

Feb 6, 1995, 2:10:32 AM



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* The following is an article reprinted with permission from a special edition of "FREEDOM" magazine, published by the Church of Scientology since 1968. "FREEDOM" is a magazine of investigative reporting in the public interest. The subject of this special edition is "CULT AWARENESS NETWORK"

Jonestown: The Big Lie

Mass murder at Jonestown was foisted off
as "mass suicide" -- who benefited, and how.

In 1978, before the messy deaths of more than 900 people in Jonestown, Guyana, the Citizens Freedom Foundation (CFF), parent of the Cult Awareness Network (CAN), was bouncing off the ropes. Not only did it lack funding, but it was coming under investigation and increasing attacks due to growing recognition of the criminal nature of its central activity: deprogramming.

For deprogrammer Ted Patrick, a founder of CFF in 1974, it was becoming more and more difficult to operate and stay out of jail. And within the organization, divisiveness and discord ruled. CFF's days were numbered.

In the months prior to Jonestown, however, CFF's "guiding lights" -- psychiatrist Louis Jolyon West and psychologist Margaret Singer, both with acknowledged CIA connections -- were working out a new strategy. It would promote the false notion that "cult brainwashing" was more absolute, dangerous and insidious than any other form of "brainwashing."

Jonestown was the proverbial blessing in disguise for CFF.

With complete disregard for what actually occurred, West, Singer and CFF-connected minions sprang into action to "interpret" the event: Jones had "brainwashed" everyone at Jonestown who then willingly engaged in "ritual suicide."

They have continued to push this propaganda line to this day, despite no evidence to support it and voluminous evidence to the contrary.

And in an ironic and gigantic switch that is a story in its own right, a former president of CAN raised "Jonestown mass suicide" as a battle cry against religions for more than a decade. The little-known fact is that this same woman -- the daughter of U.S. Congressman Leo J. Ryan, who was slain on his fact-finding mission to Jonestown -- had sued the government shortly after her father's death, charging that Jonestown was a CIA operation. Her lawsuit charged that it was the {CIA} that practiced mind control at Jonestown, not Jim Jones. But that was before her about-face occurred.

A Daughter Turns

The Congressman's daughter -- Patricia Ryan -- has forcefully and vocally exploited her father's death at Jonestown. It has become the national media platform from which she and the Cult Awareness Network have denounced a broad range of religious movements.

Patricia Ryan became president of Cult Awareness Network in 1990, serving in that capacity to 1993. She remains on its board of directors to this day.

Ryan and the Cult Awareness Network do {not} talk about the time when she and her two brothers and two sisters -- after a full year investigating who should be held responsible -- sued the Central Intelligence Agency over their father's death by still-unidentified gunmen. The Ryans alleged that the CIA had conducted mind control experiments on the members of the religious colony at Jonestown and that the U.S. government was responsible for their father's death.

Today, in concert with CAN and Cynthia Kissel, Patricia Ryan has invoked the memory of her father's death while campaigning against the spirit of his causes. During the 1993 siege near Waco, Texas, Patricia Ryan was quoted by the {Houston Chronicle} as urging the use of "whatever means

necessary ... including lethal force" against the Branch Davidians.

If Patricia Ryan once believed that intelligence officials were behind the Jonestown tragedy, what caused her about-face? And why is she not talking about it? At one point she was convinced, and then she changed her mind -- or it was changed for her.

Her reversal puts her completely at odds with her father's position. A FREEDOM source close to Rep. Ryan reported that he was threatened whenever he attempted to investigate CIA involvement in Jonestown. Did Patricia Ryan receive similar threats?

If the Ryans could prove that the CIA conducted mind control experiments at Jonestown and covered it up with an elaborate "cult suicide" deception, the CIA would indeed have been in hot water -- so hot the agency presumably would have done almost anything to cover up its involvement.

The Ryans' claim against the government, filed in the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of California on July 31, 1980, asked \$1,481 for Rep. Ryan's funeral expenses, general damages of \$3 million, plus costs.

The lawsuit charged, "Prior to his November [1978] fact-finding mission to Guyana, decedent had many times unsuccessfully attempted to learn from the United States Department of State of the true circumstances and events occurring at the Jonestown colony in Guyana.

"The United States Department of State knew prior to November 14, 1978, of vital information concerning said Jonestown colony and withheld this information from decedent despite his many requests for such information.

"Said information included knowledge by the Department of State of ... the existence of a large supply of mind control narcotics at the Jonestown colony which were being used in mind control experiments, initiated by the United States Central Intelligence Agency upon citizens of the Jonestown colony."

Also charged in the lawsuit: "The Jonestown colony was infiltrated with agent(s) of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States. ... [S]aid agents were working with the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency to use the Jonestown colony as a mass mind control experiment as part of the Central Intelligence Agency's MK ULTRA program."

