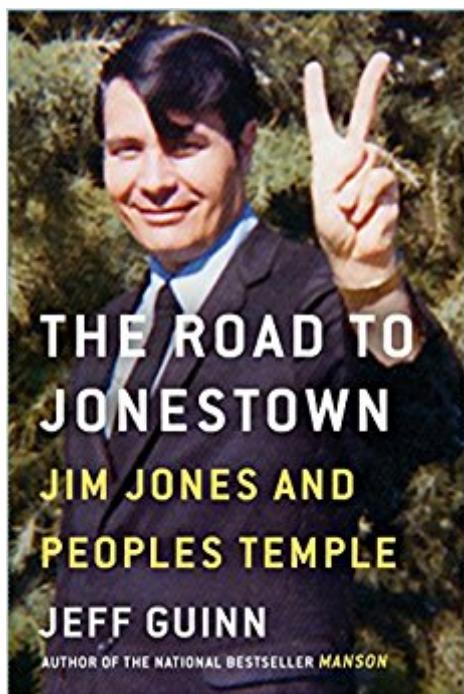


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The Road To Jonestown: Jim Jones And Peoples Temple



Synopsis

By the New York Times bestselling author of *Manson*, the comprehensive, authoritative, and tragic story of preacher Jim Jones, who was responsible for the Jonestown Massacre—the largest murder-suicide in American history. In the 1950s, a young Indianapolis minister named Jim Jones preached a curious blend of the gospel and Marxism. His congregation was racially integrated, and he was a much-lauded leader in the contemporary civil rights movement. Eventually, Jones moved his church, Peoples Temple, to northern California. He became involved in electoral politics, and soon was a prominent Bay Area leader. In this riveting narrative, Jeff Guinn examines Jones's life, from his extramarital affairs, drug use, and fraudulent faith healing to the fraught decision to move almost a thousand of his followers to a settlement in the jungles of Guyana in South America. Guinn provides stunning new details of the events leading to the fatal day in November, 1978 when more than nine hundred people died—including almost three hundred infants and children—after being ordered to swallow a cyanide-laced drink. Guinn examined thousands of pages of FBI files on the case, including material released during the course of his research. He traveled to Jones's Indiana hometown, where he spoke to people never previously interviewed, and uncovered fresh information from Jonestown survivors. He even visited the Jonestown site with the same pilot who flew there the day that Congressman Leo Ryan was murdered on Jones's orders. *The Road to Jonestown* is the definitive book about Jim Jones and the events that led to the tragedy at Jonestown.

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Customer Reviews

An Best Book of April 2017: It's interesting that the dust jacket for *The Road to Jonestown*, Jeff Guinn's biography Jim Jones, features a photograph of the infamous preacher without his signature, nearly ubiquitous sunglasses. Despite the scale of the Jonestown tragedy — where more than 900 people died, willingly or not, on November 18, 1978 — the man behind the shades and his motivations have remained mysterious, in part because the event is simply hard to look at and difficult to comprehend. Longtime journalist Jeff Guinn, however, doesn't mind an occasional walk on the wild side. In the same way that his 2013 biography of Charles Manson dug deep to uncover the pivotal moments of the psychopath's past (it features a boyish, smiling proto-cult-mastermind on its own jacket), Guinn unmasks Jones through interviews with the people who themselves knew him, from townspeople to his parishioners to his the reverend's own family. The result is a dense read and full of detail, but none superfluous. Images of a 12-year-old walking Indiana backroads - black suit-clad and a bible in hand — and conducting imaginary funeral services alone, in the woods, are weird and indelible. As we witness Jones's ascent - driven by a blend of well-honed charisma and inclusive, Marxist ideals - then his fall into megalomania and madness, it all makes a little more sense — at least as much as monstrosity at such scale can. The jungles of Guyana may have reclaimed the site of one of the 20th century's most notorious crime scenes, but *The Road to Jonestown* answers many of the questions that have persisted for almost 40 years, foremost: How did this happen? But another one remains: After Manson and Jones, where does Guinn go from here? --Jon Foro, *The Book Review*

"I have to say that it is weird to find out the background of things that I grew up hearing about around the dinner table. The level of research and detail in *The Road to Jonestown* is the best ever, and really lets readers understand not only what happened, but how and why. This book tells the Jim Jones story better than anything I have read to date." (Jim Jones, Jr.) "Jeff Guinn offers what might be the most complete picture to date of this tragic saga, and of the man who engineered it. . . . The result is a disturbing portrait of evil — and a compassionate memorial to those taken in by Jones's malign charisma." (Kevin Canfield, *The San Francisco Chronicle*) "A thoroughly readable, thoroughly chilling account of a brilliant con man and his all-too vulnerable prey. . . . Generates a bizarre — dare I say Manson-like? — magnetic force that pulls the reader through its many pages. Noir thriller morphs into horror story." (Dan Cryer, *The Boston Globe*) "Magisterial. . . . Guinn's exhaustive research, shrewd analysis, and engaging prose illuminate a monstrous yet tragic figure--and the motives of those who

lost their souls to him." (Publishers Weekly) "Guinn is a master storyteller with a unique expertise in murderous psychotics. The book reads like a thriller, each page forcing your attention to the next as the Peoples Temple slowly slides from groundbreaking progressivism toward madness." (Kevin J. Hamilton Seattle Times) "A vivid, fascinating revisit of a time and series of episodes fast receding into history even as their forgotten survivors still walk among us." (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) "Guinn paints a fascinating and even-handed portrait of Jones." (Jill Johnson Fort Worth Star-Telegram) "A powerful account of Jones's life. . . . Guinn's blow-by-blow account of Jonestown's final days in the book's last chapters is riveting." (BookPage)

