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00:00:00,275 --> 00:00:16,207

The Reverend Jim Jones was one of the most bizarre religious leaders America has ever known.

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00:00:16,207 --> 00:00:23,653

On November 18, 1978, he ordered his followers to commit suicide.

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00:00:23,653 --> 00:00:29,777

Why did over 900 people follow one man to their doom?

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00:00:29,777 --> 00:00:33,780

How did Jim Jones control so many lives?

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00:00:33,780 --> 00:01:01,802

I want you to be like I am. I want you to become what I am. I want you to enjoy the fearlessness that I have, the courage that I have, the compassion that I have, the love that I have, the all-encompassing mercy that I am. I want you to be what I am and something greater. And if you don't want to go this route, then go to hell where you want to, but don't bother me.

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00:01:02,802 --> 00:01:19,815

The Reverend Jim Jones, born 1931, died November 18, 1978, with 913 of his followers in the jungle settlement of Jonestown, Guyana. How did it happen?

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00:01:20,816 --> 00:01:30,823

What was the basis of Jim Jones' frightening power over his followers? If his story is told again, will it serve as a lesson for now?

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00:01:31,824 --> 00:01:43,833

James Warren Jones came from a poor southern Indiana family. Jimmy was a serious-minded but rebellious boy who became captivated by fundamentalist Christianity.

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00:01:43,833 --> 00:01:57,844

In what was then a stronghold of the Ku Klux Klan, the young Jones preached racial integration and utopian socialism. To finance his first interracial church, he sold live monkeys door to door.

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00:01:57,844 --> 00:02:13,856

In 1965, Jones moved his congregation to Redwood Valley, California. Haunted by visions of nuclear apocalypse, he declared that here at last was a safe place to build his utopian community, the People's Temple.

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00:02:13,856 --> 00:02:33,871

The level of society, all socioeconomic income straight up, professional down to ordinary field worker, field labor, mill worker, really it's beautiful to see that all these divisions have been broken down, not only raised, but any differences of economic position, just a warm fellowship and acceptance of all people.

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00:02:33,871 --> 00:02:40,876

He started with about 141 people, and from that we've grown to a very thriving congregation of few thousand.

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00:02:41,877 --> 00:02:43,879

Chris, excited? I think you'd be tired.

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00:02:43,879 --> 00:02:44,880

Not around you.

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00:02:44,880 --> 00:02:51,885

Jones achieved extraordinary rapport with people, especially with the aged and with blacks.

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00:02:54,887 --> 00:02:59,891

To those who felt useless and unwanted, he offered respect and love.

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00:03:02,893 --> 00:03:08,898

Jim Jones was a fiery minister who ridiculed the Christian deity as an impotent sky god.

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00:03:10,899 --> 00:03:13,901

He was a god of high and sky and sea by and by.

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00:03:13,901 --> 00:03:18,905

And he received what you see and what you get, you don't get out of it.

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00:03:21,908 --> 00:03:24,910

Grace Stone was a top aide to Jim Jones.

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00:03:24,910 --> 00:03:34,917

Jim Jones wasn't a Christian. He was an atheist, and Jim used to have people bring the Bibles into the church, and he would throw them down.

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00:03:34,917 --> 00:03:40,922

He would stomp on them, he would spit on them, and he would talk about using the pages for toilet paper.

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00:03:40,922 --> 00:03:44,925

Debbie Layton was a member of the Temple Planning Commission.

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00:03:44,925 --> 00:03:49,929

Jim Jones was a brilliant man, clever, deceitful, and evil, but he was very, very clever.

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00:03:49,929 --> 00:03:59,936

And he read all the books on sociology and psychology and other cults and brainwashing, and he knew exactly what to say and what to do to impress and influence other people.

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00:04:04,940 --> 00:04:07,942

All right, all right.

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00:04:10,945 --> 00:04:14,948

Jones was a gifted showman, an expert practitioner of faith healing.

