to meet its standard. Jones gained some assistance in his quest for integration when the Indiana General Assembly approved the civil rights Act of 1961. This act mandated that the state provide "all of its citizens equal opportunity for education, employment, and access to public conveniences and accommodations." As the civil rights Act of 1961 stated, these liberties "are hereby declared to be civil rights."[337] The passing of the act served as major victory for progress and equality at the state level, however, the law did not apply to privately owned businesses.[338] Jones turned his attention and integration efforts to this sector of the community.

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[334] Reiterman, 55.

[335] "Peoples Temple Full Gospel," Indianapolis Recorder, December 31, 1955.

[336] San Francisco Sermon, Q964.

[337] Indiana civil rights Law, *Article 9: civil rights,* 1961, https://www.in.gov/icrc/files/ch1.pdf

Jones aided in the integration of segregated restaurants and cafes in Indianapolis, particularly small independent businesses, by applying pressure to the owners. After being made aware that an eatery refused service to African American Members of the community, Jones would approach the owners and, using his new found political powers, try to get them to change their policies. When this method failed Jones assembled small groups of temple and community members to quietly protest outside of the establishment and let potential customers know of their discriminatory practices. When they achieved victory and businesses gave into their demands, the temple passed out flyers announcing the progress that had been made in movement to integrate Indianapolis.[339] Jones continued his integration campaign throughout Indianapolis finding success integrating other small businesses, such as the downtown movie theater, along the way. Jones with his gang of church goers and community activists came together and made strides in integrating Indianapolis.

Jones also brought the community together after hearing of two black families who fell victim to an act of white supremacy in the form of swastikas painted on their homes. Jones took action by walking door to door trying to calm the nerves of black residents who, for fear of similar persecution, wanted to sell their homes. Jones told them the best form of action would be to integrate instead of running away.[340] This sentiment, perhaps serving as a slight form of promotion for his own integrated church, helped sooth the tensions felt by the African American residents. In addition to Jones leg work, the community came together to help the effected families. Students from Butler University along with other community leaders worked together to help fix the damage that had been done in the name of hatred and white supremacy.[341]

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[338] Guinn, 100.
[339] Guinn, 101.
[340] Reiterman, 71.

Jones racially inclusive welfare programs, integration initiative, and social rights activism initiated in the time of the civil rights movement, not only provided for the community, but served as a form of protest against established structures of white domination. For Jones personally, these initiatives also reaffirmed his public power and gained membership for the church. People began coming to the temple and devoting themselves to Jones for reasons beyond spiritual healings which had initially served as a major motivating factor for membership. As Jones stated, “There are agnostics here who just see me as a humanitarian. They’re here because we’ve championed the civil liberties movement through the entire history of our church.”[342] Testifying to the ability of the church to bring about social change, a temple member declared that she had been trying to incite change in the community on her own but failed. She only succeeded in her efforts when she “found Jim Jones…found the community he built,” she claimed to have “found one who had effected so much change…who succeeded in uniting people of all racial, social, and economic backgrounds into a strong community….”[343] As Jones follower stated, the reverend formed an integrated community within Indianapolis dedicated to social action. In essence, what Jones had created reflected two major components of the civil rights movement: grassroots activism and nonviolent direct action.

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[341] Reiterman, 71.
[342] San Francisco Sermon, Q964.
[343] San Francisco Sermon, Q964.

Defined as a movement organized by the members of a community outside of a larger organization that used collective action to make change at the local level or higher, grassroots movements served as hallmark of the civil rights movement.[344] The community involvement that characterized Jones Indianapolis integration movement that took place without the organization of a larger political force has the elements of a grass-roots movement. Though Jones held same public power, he in no way had that power of a large political or organizing force like the NAAPC. The community members who aided in Jones movement appeared to do so organically in response to the need for change in Indianapolis. This bottom-up form of activism began at the local level with small independent businesses and had the goal of spreading upward and enacting change at a higher level. With Jones at the helm, the Peoples Temple and the community worked as one slowing integrating Indianapolis restaurant by restaurant.

