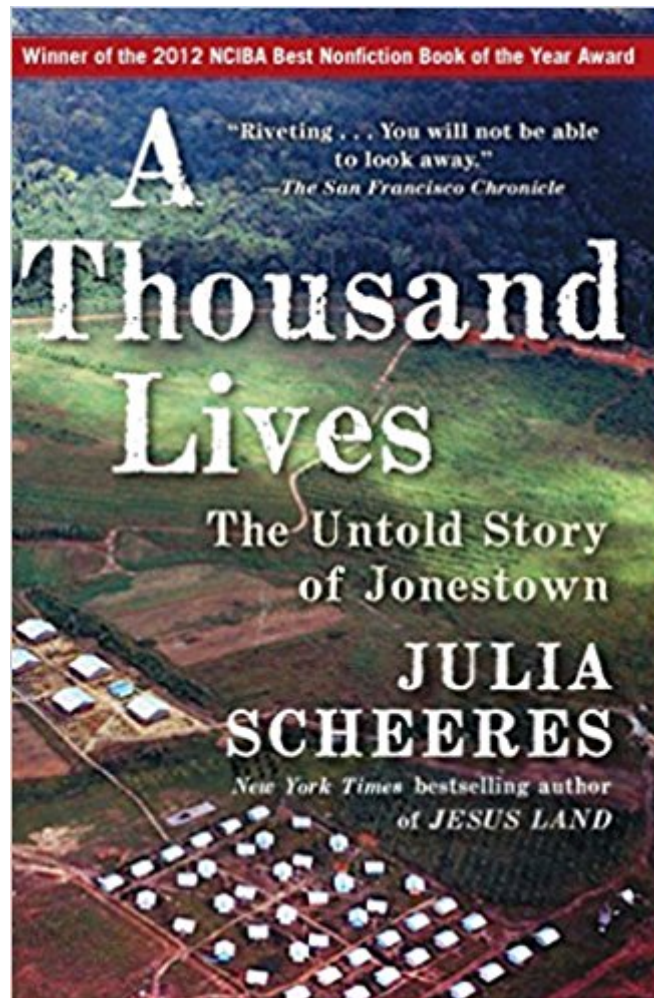




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# A Thousand Lives: The Untold Story Of Jonestown



## Synopsis

“A gripping account of how decent people can be taken in by a charismatic and crazed tyrant” (The New York Times Book Review). In 1954, a pastor named Jim Jones opened a church in Indianapolis called Peoples Temple Full Gospel Church. He was a charismatic preacher with idealistic beliefs, and he quickly filled his pews with an audience eager to hear his sermons on social justice. As Jones’s behavior became erratic and his message more ominous, his followers leaned on each other to recapture the sense of equality that had drawn them to his church. But even as the congregation thrived, Jones made it increasingly difficult for members to leave. By the time Jones moved his congregation to a remote jungle in Guyana and the U.S. government began to investigate allegations of abuse and false imprisonment in Jonestown, it was too late. *A Thousand Lives* is the story of Jonestown as it has never been told. New York Times bestselling author Julia Scheeres drew from tens of thousands of recently declassified FBI documents and audiotapes, as well as rare videos and interviews, to piece together an unprecedented and compelling history of the doomed camp, focusing on the people who lived there. The people who built Jonestown wanted to forge a better life for themselves and their children. In South America, however, they found themselves trapped in Jonestown and cut off from the outside world as their leader goaded them toward committing “revolutionary suicide” and deprived them of food, sleep, and hope. Vividly written and impossible to forget, *A Thousand Lives* is a story of blind loyalty and daring escapes, of corrupted ideals and senseless, haunting loss.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Riveting...You will not be able to look away. " --"The San Francisco Chronicle""Julia Scheeres's book sheds startling new light on this murky, mini-chapter of contemporary history....the narrative is [a] compelling...psychological mystery." --"The Wall Street Journal""Scheeres shows great compassion and journalistic skill in reconstructing Jonestown's last months and the lives of many Temple members (including a few survivors)...["A Thousand Lives" is a] well-written, disturbing tale of faith and evil." --"Kirkus""Jonestown has become a grim metaphor for blind obedience--for fanaticism without regard to consequences. In the aptly titled "A Thousand Lives", Julia Scheeres captures the humanity within this terrible story, vividly depicting individuals trapped in a vortex of hope and fear, faith and loss of faith, not to mention the changes sweeping America in the 1960s and '70s. She makes their journeys to that unfathomable tragedy all too real; what was truly incredible, she shows, was the escape from death by a tiny handful of survivors. Drawing on a mountain of sources compiled and recently released by the FBI, she changes forever the way we think about this dark chapter of our history."--T.J. Stiles, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning "The First Tycoon: The Epic Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt""Chilling and heart-wrenching, this is a brilliant testament to Jones's victims, so many of whom were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time." --"Publisher's Weekly", starred review"For those who can picture only the gory end of Jonestown, Julia Scheeres offers a heartbreaking and often inspiring glimpse of what might have been. Her masterfully told and exhaustively researched "A Thousand Lives" should stand not only as the definitive word on Jones' horrific machinations, but on the utopian dreams of a bygone generation. A worthy follow-up to her superb memoir, "Jesus Land"." --Tom Barbash, author of "On Top of the World: Cantor Fitzgerald, Howard Lutnick, and 9/11: A Story of Loss and Renewal""How do you tell a new story about Jim Jones and his followers, when everyone knows how it ends? ...Julia Scheeres' riveting "A Thousand Lives" gives us reason to look again. " --"Miami Herald""The first solid history of the Temple...less a warning about the dangers of religiosity than a clear headed chronology." --"San Francisco" magazine"Julia Scheeres' "A Thousand Lives"... tells the tragic tale of Jonestown -- in its way, a peculiarly American apocalypse." --"L.A. Times""The definitive book on Jonestown and the Danse Macabre of suicide and murder orchestrated by mad Jim Jones. Julia Scheeres takes us by the hand and leads us gently, inexorably, into the darkness." -Tim Cahill, author of "Lost in My Own Backyard"