The lawsuit identified by name two Americans in Guyana as CIA agents -- Philip Blakey, an aide to Jones, and Richard Dwyer, deputy chief of the U.S. embassy in Guyana -- and noted that massive quantities of mind control drugs were found at Jonestown after the mass killings, a fact also reported by news media.

Blakey had traveled to Guyana earlier in the 1970s to select the site for Jonestown and to begin clearing land for the settlement. Blakey was one of the few survivors of Jonestown. Dwyer, who was at the airstrip when Rep. Ryan was killed and who evidently returned to Jonestown after the airstrip murders, also survived.

Despite compelling reasons to continue, the Ryans' lawsuit against the CIA was dismissed by the court for reasons that were never fully revealed, and the killers of Leo Ryan were never brought to justice. And Patricia Ryan is still not talking about whatever it was she discovered about her father's death.

Investigation of

Mind Control Experiments

Rep. Ryan was co-author of the Hughes-Ryan Amendment, a 1974 law which sharply curtailed CIA covert activities internationally. A former aide to Rep. Ryan told FREEDOM that the measure was, not surprisingly, enormously unpopular with the CIA.

A relentless investigator and adversary of intelligence agency-sponsored "mind control" activities, Rep. Ryan carried on persistent correspondence with the CIA regarding

its MK ULTRA experiments -- various "mind control" tests done with drugs and other means to alter human behavior. He fought to find out if such experiments on unwitting or unwilling human victims were still occurring after the agency assured Congress they had stopped in 1963.

In one such letter, dated September 27, 1978, Rep. Ryan asked the agency to confirm or deny that it had experimented on prisoners at the California medical facility at Vacaville. His letter referred to Donald DeFreeze, known as "Cinque," a Vacaville inmate later to become notorious in the Symbionese Liberation Army's abduction of Patricia Hearst.

About a week later, on October 5, Jack Anderson's column headlined the story, possibly leaked from Rep. Ryan's congressional committee, "CIA May Have Inspired Cinque." The article described CIA tests at Vacaville in which DeFreeze claimed he was given mind-control drugs and ordered to kidnap someone from a rich and powerful family.

In any event, Ryan's committee was not regarded favorably by the agency. A source once close to Rep. Ryan told FREEDOM the CIA wanted to get rid of the congressman. He believes that the agency deliberately lured Rep. Ryan into a trap at Jonestown. "He was a real pain" to the agency, the source said, because of his forceful and effective insistence that the agency be accountable for its actions.

On the fact-finding trip to Jonestown on which Ryan was murdered, did he note the massive quantities of psychotropic drugs in Jonestown's medical clinic? These reportedly included more than 10,000 injectable doses of the powerful psychiatric drug Thorazine. What would his report about the settlement have stated? We will never know.

New Life for Deprogrammers

After Jonestown, there was no more Leo J. Ryan to oversee CIA covert actions. And to return to the activities of the CFF, "Cult" became a household word synonymous with

evil. New life was breathed into the Citizens Freedom Foundation and the world of deprogramming, allowing wholesale criminal acts and violations of constitutional rights by the likes of Ted Patrick, Galen Kelly, Joe Szimhart, Rick Ross, Steven Hassan and others.

In a press conference in Miami on November 21, 1978, just three days after the killings, Ted Patrick exploited the massacre to incite fear and drum up business, claiming that "cult followers" in the United States numbered more than 50 million -- nearly a quarter of the country's population.

As the violent deprogramming floodgates flew open, money poured into the coffers of deprogrammers and CFF. Patrick and his cohorts were in their heyday.

It didn't last. By 1985, law enforcement officials and others were beginning to take a new interest in the criminal nature of deprogramming. CFF rapidly changed its name to Cult Awareness Network ("CAN") that year to distance itself from its violent past and to further brand the American consciousness with the word "cult."

In the years following Jonestown, CFF and later CAN, particularly under Cynthia Kissner, in pursuit of their own profits further forwarded the "brainwashing" falsehood promulgated by Louis West and Margaret Singer.

The Cult Awareness Network even paraded witnesses to make their point -- false witnesses as it turned out.

Garry Lynn Scarff stated under oath that he had been used for years by the Cult Awareness Network to lie about Jonestown and the People's Temple. Although he had never been a member of the People's Temple, he wove an elaborate tapestry of falsehoods about his alleged involvement for audiences at CAN conventions -- and for the news media.

In his words, "Eventually, my embellished story grew to the extent that I had fathered a son in San Francisco by my girlfriend who was a member of the People's Temple and that my girlfriend had taken my son to the People's Temple in Guyana; that my father was a member of, and lived at, the People's Temple in Guyana; that Jim Jones had forced me to

orally copulate his penis in front of the People's Temple congregation in San Francisco; that I had appeared in a pornographic movie; that Jim Jones and I attended Fidel Castro's birthday party in Cuba; that my `son,' my son's mother and my father were subsequently murdered during the Jonestown massacre; and many other blatant lies."