I was 16 when it happened, and remember reading a book about the tragedy several years later. That decades-old book didn't compare to the detail, depth, and insight of *The Road to Jonestown*. I won't go into the details of the story, as there are other synopses here. The lesson then, and it certainly applies today: when you listen only to one point of view, and surround yourself only with people who agree with you, you lose the ability to think for yourself. And the echo chamber becomes a trap. Whether it's religion, or politics, it's never a good idea.

OMG this was a page turner! If you are into true drama/true crime/true adventure, this is a fascinating, extremely thorough account of the man Jim Jones and the cult that he built and destroyed. There is so much going on here beyond the standard cult headlines: successful socialism, mass manipulation, human ego and frailty... this is a deep and wide story that will disturb you for weeks.

I received an e-ARC of this book through NetGalley and Simon & Schuster True Crime. Thank you. This is a story which will disturb you during the time you are reading it and after you put the book down. I wanted to see how Jim Jones was able to convince so many people that he was one person when he so obviously was another. One of the things which came as such a surprise to me was how his ministry began around such a good thing: equality and dignity for everyone. And Jones absolutely believed in helping people attain those things. What also surprised me was how willing some of his followers were to allow him to use whatever means he wanted in order to forge his ministry into his ultimate goal. I think about the only thing Jones never actually did was commit murder, but he sure made people who tried to leave his mission think that he wouldn't hesitate to do that too. Living the perfect socialist lifestyle (later with definite leanings toward communism) is how

this incredibly charismatic man took his small town Christian revival teaching to the front pages of the world's newspapers. Of course, by then it was too late for those who had shown their ultimate love and loyalty to him by dying for him. Even then Jim Jones didn't follow his own teachings because he took a bullet in the head instead of the agonizing death by cyanide poisoning which his followers endured. Some might have needed persuading by the armed guards before they gave the infants and children the poison squirted from syringes while adults drank it from cups, but most were willing participants. Some members simply told the guards they wanted to leave and they were allowed to go. Down to the bitter end this was a contradiction of good intentions versus evil manipulation. Author Jeff Guinn has written an absolutely fascinating revelation of exactly how Jim Jones became the leader he was so we can understand the power and control Jones had over almost everyone he came into contact with. Even people who were never members of his Peoples Temple were willing to do his bidding after spending even a small amount of time in his presence. How do you fool so many people? The answer is, you have charm, you tell them what they want or need to hear, and you have people backing you up to help you run the con game. Good people joined Peoples Temple because Jones promised them racial equality and dignity or because they saw through his religious facade to his socialist intentions and agreed that was the way the world would work best. Not everyone remained with Peoples Temple, some left. Some even left many times and returned. I was absolutely fascinated to learn at what point the Peoples Temple followers knew about the mass suicide plan. What an incredible hold he had over them. I read this book on an e-reader. The final 15-16% of the book is taken up with the Footnote information. There was an impressive amount of research which went into the making of this book.

I've read Guinn's last two books and really enjoyed them. In my mind, he's now 3/3. In this perfectly named and thoroughly researched book, he takes the reader on a journey that leads to the tragedy in Jonestown. The balanced tone is remarkable given the unbalanced character who is at the center of the story. Guinn is an author who clearly respects the facts (it's sad that in today's climate, that too is remarkable). Can't wait for his next effort.

I was a young girl when the tragedy unfolded in Jonestown. I remember the shock and horror of my parents, and the total disbelief that 900 people died, over 300 children, because of a cult. As the years have passed, I've read a lot about Jones, the church, and the tragedy itself. I thought I knew quite a bit about it until I heard Mr. Guinn on NPR and I had to know more. I read the book in a day, I couldn't put it down. His writing style is mesmerizing, I felt drawn into that world. I'm left with a

solitary question, was Jim Jones always bad or did his success, ego and excesses turn him into the person he became?

I love reading about his past and how he got to where he did in his mind. Very interesting past information about that era as well. This author did thorough research and there are a lot of great details

I remember when the Jonestown tragedy occurred and was very interested to read all the background information as well as the details of the final days. Mr. Guinn did an excellent job of recounting the rise and fall of Jim Jones.

Couldn't read enough about the tragedy when it happened, but this book finally tied everything together. Can't believe the smart people who were willing to give up their free will, \$ & lives for that lunatic! Loved the background info on "him" and the first hand reports of the survivors. So glad I got the book.

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