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00:04:14,948 --> 00:04:26,957

According to numerous reports, most of the healings were phony, but they appealed especially to fundamentalist worshipers who had a long tradition of theaptics and high emotion in their religion.

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00:04:27,957 --> 00:04:43,970

I think that Jones was able to attract a lot of people into the church because he got to these people at a point in their life where they were vulnerable, be it with they were in the middle of a divorce or they were depressed or they were lonely.

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00:04:43,970 --> 00:04:50,975

I was a very, very rebellious kid, and Jim used guilt to bring me into the church and keep me there.

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00:04:50,975 --> 00:04:59,982

He said people from affluent backgrounds that are spoiled cannot stay in a group like this, cannot stay in a structured life and give of themselves to other people.

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00:04:59,982 --> 00:05:04,985

And I was determined that I cared about other people, and I was going to stay in people's temple.

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00:05:08,989 --> 00:05:13,992

You had an instant family, you had instant friends, you never had to be alone.

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00:05:14,993 --> 00:05:21,998

If you had any problems, you always had someone to go to. You were just never alone. You always had support, and that's very powerful.

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00:05:25,001 --> 00:05:29,004

Charles Gary was people's temple attorney for two years.

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00:05:29,004 --> 00:05:35,008

Jim Jones had tremendous charisma. As a matter of fact, I don't think I've ever met anybody with more charisma.

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00:05:35,008 --> 00:05:41,013

He was very fascinating, very enthusiastic in what he had to say, very convincing.

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00:05:41,013 --> 00:05:56,024

It's only when you began to read between the lines as you knew him over a period of time that you began to get the feeling that he had a tremendous ego, and that ego was almost destructive.

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00:05:57,025 --> 00:06:01,028

As temple membership soared, Jones became increasingly political.

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00:06:02,029 --> 00:06:13,037

He mobilized thousands to help elect the late San Francisco mayor, George Moscone, who rewarded him with the prestigious directorship of the housing authority.

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00:06:14,038 --> 00:06:22,044

Jim Jones was highly respected in San Francisco. He supported Ronald Reagan as governor and Richard Nixon.

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00:06:22,044 --> 00:06:31,051

He was a tremendous champion of free speech, civil rights, civil liberties, anything that was progressive and good.

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00:06:36,054 --> 00:06:40,057

Along with Jones' increasing power came fear of media persecution.

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00:06:41,058 --> 00:06:48,063

On one occasion, he gave permission to film services in Los Angeles, but suddenly reneged on his promise.

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00:06:48,063 --> 00:06:56,070

I really don't feel comfortable with my worship being a photograph. I really don't. I must go against the entire council. I don't feel good about it.

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00:06:56,070 --> 00:07:04,076

They can photograph me all they choose because I do not care. I'm fearless, but I don't want the cameras focusing on others. I don't want them.

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00:07:04,076 --> 00:07:11,081

They ask me your questions and I'll tear you right straight from the shoulder for I stay. You want to get out there? I'll take you out.

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00:07:12,082 --> 00:07:26,092

What was passing between this man and his congregation? It was perhaps a form of romance, but as

time went on, Jones seemed to change. The dark side of his personality came to the fore.

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00:07:27,093 --> 00:07:46,107

Every single member of your family had to get on the floor and say something negative about you, and that was to break down any ties and unity within a family so that when you did come to the realization that something was wrong and you wanted to leave, you could not feel the bond to go to a family member and say, listen, something's wrong here. Let's get out.

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00:07:47,108 --> 00:07:51,111

Tommy Bogue was seven years old when his parents brought him to people's temple.

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00:07:51,111 --> 00:08:03,120

They had these little kids, maybe six, seven years old, going to this room and they make them grab all these electrode things and they start turning up the electricity on them and they put a microphone next to the door and you start hearing them screaming.

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00:08:03,120 --> 00:08:08,124

It sounds bloody chilling. It's the only way I can really put it.

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00:08:10,126 --> 00:08:16,130

After critical articles appeared in the San Francisco Examiner, Jones staged a demonstration.