Had I walked by 1859 Geary Boulevard in San Francisco when Peoples Temple was in full swing, I certainly would have been drawn to the doorway. I grew up in a strict Christian family with an adopted black brother; race and religion were the dominant themes of my childhood. In our small

Indiana town, David and I often felt self-conscious walking down the street together. Strangers scowled at us, and sometimes called us names. I wrote about the challenges of our relationship in my memoir, *Jesus Land*. Suffice it to say, David and I would have been thrilled and amazed by Peoples Temple, a church where blacks and whites worshipped side by side, the preacher taught social justice instead of damnation, and the gospel choir transported the congregation to a loftier realm. We longed for such a place. Unfortunately, the laudable aspects of Peoples Temple have been forgotten in the horrifying wake of Jonestown. I stumbled onto writing this book by accident. I was writing a satirical novel about a charismatic preacher who takes over a fictional Indiana town, when I remembered Jim Jones was from Indiana, and Googled him. I learned that the FBI had released fifty thousand pages of documents, including diaries, meeting notes, and crop reports, as well as one thousand audiotapes that agents found in Jonestown after the massacre, and that no one had used this material to write a comprehensive history of the doomed community. Once I started digging through the files, I couldn't tear myself away. It was easy to set my novel aside. I believe that true stories are more powerful, in a meaningful, existential way, than made-up ones. Learning about other peoples' lives somehow puts one's own life in sharper relief. Aside from race and religion, there were other elements of the Peoples Temple story that resonated with me. When David and I were teenagers, our parents sent us to a Christian reform school in the Dominican Republic that had some uncanny parallels with Jonestown. I could empathize with the residents' sense of isolation and desperation. You won't find the word cult in this book, unless I'm directly citing a source that uses the word. My aim here is to help readers understand the reasons that people were drawn to Jim Jones and his church, and how so many of them ended up dying in a mass-murder suicide on November 18, 1978. The word cult only discourages intellectual curiosity and empathy. As one survivor told me, nobody joins a cult. To date, the Jonestown canon has veered between sensational media accounts and narrow academic studies. In this book, I endeavor to tell the Jonestown story on a grander, more human, scale. ã ã Julia Scheeres ã ã Berkeley, California, March 24, 2011 --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Wow. Amazing story. It was scary how very easy it was to empathize with the decisions that the victims made throughout the story. Lots of details with good characterizations. I really enjoyed reading about the history of this event. Very highly recommend. The church in San Francisco has been converted into a post office, but there's a memorial at the cemetery. Book was in rough shape - even for the price. Shipping was about a week.