Furthermore, Jones' grassroots movement used a tactic employed in the civil rights known as nonviolent direct action. In his letter from the Birmingham Jail in 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about the use and goal of nonviolent direct action. King stated, "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored."[345] Tactics employed by this method called for mass social protests in the form of boycotts, marches, sit-ins, and freedom rides among other nonviolent forms of social disturbance.[346] Famous instances of nonviolent direct action in the civil rights movement included the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955, the Woolworth lunch counter sit-in of 1960, and the Freedom Rides that took place in 1961. On a much smaller scale and to a lesser degree, Jones' nonviolent efforts in Indianapolis drew on the idea of nonviolent action perpetuated by King and the movement. Boycotts and quiet, peaceful protest of local restaurants that refused to serve black members of the community acted as small scale social protest and a form of nonviolent direct action. Though characterized by lack of aggression and violence on the part of the protester, nonviolent direct action often met violence at the hands of the opponent. Many of the large scale nonviolent social protests during the civil rights movement ended in violence enacted on the protestors. In a less severe and direct manner, Jones and his local movement encountered violence because of their integration efforts.

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[344] Morris, 49.

[345] King, Martin Luther Jr. "Letter from the Birmingham jail." in *Why We Can't Wait*, ed. Martin Luther King, Jr., 77-100, 1963.

Picking up speed and public visibility, Jones campaign for racial equality in Indianapolis faced aggression from those wanting to protect the structures of white supremacy. Reports began circulating of menacing letters and calls to the temple, threats to burn down the church, and even attempted bombing of the Peoples Temple. Jones claimed, "One night there was regular battle around our home…our home was being shot at, Molotov cocktails thrown on the roof…it was a regular battle, and it went on for hours."[347] Some threats of aggression against Jones and the temple remained unsubstantiated and might have resulted from Jones ever growing paranoia or a potential ploy by the reverend to heighten the importance of his movement. However,

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[346] Morris, 49.

[347] An untitled collection of reminiscences, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.

Jones message of racial equality and integration did receive backlash in Indianapolis. Deeming the Indiana capital too racist and unaccepting of socialism for his movement to further prosper, Jones relocated the temple to California.

Motive behind the California came from Jones' desire to find a more accepting community. The social activist reverend exclaimed, "I'd heard there was more acceptance there. California was supposed to be more liberal. So we had to go. Things in Indiana were getting too bad." He figured that California, "was the furthest point [he] could go before [he] fell into the ocean." [348] In search of a racial social haven in 1965, Jones and his most loyal followers, about 150 in number, relocated to Ukiah, California. The rural area in the Northern part of the state served as the temple's new home as well as a litmus test for Jones' ultimate goal of a creating a socialist utopia.

Arriving in the small town of Ukiah, consisting mainly of white working-class residents, just a couple months after the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and not long after the civil rights Act of 1964, the integrated church received backlash from the community. These acts that legally ended public segregation and ensured the right to vote for African Americans have been marked by many as the end of the civil rights movement. However, many societal constructs that upheld the belief of white superiority and black oppression remained ever present. Many Ukiah, residents remained firm in their belief of black inferiority and refused to live near their new Hoosier neighbors. In an interview by Jeff Guinn, one member of the community remembered that her "father did not want to live with blacks…Black people moved in. We had nothing to do with them or their temple."[349] Jones began trying to integrate the white community into the church by writing gushingly kind hand-written letters to the members of the area in hopes of gaining their favor.[350] Seeing that the letter writing campaign would not work among the more conservative Northern California natives, Jones had to come up with another plan.

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[348] An untitled collection of reminiscences, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[349] Guinn, 138.

The reverend began looking to the cities. In the racially mixed, poverty stricken urban areas of Indianapolis, Jones had found power and influence, so the reverend turned his attention to the urban areas of San Francisco and Los Angeles, California, in hopes of recapturing and multiplying what he had formed in Indiana. Speaking of his commitment to the city, Jones exclaimed, "It wasn't long before I was in the city. Church was going on, people lived their little agrarian lives, but I was involved in the city."[351] In San Francisco and Los Angeles in the 1970s, Jones found much of what he encountered in Indianapolis. In Los Angeles numerous families, an estimated six out of every ten, lived on welfare checks in the ghettos that served as ripe grounds for gangs and riots.[352] In San Francisco, though generally considered less violent than Los Angeles, the black community, which made up 13% of the population, suffered from disenfranchisement, poverty, and ghetto housing.[353] Jones' selected the perfect environment in California to build a church based on the premise of racial equality, social programs, black pride, and anti-government sentiment. Jones began enacting some of the same types of programs as he had in Indianapolis supplemented by the same types of sermons rooted in tradition black religion. Temple membership quickly began to grow, reaching between three thousand and five thousand members in the early

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[350] Guinn, 137.
[351] An untitled collection of reminiscences, RYMUR 89-4286-O-1-B.
[352] Guinn, 243.
[353] Guinn, 249.

