

Jim Jones, Made in San Francisco and created by Democrat Big Wigs

Forty years after the Jonestown massacre, a new book chronicles the deep ties between the depraved cult leader and prominent Democratic politicians.

[Seth Barron](#)

Arts and Culture
Politics and law

[Cult City: Jim Jones, Harvey Milk, and 10 Days That Shook San Francisco](#), by Daniel J. Flynn (ISI Books, 330 pp., \$27.95)

Thanksgiving, 1978 was bookended by two of the most bizarre and notorious events in American history. On November 18 in Guyana, hundreds of members of Jim Jones's Peoples Temple committed mass suicide, or were murdered. Over the next few days, news trickled out from the jungle of 300, 400, 600, and finally more than 900 poisoned cultists, most of them from the San Francisco Bay Area, including many children; and of a congressman, Leo Ryan, ambushed and assassinated as he left with a dozen or so apostates whom he had rescued. Then, the

Monday after the Thanksgiving weekend, San Francisco mayor George Moscone and a city supervisor, Harvey Milk, the first openly gay non-incumbent politician elected to office in America, were shot and killed in City Hall by Dan White, a disgruntled city supervisor who had quit his job and then wanted it back.

The connection—sometimes tenuous, sometimes shocking—between these incidents has been brushed over by a society eager to sanctify its martyrs and forget its villains, but Daniel Flynn in *Cult City* brings to light a kind of secret history of California in the 1970s, showing how modern progressive politics intersected with cults of madness and despair. Jim Jones came from Depression-Era Indiana, and was drawn to charismatic Christianity and radical politics from an early age. He founded a church called People Temple, dedicated to racial harmony, the living Christ, and veneration of the Soviet Union, and presented a compelling enough message that he attracted thousands of followers over the years.

Having moved his flock to northern California in the 1960s, Jones began leveraging their labor toward political ends, volunteering them for protests or electioneering on behalf of friendly aspirants to public office. Gaining the respect of San Francisco's political class, Jones became a player in his own right. Many gave him credit for Moscone's tight victory in the 1975 mayoral runoff, and he was appointed head of the San Francisco Housing Authority. Praised as a hero of social justice and a crusader for racial equality, Jones became an important figure in Democratic politics.

Among his advocates was Harvey Milk, also a newcomer to San Francisco. Milk, formerly a Goldwater Republican, became

politically radical in California and repeatedly sought election to office as an outsider to the political machine. Milk attended services at Peoples Temple dozens of times, and wrote effusive letters to Jones. "Such greatness I have found in Jim Jones's Peoples Temple," Milk proclaimed.

Milk wasn't Jones's only fan. Many powerful people—Governor Jerry Brown, columnist Herb Caen, and Vice President Walter Mondale, to name a few—sought Jones's blessings and expressed admiration for his dedication to racial equality and a better world. Flynn does a good job of laying out the social and political landscape of the Bay Area in the late seventies and situating the bizarre respect that the Jones cult received within the general fruitiness of the era. Jim Jones's Bay Area was the same milieu that gave rise to the Zodiac killer, the lost-in-time Zebra murders, and the depredations of the Symbionese Liberation Army. In that context, a wacky preacher who healed the sick and ran drug-treatment centers while promising a racially unified heaven on earth seemed like a salutary influence by comparison.

While Harvey Milk was a strong advocate for Jim Jones, he was never a member of the cult as such, and Flynn may overstate the comparison between the two figures, though he draws no moral equivalence between them. It's true that Milk amplified Peoples Temple propaganda, and even wrote letters to President Jimmy Carter defending Jones after disturbing reports of abuse emerged from the Jonestown compound in Guyana. But Milk was essentially just an aggressive municipal official willing to play hardball; he was murdered by a political rival. Jim Jones, on the other hand, was a diabolical lunatic for the ages.

Flynn nonetheless makes a compelling argument about our faulty historical memory of these events. Dan White killed Harvey Milk and George Moscone because he felt stymied and betrayed by them politically, not because Milk was gay or Moscone was friendly to gays. There is no evidence that White was homophobic, but with the help of [two](#) Oscar-winning [films](#), Milk has been [elevated](#) to [sainthood](#), a [martyr](#) to gay liberation.

At the same time, Jim Jones's connection to mainstream Democratic politics has been suppressed. He and the Peoples Temple, which exalted racial diversity and social justice, have been cast as harrowing examples of Christian religious extremism, though Jones preached atheism and ordered his followers to use the Bible as toilet paper. A roster of leaders who remain dominant figures in California politics today embraced Jones publically. Jerry Brown, then and now governor of the state, approvingly visited the Peoples Temple, and Senator Dianne Feinstein, who ascended to the mayoralty upon Moscone's assassination, joined the Board of Supervisors in honoring Jones. Willie Brown, longtime speaker of the California state assembly, a mayor of San Francisco, and the mentor of Senator Kamala Harris, was especially lavish in his praise of Jones, calling him "a combination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Angela Davis, Albert Einstein, and Chairman Mao."