The author, Julia Scheeres, had already her own experiences with a similar camp in the Dominican Republic regarding religion which she wrote in her own memoir, "Jesus Land." In this book about Jonestown, the Peoples Temple, and Jim Jones, she writes for those of us who need to further understand the situation that occurred on November 18, 1978. In our world, Jonestown Massacre is rarely mentioned about or talked about and perhaps back in 1978 and 1979 where 24 cable news channels are non-existent that news of Jonestown spread sporadically in the newspapers and television accounts. Guyana at the time didn't have television sets or stations but relied on radios. For those of us who have spent years trying to figure out what happened. This author provides fresh insight from some of the survivors like Tommy Bogue and his family who joined but defected on that catastrophic day leaving behind his sister, Marilee Bogue, who would die among the others. Marilee was a true believer and wouldn't leave by her own free will even if given the opportunity. Then the author goes further into detailing about Edith Roller, a loner by choice, educated, cultured, teacher, and who kept a daily diary of the events regarding Jonestown including her own fears and worries. The author really goes into detail about some of the people who were involved in this tragedy. The author also writes about the only survivor who slept through it all, Hyacinth Thrash, an elderly African American woman with a permanent limp. She had awoken the next day to the horrors of the Jonestown Massacre. She hadn't attended the final white night because she was too tired and frail to go but her sister, Zipporah Edwards, had gone to the event and never returned. The author goes into details about what life was like in Jonestown including the horrors. She doesn't go into complete details about what else was going on there but she gives a good example of the dire situation. I think if anybody wants to read about Jonestown without being overwhelmed by details and information. This book would provide a great overview and enlightenment about the people who lived and died. To this day, most people don't refer to Jonestown or are even aware of what happened except to news reports and newspapers. Jim Jones Jr. made an appearance on the Oprah Winfrey Show but he shared the hour with John Wayne Gacy's poor sister about relatives who did horrible things to others. Well, maybe if you keep an open mind about the situation in Jonestown. The Peoples Temple didn't happen overnight. Many of that generation wanted change in their society. The Peoples Temple offered an immediate family and friends along with health care services for its members. Drug addicts would be rehabilitated long before clinics and centers were there to help them. Lonely senior citizens would have companionship and friendship with others. The Peoples Temple attracted people from all walks of life to its organization in making the world a better place. In the end on November 18, 1978 which reads like a horror book, the Peoples Temple's light was extinguished by a madman for the final

time in order. I hope readers will be fascinated by this book and I encourage those out there interested in buying this book. For those of us, I'm still learning from the events on November 18, 1978. I would suggest that the author have provided maps to further familiarize the areas in South America and North America and a list of those who perished that day. The author couldn't write everything down but she did provide a sensitive overview of Jonestown which should be greatly admired. I also suggest photographs of some of the people involved as well to further relate readers to the event. It's time that everybody looked at Jonestown and the events of November 18, 1978 with new light and education over ignorance and ridicule.

This was one of those books I couldn't put down. As a teenager when this happened, I remembered the horror of this story. I wondered what else could have been written. Well - this author does it. She must have spent hours and hours researching newly declassified material to write the story utilizing actual persons involved which creates a novel-like experience. I felt as though I came to know many of the people written about. I came to know more about the horrors of Jonestown which started long before that fateful November day with the kool aid. I am glad I read this book. \*\*If you found this review helpful, do vote by replying Yes to 'Was this review helpful' \*\*

This is one of the many books I have read that you cannot put down. This is by far, one of the best reads that everyone should have the ability to read and understand and also learn from. Julia Scheeres work in this book provides an awesome lesson about a movement that had good intentions, but failed because of corruption, lies, and the absolute distortion of reality that Jim Jones and his Inner Circle have placed on the members of The People's Temple. What is amazing to me is that this story of Jonestown is eerily similar to what's going on socially in the United States of America today but on a larger scale. I highly recommend everyone to read this book and share it with your family and friends.

By page 90 I was sick of reading this book.... each page more depressing than the prior one... full of children being beaten, adults being punished by being overworked and separated from their own families, everyone tricked into becoming kidnapping victims living in a mosquito-infested jungle... ugh!. Why these adults put up with this as the church changed from doing good to pure evil is not explained sufficiently to offset the pain of reading the horrible stories of the people... basically tortured slaves to the sicko Jones.

This book goes down easy...even though the subject matter is horrific. From this telling I learned that Jim Jones had long planned the tragic end (I had previously thought it was a last-minute decision). There are two kinds of people--those who build others up and those who destroy others. Jones started as one and ended as the other. Why and when this happened is not fully clear here--and is perhaps something we will never know. It is like a spouse who kills his or her mate rather than choose divorce. Crazy and narcissistic.

Well written and accessible. It reads quite like a novel as opposed to a historical or non-fiction piece. A GREAT unfolding of Jim Jones from his humble beginnings to his madness. Sad, scary, disturbing.. how DOES one man get a whole community to drink the Kool-Aid? Quite an easy read, and will definitely bring some more insight into the Jonestown story most of us are familiar with. This is more than just the facts of the mass-suicide. In fact, that is only a small portion of the book. This isn't even just about Jones as a person; this is about all the people he deceived and subsequently murdered.

Exceptional read. Very good historical account of what happened, the different perspectives as to why it happened and why many people followed Jim Jones to Jonestown. It gives a sincere look as to what 'forces' people to do what they do instead of writing them all off as lunatics. A thoughtful, gripping narrative.

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