1970s.[354] Jones began gaining the power, influence, and public acclaim he craved. In 1972, Jones claimed that the head of the civil rights Commission came from Washington in response to his humanitarian efforts in California, and told him, "you're the last hope of America."[355]

In the 1970s, with the passing of civil rights acts and the death of Martin Luther King in 1968, many believed the civil rights movement had come to an end. While Jones believed that the movement had met and end, he did not believe in its success. Speaking on King's death and the end of his mission, Jones lamented, "Now Martins dead…to have lived all those years…39 years for an idea, and then to not even see the idea carry on…nobody even knows what he stood for… It's all dead, down the drain… Three years after his murder — four years — and the movement's dead."[356] Jones believed that, "Martin Luther King had lived, and had died in vain."[357] According to Jones, "The honky heart is as mean as it ever was. Prejudice is just as rank as it was the day he took on the Montgomery bus problem. It's just as mean, it's just as vicious, it's just as cruel."[358] In his mind, Jones attempted to keep the movement alive and fight prevailing racism with his efforts in the urban areas of California. Jones applauded his own accomplishments by exclaiming,

> No God heard your prayer in your ghettoes when you were in need, no God heard you when your children were in drugs, no God heard you when your child was in trouble, no God heard you when you couldn't get enough money to keep your body and soul together from the welfare, but I came along, Jim Jones, nigger, I came along, and now there's a change being made.[359]

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[354] Chidester, 8.
[355] Two Sermons, Q1059-3.
[356] San Francisco Sermon, Q1053-4.
[357] San Francisco Sermon, Q1053-4.
[358] San Francisco Sermon, Q1053-4.
[359] Two Sermons, Q1059-3.

Placing partial blame as to what he thought to have prevented change in the modern civil rights movement on King's commitment to nonviolence, which he too claimed to hold, Jones began to take on a more militant understanding of the movement. Though he and the temple did not personally perform public acts of violence, Jones empathized with more hostile organizations in the 1970s, such as The Black Liberation Army and the New World Liberation Front. While still not practicing violence in the name of socialist revolution, Jones took on the attitude of "we'll not bother anyone, 'less they bother us."[360] A sentiment which held mostly true, at least in public, until November 18, 1978.

Jones and the Temple gained recognition and acclaim for their social and humanitarian efforts in California, yet their presence in the state would soon come to an end. The increased visibility gained from Jones' political appointments and accolades led to hard times for the reverend and his people. People began looking more closely at Jones and his followers. Not only met with aggression from individual outsiders who disagreed with their message of equality and socialism, Jones and the temple came under fire from organizations and the press. *New West* magazine published an article by San Francisco Chronicle reporter Marshal Kilduff and Phil Tracey which detailed "allegations of former church members who claim church leaders staged phony cancer cures, lied to their congregation about contributions…routinely paddled members…and pressured others to turn over property, money and houses to the church."[361]

Many of the heinous accusation placed against Jones and the church proved to be true based on substantiating claims made by other members. Using the testimonials of defected former Peoples Temple members, the article captured in seedy underbelly of the temple and its leader. The testimonies of the defected members and the claim that Jones, "one of the state's most politically potent leaders," used his following to influence elections, led the article to call for a full investigation into Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple.[362] Of course, Jones and the temple denied the claims directly stating, "We are not really surprised at the charges that have been made against us. Movements for fundamental social change have always been subjected to sophisticated and well-coordinated attempts to discredit their goals and destroy their leaders."[363] While seeming confident in their response, anxiety mounted in the temple. Already paranoid of government intervention in his church, this call for investigation from the *New West* magazine expedited Jim Jones move to Guyana, which he had been planning for some time previous to the publication of the article. The article expressed concern for Jones' alleged future move to Guyana and stated, "Whether the church will permit those who move to Guyana the option of ever leaving is questionable."[364] The answer to their question would soon be known.

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[360] San Francisco Sermon, Q1053-4.
[361] "S.F. Church Denies Charges," *Santa Cruz Sentinel* 121, no. 168, July 19, 1977.

The exodus from California to The Peoples Temple Agricultural Project in Guyana, known as Jonestown, began in July of 1977, the same month as the release of the *New West* article. By September, of the same year, nearly 1,000 temple members had made the migration to South America.[365] Jim Jones relocated his flock for the final time. Having already made good headway in construction of their new home, Jones and his followers anxiously anticipated their arrival at their communal sanctuary. Leaving

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[362] Marshall Kilduff and Phil Tracy, "Inside Peoples Temple," *New West Magazine*, August 1, 1977, 38.
[363] "Peoples Temple statement in response to New West article," RYMUR 89-4286-HH-1-C.
[364] "Inside Peoples Temple," *New West Magazine*, August 1, 1977, 38.
[365] Reiterman, 337.