Flynn closes with another important observation: that the one hero of the Jonestown saga, Congressman Leo Ryan, has been relegated to oblivion. Ryan flew into the Guyanese wilderness to investigate Jonestown and rescue defectors. He wound up being only the second congressman assassinated in the line of duty, and his body was mutilated. Ryan has been memorialized by a park and federal building in his former congressional district

south of San Francisco, but Flynn observes that nothing in San Francisco or Oakland, where most of the Temple victims came from, commemorates his sacrifice. The history of Jonestown and the public officials complicit in Jones's rise and fall is apparently still too sensitive to be dealt with honestly. *Cult City* could change that.

[Seth Barron](#) is associate editor of City Journal and project director of the NYC Initiative at the Manhattan Institute.

[Forty years after the Jonestown massacre, a new book chronicles the deep ties between the depraved cult leader and prominent Democratic politicians. \(city-journal.org\)](#)

submitted 2.7 hours ago by [Arrvee](#)

- [5 comments](#)

want to join the discussion? [login](#) or [register](#) in seconds.

sort by:

[New](#) [Bottom](#) [Intensity](#) [Old](#)

Sort: [Top](#)

[\[-\] Lord Odious the Foul](#) 1 points (+1 | -0) 28 minutes ago

Jonestown was an experiment in pure Socialism, Jim Jones was rather adamant about that.

- [link](#)

[\[-\] 70times7](#) 1 points (+1 | -0) 1.6 hours ago

Just google it people. Demonrats or not it was a cia op.

Lsd dosing, mkultra kinda crap.

They even shot a us congressman who went to investigate. They they shot everyone else. (very few drank the koolaid). They were shot.

Cia spook op

- [link](#)

[\[-\] Lord Odious the Foul](#) 0 points (+0 | -0) 25 minutes ago

Ever listened to the tapes? They never leave your head.

“Mother mother mother mother *pleeeaaase*... have some *dignity*... if we can't live in peace we might as well die in peace...”

—Jim Jones scolding a woman for screaming as her child was injected with the toxin

- [link](#)

- [parent](#)

[–] [StarlettFox](#) 0 points (+0 | -0) 29 minutes ago (edited 10 minutes ago)

List.

- [CIA Mind Control Linked to Jonestown MassacreYouTube.](#)
- [Jonestown Was Mass Murder by the CIA Not Mass SuicideYouTube.](#)
- [Jonestown Was a CIA Mind Control ExperimentYouTube.](#)
- [The 1978 Mass Suicide at Jonestown Was in Reality a Massacre.](#)
- [Mass Suicide at Jonestown in Religious Frenzy a Fabricated Fish Tale.](#)

The headlines the day of the massacre read, "Cult Dies in South American Jungle - 400 Die in Mass Suicide, 700 Flee into Jungle." By all accounts there were at least 1,100 people at the People's Temple in Jonestown, 809 adult passports were found while there were reports of 300 children, 276 were found among the dead 210 were never identified.

The original body count done by the Guyanese was 408 a figure initially agreed to by US authorities, however, over the next few days the total of reported dead rose quickly accompanied by a series of misleading and openly false statements about the discrepancy. The new total, which was the official final count, was given almost a week later by American authorities as 913, 16 survivors were reported to have returned to the US .. where were the others?

The first reports said 400 had died and 700 had fled to the jungle, American authorities claimed to have searched for people who had escaped, but found no evidence of any in the surrounding area. At least a hundred Guyanese troops were among the first to arrive, and they were ordered to search the jungle for survivors.

Nearly 600 British commandos from the [Black Watch YouTube](#) as well as American Green Berets were in the area at the same time allegedly on "training exercises," the presence of these troops specially trained in covert killing operations may explain the increasing numbers of bodies.

Photographs show most of the bodies in neat rows face down, close shots indicate drag marks as though the bodies were positioned by someone after death, the 700 who fled were thought to have been rounded up by these troops brought back to Jonestown and added to the body count? [Black Hole of Guyana--The Untold Story of Jonestown.](#)

- [link](#)

[\[-\] hankylanky](#) 0 points (+1 |-1) 1.1 hours ago (edited 1.1 hours ago)

Don't be an idiot. It was a Democratic Congressman and his staff that they murdered on the tarmac. Current Democratic Congresswoman, Jackie Speier, was one of his aides and survived being shot five times that day. If the whole Jonestown thing happened today I have no doubt you fucking fools would be calling it a false flag within hours. And Ryan was there to investigate whether people were being held against their will.