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00:08:16,130 --> 00:08:26,138

All of these allegations are totally untrue. I'm principled and dedicated to my people and they are also committed to the Christian ethic, the Judeo-Christian ethic of service.

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00:08:26,138 --> 00:08:34,144

Certainly anyone who wants to investigate our organization will be more than open to it by any honestly inquiring group or otherwise.

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00:08:34,144 --> 00:08:41,149

So intimidating was Jones' demonstration that the newspaper canceled its series of articles on people's temple.

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00:08:41,149 --> 00:08:55,160

I think that Jones probably was an unhappy person. Deep down inside, he didn't believe in himself and so he was constantly having to attain more money to be more secure, more political friends.

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00:08:55,160 --> 00:09:01,164

Jones would freak out when anybody would speak against the church or him.

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00:09:01,164 --> 00:09:10,171

Jim hated men. He was very insecure and only women became the top aides to him.

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00:09:10,171 --> 00:09:18,177

According to Debbie Layton in the book In My Father's House, Jones appropriated her brother Larry's first wife, Carolyn.

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00:09:18,177 --> 00:09:23,181

When Larry remarried, Jones also seduced his second wife, Karen.

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00:09:23,181 --> 00:09:24,182

Because of this...

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00:09:24,182 --> 00:09:26,183

Ex-temple member Richard Clark.

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00:09:26,183 --> 00:09:36,191

I think that Jones was burning up with lust. Matter of fact, he finally told it one night. He finally said that he would like to have sex with everybody in the temple, you know.

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00:09:36,191 --> 00:09:47,199

Every single woman that was on the planning commission was approached by Jim Jones and forced into a sexual relationship and I consider it rape. I was raped by Jim Jones.

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00:09:47,199 --> 00:09:54,204

In late 1977, New West Magazine printed a blistering expose of people's temple.

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00:09:55,205 --> 00:10:01,210

Grace Stone sued for custody of her six-year-old son, who Jones claimed was his child.

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00:10:01,210 --> 00:10:12,218

Jones reacted to his difficulties by moving temple members 6,000 miles to Jonestown, a settlement he had started earlier in Guyana.

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00:10:12,218 --> 00:10:23,226

Here, Jones would have to answer to no man. Jonestown would be a world unto itself.

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00:10:23,226 --> 00:10:32,233

Flower, rice, black-eyed peas, more peas.

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00:10:32,233 --> 00:10:38,238

They have different containers around the place. Couldn't go through all the tremendous inventory. They built up Kool-Aid.

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00:10:38,238 --> 00:10:41,240

What a swing! What liberation brings!

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00:10:41,240 --> 00:10:48,245

The first time I went there in October of 1977, I came back and I said, I saw a paradise.

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00:10:48,245 --> 00:11:00,254

They had their own electricity. They had their own generators. They had the most perfect medical setup I have ever seen. Everything was immaculate. Everything was good and everything was decent.

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00:11:00,254 --> 00:11:08,260

When fascist terror brings concentration camps or brings massive food riots, you have a home.

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00:11:08,260 --> 00:11:17,267

You just can't imagine that all the hundreds of us here are so extremely happy. I wish I could describe the whole thing to you, but it's hard.

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00:11:17,267 --> 00:11:25,273

But I just must say this. I can't help but say that none of this would have been possible had it not been for Jim Jones.

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00:11:25,273 --> 00:11:34,280

I thank you, Jim. You have certainly made a way for us and everybody seemed to be so happy. I am pleased. Thank you, Jim.

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00:11:34,280 --> 00:11:40,284

I don't want to go back to the States because this place is better.

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00:11:40,284 --> 00:11:48,291

That was pretty much an ideal situation because you could see progress happening. You had a sense of you were creating a town.

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00:11:48,291 --> 00:11:55,296

But then when Jones came down there, that all changed. They started having the long meetings until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning.