According to Scarff, CAN members and deprogrammers, including Adrian and Anne Greek, Bob Brandyberry and Kent Burtner, "praised me for my performance, even though they knew that my stories were totally false and had actually been concocted with their advice and encouragement. ... The Greeks, Brandyberry, Burtner and I had a good laugh about how the story caused so many persons in the audience to cry."

Murders, Not Suicides

So, behind all this smokescreen, what is the truth about Jonestown?

The Guyanese government's top pathologist, who was also the first doctor to Jonestown after the tragedy, concluded that the overwhelming majority of the deaths were murders, not suicides. Dr. C. Leslie Mootoo, then chief medical examiner of Guyana, examined the bodies of many victims and determined that some of them had died from cyanide {injections} in portions of their bodies they could not have reached themselves.

In an interview with FREEDOM, Dr. Mootoo said he determined that at least 187 had died from injections. There may have been and probably were more deaths by injection. In his words, after 32 nonstop hours of work under arduous conditions, "we gave up." Forensic assistance reportedly promised from the United States never arrived. Those individuals may have been injected against their will, he said, and added, "Those who were injecting them knew what they were doing."

Despite such evidence, and despite the finding of a Guyanese jury that virtually all of the people at Jonestown

had been murdered, the Cult Awareness Network continues to spread false tales of "mass suicide" at Jonestown.

One survivor of Jonestown, who spent the night of the mass murder hiding some five miles away at the airstrip where Rep. Ryan was slain, said that there was so much gunfire coming from the Jonestown settlement that it sounded like a war was going on. So much for CAN's "mass suicide" story.

San Francisco attorney Robert Brocklemen, representing two families of Jonestown survivors, stated that his clients had heard gunfire "all night and for several days" after the massacre. Brocklemen said that a coroner on the scene had confirmed dozens upon dozens of the bodies had gunshot wounds.

Skip Roberts, Guyana's assistant commissioner of crime, alluded to reports of gunfire when he told author Alan W. McCoy that he had been "very nervous that when the bodies were sent back to the U.S. it might turn out that five hundred people were shot"

* Alan W. McCoy, {The Guyana Murders}, (San Francisco: Highland House, 1988), page 20.

Roberts also told McCoy that his men had been reluctant to examine the cause of suspicious bloodstains due to the "very offensive" condition of the bodies, which had putrefied for days in the steaming jungle.

Five-Day Search

Finds No More Bodies

According to documents released under the Freedom of Information Act, an extensive five-day search of the surrounding jungle had found no more People's Temple members, dead or alive.

But suddenly, on the morning of November 24, 500 more bodies turned up. The After-Action Report by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who ran the Jonestown cleanup, clumsily explained that the count changed "because of the bodies being stacked and widely dispersed."

This begs many questions. Why were the bodies "widely dispersed" if, as CAN promotes, they all voluntarily committed suicide?

How did the bodies get stacked, and who stacked them?

The newspaper reports upon which CAN relies for its propaganda are even more absurd than the After-Action Report. Pronouncements from Army public relations officers claimed the reason the bodies were missed in the original count was that they had been stacked three and four deep. The government PRs, contradicting their own Joint Chiefs of Staff, did not say that the bodies were dispersed, but rather that they were {underneath} the originally counted bodies.

Dr. Mootoo, the first pathologist to arrive on the scene after the tragedy and the only person to do on-site autopsies, told FREEDOM no bodies were stacked.

The U.S. Army's theory that 509 bodies could have been hidden under 405 other bodies was never explained or substantiated. An examination of photos of the bodies taken shortly after the tragedy showed no stacking, although some bodies had apparently been dragged into neat rows by the killers.

It was never explained how people in the throes of cyanide poisoning or shot by bullets could have neatly arranged themselves. Nor, for that matter, was it explained how the victims could have so widely dispersed themselves, when one of the effects of cyanide poisoning is loss of muscular coordination.

CAN has refused to examine the myriad contradictions raised about Jonestown and has strenuously worked to cloud the issues whenever they are raised by others. Why is CAN hanging on to the "mass suicide" theory? What do they stand to lose if they give it up?

CAN would fall like a house of cards, because its own invented reason for existing would vanish.

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Forgotten History

While the word "cult" has today come to be synonymous with Jonestown -- due to calculated redefinition of the word by Cult Awareness Network propagandists -- the Peoples' Temple was, until Jonestown, viewed as part of mainstream Protestantism.

It was founded in Indianapolis, Indiana, by Jim Jones, an ordained minister of the Disciples of Christ, and moved to Ukiah, California, in 1967, then to San Francisco and, in 1977, to Guyana.

Religious scholar J. Gordon Melton noted, "Jim Jones' Peoples' Temple, labeled a 'cult' after the deaths in Jonestown, was in fact a congregation within mainline Christianity. It was a full member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) which in turn is a member of the National Council of Churches.

"Liberal Protestants heralded it for its social action program, and during the mid-1970s, several denominations such as the United Methodist Church devoted an entire adult church school lesson to extolling its virtues."

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