America behind for a socialist utopia free of racism and fascism, Jim Jones and his followers headed for their Heaven on earth.

Chapter Eight:

Revolutionary Suicide

He turned to them with a haughty salute
For then he knew they had grasped the truth.
They were strongly united in the knowledge of socialism divine.
These people have had enough from that bitter cup.
They were willing and ready to be lifted up![366]

In the self-titled commune, all of Jim Jones' ideas, beliefs, and motivations coalesced into one singular body known as Jonestown. Upon his arrival to the Peoples Temple Agricultural project in July of 1977, all of Jones desires had come to fruition. Amongst the Jonestown compound people lived as an interracial, communal group, dedicated to equality and the socialist cause. However, most importantly, Jones had finally amassed a zealously loyal group of people willing to devote their life to him; their father. The people of Jonestown had been mentally entrapped by the charisma and perceived earnestness of Jim Jones and his mission and now, physically entrapped by their remote location in the South American jungle, no hope of escape existed.

Before the mass pilgrimage of followers from California arrived at Jonestown in 1977, the few original settlers that had gone down in advance to build the commune lived relatively happy lives.[367] However, after the arrival of nearly 1,000 people the increased work load, crowded cottages, lack of food, and overbearing leadership by Jones changed the mood. Coming in truck loads, men, women, children, the elderly, and entire families began pouring in to the commune prepared to make it their new home. Expecting heaven on earth, what they received looked more like hell in the jungle.

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[366] The Ballad of the Jim Jones Movement, RYMUR 89-4286-x-3-f.
[367] Guinn, 353.

Almost immediately Jonestown began having issues. They had problems collecting enough fund for the mission, even though they drew in thousands of dollars from social security checks turned over to Jones mainly by elderly black women who made up a large percentage of the community. Food shortages proved to be a major issue in Jonestown as they did not anticipate exactly how much it would cost to feed 1,000 people three times a day. The work load to keep the commune running became extreme demanding a seven-day work week, with a half day on Sunday, of back breaking labor. [368] Yet, the people remained with Jones in Jonestown: some out of a feeling of loyalty to Jones, others out of the commitment to the socialist cause, while others only stayed because they had nowhere to run. In the words of Jim Jones, "We're gonna live together, or we're going to die together."[369]

The people that willing uprooted their lives and came to live in Jonestown, did so for their own reasons. Many of the elderly population, who had suffered hard times in America, came to Jonestown for promise of being looked after in their old age. Others, especially those who had been rescued from a life of drugs by the temple, came looking for a fresh start. Many families came looking for a safe place to raise their children for Jones had convinced them that the capitalist society of America acted as a malicious enterprise bent on destroying them. Jones had persuaded his people to believe that relocation out of the United States and the establishment of their own socialist utopia would be the only way to escape the racists and fascists that oppressed them in America.

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[368] Guinn, 357.

[369] Sermon in Redwood Valley, 1972, Q932.

Within Jonestown, Jim Jones practically abandoned religion. Because the religious element served as a means to spread his socialist message and draw people to his mission, Jones no longer had to focus on religion because he had a built in, permanent audience. Therefore, sermons mainly gave way to Jones reading aloud about the news in the United States, mainly taken from soviet sources, which he embellished and changed to fit his own needs.[370] Jones painted a bleak, frightful picture of the home which they had abandoned to prevent anyone from wanting to return. He also discussed the potential dangers from foreign forces, namely the United States government, that lurked just outside of the commune. Many of Jones' perceived enemies existed as figment of imagination in the mind of deeply paranoid, and drugged, individual. However, Jones' fear of invasion by the United States government proved to be rational.

Jones believed by uprooting his following and moving out of the country that the controversy in the states would disappear; it did not. After the *New West* article came out, defectors began communicating and forming a fellowship with one another and with family members of Jonestown residents. This legion of mothers, fathers, siblings, and friends, bred trouble for Jones and the Peoples Temple in Guyana. The group became known as the "Concerned Relatives," and their mission stated,

> We are individuals having only one bond in common; relatives isolated in the "Jonestown" jungle encampment in Guyana, South America, under the total control of one man, Jim Jones. We espouse no political or religious viewpoint. Our only concern is for our families. We are bewildered and frightened by what is being done to them. Their human rights are being violated and the fabric of our family life is being torn apart.[371]

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[370] Guinn, 359.

[371] "Concerned Relatives Flyer," *The Jonestown Institute*, RYMUR 89-4286-II.