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00:11:55,296 --> 00:12:05,303

You start having 12-hour work days and the discipline started getting into the extremes. And it just became the hellhole.

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00:12:05,303 --> 00:12:14,310

When I got to Jones, the first thing Jones asked me was, how did I want to die? And he asked me, did I want to die fighting?

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00:12:14,310 --> 00:12:22,316

Did I want to take the portion? Then I know what I was up against then. It was death that Jones had chosen for us.

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00:12:26,319 --> 00:12:38,328

As more people packed into Jonestown, food supplies ran low. Jones controlled millions in temple funds but refused to spend it on food or adequate housing.

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00:12:38,328 --> 00:12:46,334

Isolated in the jungle, news from outside came to him in radioed fragments. His fears and suspicions multiplied.

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00:12:46,334 --> 00:12:49,337

Quite likely I'll be there for both.

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00:12:50,337 --> 00:13:01,346

For 900 people, life became an answer to one man's whim. Jonestown was their entire reality. Jim Jones was their god.

89

00:13:02,347 --> 00:13:12,354

I woke up and I had a constriction, I guess, in my chest or in my stomach and I couldn't breathe.

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00:13:15,356 --> 00:13:26,365

I couldn't breathe at all. I didn't even call a father. I thought of him and it all worked quite well.

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00:13:27,365 --> 00:13:28,366

Thanks.

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00:13:31,369 --> 00:13:32,369

Thanks, father.

93

00:13:32,369 --> 00:13:33,370

Thank you, father.

94

00:13:34,371 --> 00:13:35,372

Thank you, father.

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00:13:36,372 --> 00:13:37,373

Thank you, father.

96

00:13:37,373 --> 00:13:47,381

Ron Jones was just like a force field of evil. It would even take your mind. Just like you can even thank me, is Ron Jones, because it's the force that he had built up.

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00:13:47,381 --> 00:13:56,387

The most frightening things about Jonestown were that there were armed guards surrounding the camp at all times and while you worked in the field, they watched you.

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00:13:56,387 --> 00:14:08,397

And you weren't allowed to speak to your neighbor and you had to work double time. And Jim Jones's voice went over the loudspeakers 24 hours a day while you ate, while you worked in the field and while you slept.

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00:14:08,397 --> 00:14:16,403

When Grace Stone carried her custody battle for her son, John John, into Guyanese courts, Jones was beside himself.

100

00:14:17,403 --> 00:14:28,412

He said, you would make a mistake to try to come in and take any one of us. We will not let you. You will die. You will have to take anybody over all of our dead bodies.

101

00:14:28,412 --> 00:14:53,431

Jim Jones was not sane. He had not been sane since I saw him in August of 1978. His paranoia was destructive. I warned him about his paranoia, but he treated that as though I was an enemy.

102

00:14:53,431 --> 00:15:04,439

I got a hell of a lot of weapons to fight. I got my tools. I got guns. I got dynamite. I got a hell of a lot to fight. I'll fight. I'll fight. I'll fight.

103

00:15:04,439 --> 00:15:25,455

By mid-November 1978, concerned relatives of Temple members persuaded Congressman Leo Ryan to visit Jonestown. Ryan brought reporters and a network news team. Nothing could have triggered more dread in Jim Jones.

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00:15:25,455 --> 00:15:48,472

At first, the visit was a success for Jones. Ryan and reporters saw only the superficial, positive side of Jonestown. The next morning, however, ten people, including Richard Clark, fled into the jungle. Several other families told the Ryan party they wanted to leave. Jones could not change their minds.

105

00:15:48,472 --> 00:16:03,484

Congressman Ryan came over to him and he said, Jim, don't be upset about this. He said if half of the people here were to leave, I would still say you have the most beautiful place. It's a dream.

106

00:16:03,484 --> 00:16:19,496

Jones would not be soothed. Is it conceivable that he was mentally unstable from an early age, a borderline psychotic who attempted to realize his paranoid delusions of grandeur? Now his dreams seem to crumble around him.

107

00:16:20,496 --> 00:16:43,514

People play games, friend. They lie. They lie. What can I do about lies? Are you people going, leave us? I just beg you, please leave us. Bill, we will bother nobody. Anybody wants to get out of here, can get out of here. We have no problem about getting out of here. They come and go all the time. I don't know what kind of game. People like publicity. Some people do. I don't.

108

00:16:44,515 --> 00:16:51,520

Emotions ran high as the defectors left with the Ryan party. Tommy Bogue was among them.

109

00:16:51,520 --> 00:16:59,526

So we're going down the road and then they stop to take some pictures, further along. When they stop, we tell them, don't stop. Keep going, because something's going to happen.

110

00:17:02,528 --> 00:17:15,538

So we come into the airport and that's where we all get off and we wait for the airplanes. And I load it onto the big airplane and I sit right across from the door in the back. That's when we saw the tractor and trailer coming around.

111

00:17:22,543 --> 00:17:41,558

When the shootings stopped, Congressman Ryan, three newsmen and young Patty Parks lay dead. Ten others, including Tommy Bogue, were wounded. Odell Rhodes is one of the few surviving eyewitnesses to what happened next in Jonestown.

112

00:17:41,558 --> 00:17:46,562

Jim Jones came over the speaker system itself and he called everyone to a general meeting.

113

00:17:55,568 --> 00:18:06,577

He told us that the guy in his army would parachute in on us and they would torture older people and babies and that, you know, when they come, you know, we should all be dead.

114

00:18:11,580 --> 00:18:20,587

And then the further trade, the more terrible the trade.

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00:18:23,590 --> 00:18:37,600

And I was just looking, I mean, here are people my age, older people, younger people, and they were, for the most part, they were voluntarily taking at the time. They were voluntarily drinking poison.

116

00:18:37,600 --> 00:18:53,612

This is a revolutionary suicide. This is not a self-destructive suicide. Please, for God's sake, let's get on with it. We've lived, we've lived as no other people have lived and loved. We've had as much of this world as you're going to get. Let's just be done with it. Let's be done with the agony of it.

117

00:18:53,612 --> 00:18:56,615

Eyewitness Stanley Clayton.

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00:19:23,635 --> 00:19:42,649

We do not want them to come in and shoot us down like dogs. You know, let's die with dignity and so forth. In fact, people listened to that, but then there were some that didn't listen. And those who did not listen to that were forcibly pulled up out of their seats. If they didn't go over there, they were injected right there.

119

00:19:54,658 --> 00:20:21,679

Odell Roads and Stanley Clayton escaped into the jungle. When Odell returned with Guyanese officials, they found Jim Jones shot in the head. Of 914 dead, only he and his nurse had not taken poison. Jim Jones and most of his followers are gone, but disturbing questions remain.

120

00:20:22,680 --> 00:20:31,686

Is our present society especially vulnerable to men like Jones? Are there other cults in America with tragic potential?

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00:20:32,687 --> 00:20:42,695

Reportedly, there are still people who venerate Jim Jones, who sleep with his picture and who feel he is the only person who ever loved them.

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00:20:42,695 --> 00:20:59,708

Organizations that offer solutions to all of life's problems can be seductive, but also perilous. Might the lesson of Jonestown help people avoid the danger?

123

00:21:00,708 --> 00:21:14,719

The church was bizarre at the end, but it didn't start out that way. What a person saw the church in the beginning and what they saw afterwards were two different things. People were tricked, and I believe that most people can be tricked.

124

00:21:14,719 --> 00:21:39,738

Coming up next in Search of continues with the profile of the world's most wanted man, the Playboy turned terrorist they call Carlos. Then 20th century with Mike Wallace reports on the history of kidnapping in America from the Lindbergh baby to the case of Polly Class.

125

00:21:39,738 --> 00:21:48,745

And later tonight, bounty hunters stalk their prey on history's mysteries at 8 here on the History Channel where the past comes alive.