The Concerned Relatives amassed a lengthy document compiling all of the accusation of human rights violations made against the Reverend Jim Jones. Accusations on the list included, physical intimidation, hold people against their will, and depriving them of their right to privacy and free speech.[372] Together the group ordered a "governmental investigation of Jonestown with inspectors placed there around the clock."[373] The Concerned Relatives pressured the United States Government and lobbied Congress to launch an investigation. The group achieved success when in November of 1978, congressman Leo Ryan of California, traveled to Jonestown in Guyana. The victory of the Concerned Relative would ultimately contribute in the death of the loved ones they worried about.

Ryan's plane touched down at Port Kaituma, airstrip in Guyana on November 14th, and traveled to Jonestown November 17th, where they received a deceitfully warm welcome. By November 18th, Leo Ryan, along with four other members of his group lay dead on the Guyana airstrip. Shot down by Jones hired guns. Though seemingly open to the congressman's visit, Jones and his followers were ready for them in a different manner. A week before the Jonestown visit, Jones went on a tirade on exactly how he felt about the "criminal" Leo Ryan and his group of capitalist and fascists coming to invade his utopia. Jones told his fellowship about the congressman's plan to kill them in the night and "cut up babies." Jones concluded that, "if they enter this property illegally, they will not leave it alive." [374] Prepared to kill Ryan and the whole group that traveled with him, which included some of the Concerned Relatives, Jones waited for their arrival.

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[372] "Accusation of Human Rights Violations," *The Jonestown Institute*, RYMUR 89-4286-II.
[373] "Concerned Relatives Flyer," *The Jonestown Institute,* RYMUR 89-4286-II.
[374] Jonestown Meeting Discusses Ryan's Arrival, November 10, 1978, Q313.

Upon Ryan's arrival, some temple members expressed their desire to leave Jonestown. So, as Ryan headed back to the airstrip after the conclusion of his visit, he took with him sixteen defecting members. Before they boarded the plane to Head back home, men in a truck pulled up and opened fire on them. Five people were killed including the congressman. Back at Jonestown, word came the final "white night" had come and Jones readied his followers at the open-air temple for his final message.

Jones had prepared his flock to die in the name of socialism. The members had been forced to pledge their willingness to die for the cause. When prompted with the question, "What would you do if this were the last white night?" Temple members responded with various ways of taking down the fascists and racists as they gave their life for the name of socialism. Carolyn Thomas, a Jonestown resident, pledged,

> My life is committed to the demonstration and implementation of communist principle. I am ready to do whatever is necessary. I will kill enemies of this principle, fascists. I will commit revolution suicide or go to jail. I am ready to die today or any time.[375]

The hundreds of Jonestown members that made the same type of pledge, suddenly became confronted with its reality. Jones had convinced his followers that the death of the congressman would lead to an invasion of the commune by the American government and every man, woman, and child would be cut down by the enemy as a result. Instead of dying at the hands of the enemy they were to die together as a community in protest. As they gathered together for the last time to listen to their father's message and drink a concoction of cyanide and red Kool-Aid, some willingly accepted their fate, while others resisted. In the end, whether they succumbed to the poison, the injection of a needle, or the bullet of a gunman, 912 men, women, children died that day in the name of revolutionary suicide.

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[375] "Statements of Commitment to Death," RYMUR 89-4286-c-5-a-3.

Starting from humble beginnings in 1954, as an interracial church in Indiana, the message of the Peoples Temple had become twisted and malformed in the jungles of Guyana by 1977. To understand how this tragedy occurred, the history of the temple must be examined. The tendency to dismiss Jones and his followers as nothing more cultists while reducing their history to a singular event, though tempting when looked at outside of a broader context, erases the years of cultural influence that shaped the creation and growth of the movement. Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple, guided by Pentecostalism, egalitarianism, and socialism, emerged from an environment of Jim Crow Law, the civil rights movement, and the Cold War. Those who found the temple, came in search of answers, belonging, and hope in a time of uncertainty. They ended their lives when told that hope no longer existed by the man who promised it to them.

Of the Jonestown dead, African Americans made up nearly 70% of the total life lost. This served as a testament to the origin of the Peoples Temple which preyed of the desire of the black population to find an accepting community and enact social change in a time of social unrest. The members of the Peoples Temple and the Jonestown commune should be remembered as people effect by a culture who left behind what they perceived as structures of oppression in search for a better future, not as crazed cult members. Uncovering the history of the Peoples Temple, though not to moralize the actions of Jim Jones, served to humanize the people and bring them into the historical American consciousness. When studying the life of an important person or event in history, one does not ignore all that came before it or developed alongside of it. The same respect should be applied to the Jonestown tragedy of 1978.

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