

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: History Retold
Subject: *The People's Temple*
Discipline: Theatre

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Actors in *The People's Temple* production at Berkeley Repertory Theatre work on the play in its early stages.
Still image from SPARK story, 2005.

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME

History Retold

SUBJECT

People's Temple Project

GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-Secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Theatre, Language Arts

OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to Berkeley Repertory Theatre's world premiere of *The People's Temple*, a theatrical production about the Peoples Temple movement led by the Reverend Jim Jones.

STORY SYNOPSIS

On November 18, 1978, 913 members of Peoples Temple religious community, together with their leader Reverend Jim Jones, died in Jonestown, Guyana, South America. That same day, Bay Area Congressman Leo J. Ryan and three journalists were also killed as they were leaving Jonestown. SPARK follows the project from its original conception by David Dower, artistic director of Z Space Studio, to opening night of *The People's Temple* play written and directed by Leigh Fondakowski at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

- To inspire students to consider how performing arts can articulate different voices and perspectives
- To illustrate how theatre can help students to explore important social and historical issues
- To engage with the process of translating personal narrative into theatrical performance
- To introduce students to the collaborative creative process of ensemble theatre
- To facilitate consideration of religious and/or intentional communities and groups

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- Group oral discussion, review and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing
- Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance
- Hands-on individual projects in which students work independently
- Hands-on group projects in which students assist and support one another

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- SPARK story about *The People's Temple* Project on DVD or VHS, and related equipment
- Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sounds card, printer

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
- Pencils, pens, and paper
- Berkeley Repertory Theatre season information at <http://www.berkeleyrep.org> including information on post-show discussions at the theatre, docent presentations and *The People's Temple Dialogues*, a series of public discussions.
- Berkeley Repertory Theatre's program for *The People's Temple*
- Berkeley Repertory Theatre *The People's Temple* Study Guide that accompanies the production

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

- Bodily-Kinesthetic - control of one's own body, control in handling objects
- Intrapersonal - awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
- Spatial - ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems
- Logical-Mathematical - ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

On November 18, 1978, 913 members of Peoples Temple religious community, together with their leader Reverend Jim Jones, died in Jonestown, Guyana, South America. That same day, Bay Area Congressman Leo J. Ryan and three journalists were also killed as they were leaving Jonestown. SPARK follows the project from its original conception by David Dower, artistic director of Z Space Studio, to opening night of the *The People's Temple* play written and directed by Leigh Fondakowski at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre.

The People's Temple was commissioned by Z Space Studio, a San Francisco theatre company that commissions and develops innovative works for the stage. To develop the story of Jonestown for the stage, David Dower, founder and director of Z Space Studio, approached Leigh Fondakowski, head writer of *The Laramie Project* and a long-standing member of the Tectonic Theater Project. Dower felt certain that Fondakowski's documentary theatre techniques, developed with Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic team, was the right way to tell the story of Peoples Temple. Tectonic Theater Project had produced two powerful pieces that successfully combined historical information, journalism and theatre, *The Laramie Project* about the murder of Matthew Shepard, a young gay man in Laramie, Wyoming, and *Gross Indecency: the Trials of Oscar Wilde*.

"People think of them as crazies, if they think of them as people at all...people are so convinced that they know that they can't understand why you still have questions. In my head I have lodged the images of the people of Jonestown lying facedown in piles, unidentified in photos, and I want to know their faces." - David Dower, Director, Z Space Studio

David Dower and wife Denice Stephenson have meaningful connections to Peoples Temple, and are

the primary instigators behind the project. Both were college students with Rebecca Moore, whose sisters Ann and Carolyn were members of Peoples Temple and died at Jonestown, and Stephenson is a special project archivist at the California Historical Society, where the Peoples Temple archive is housed. Dower and Stephenson wanted to give meaning to this terrifying chapter in US history and a voice to those who had died as well as the survivors, friends and relatives of Temple members who had never told their stories.

Over 75 interviews conducted by Fondakowski and her collaborators were transcribed and the challenge was to then transform these testimonies and the documentary evidence into compelling theatre. The actors, writers, and director worked for more than three years to stage this material, translating memories of the group and its demise into dramatic moments. As the voices of the play's characters fill the theatre, the aspirations and dreams of the community members resonate as audiences begin to understand them; these people could have been our relatives and friends.

As a work of docudrama (see Context section), *The People's Temple* project does not offer any conclusions or judgments about the community or its tragic end – audiences decide for themselves what to think and feel about the events and how they have been related and preserved in history.



Greg Peirotti, David Dower, Joan Mankin, Karen Zamd and Margo Hall prepare for a reading of *The People's Temple*. Still image from SPARK, 2005.

THE BIG PICTURE - DOCUDRAMA & HISTORY

The People's Temple play is based on contemporary interviews and historical documents about the Reverend Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple and the members who died at Jonestown in 1978, as well as survivors, relatives and friends. The script for the play is taken verbatim from over 3,000 pages of transcriptions made over a 3-year period. Although not every interview was included in the finished script, the sections of interviews that are used in the text are quoted verbatim.

This differs from *The Laramie Project*, another docudrama also directed by Leigh Fondakowski in that within a month of the murder of gay college student Matthew Shepard, the Tectonic Theatre team flew to Wyoming to begin the interviews. In the case of *The People's Temple*, the work began more than 20 years after the event, using the Peoples Temple archive at the California Historical Society – an archive containing over 170 boxes of documents, photographs, letters, personal records, news clippings and audiotapes.

The 12 person cast of *The People's Temple* speak the words of those people who were interviewed as well as those whose writings are represented in the archive. Robert Hurwitt, drama critic for the San Francisco Chronicle wrote that the voices of the people “fill the theatre with hope, regret, faith, skepticism, panic and immeasurable sorrow.” (SF Chronicle 4/22/2005) To dramatize the text, as the actors change characters, they retrieve clothing and personal effects from boxes on the stage, essentially becoming the people as they were documented in the archive.

The People's Temple as a docudrama draws upon an approach to history that gives voice to “ordinary” people – people traditionally not considered historically significant, but who were part of history. These voices are captured using oral history, an alternative historiography that has flourished since the 1960s that challenges traditional historical accounts based on the lives of key individuals, ruling parties, politicians and/or governments. In developing an oral history, the intention is not to discount these accounts, but to add new dimensions to them from those “hidden from history” – the voices of people who lived through the events.

This populist approach enriches popular understanding of history. *The People's Temple* is part of this tradition as a documentary theatre project that employs personal testimony to bear witness to, and gives contemporary meaning to, an historical event.

Docudrama presents audiences with a version or an interpretation of events as told by witnesses; however it may not and cannot be the whole story. Some accounts will be missing. Although the interviews are quoted verbatim in *The People's Temple*, inevitably certain voices have been selected over others. The Berkeley Repertory Theatre Study Guide that accompanies the production notes that “If different survivors had been interviewed, it would be a very different play”. Similarly, through the choices of the director, certain viewpoints shape this version of history. This aspect is implicit in the art form of documentary theatre as well as film, although documentary film has a certain transparency – the medium creates the illusion of reality. We believe what we **see** since it **represents** the “real,” although we decide what we take away. In a theatrical production, we **interpret** the interviews or evidence in terms of our knowledge of the event(s) and beliefs and values. As such, in a theatrical production, audiences may find that they enter into a dialogue with the content more readily.

The question remains as to the historical weight of this kind of evidence, of people relating their experience, what they know or what they recall. It is common to recall past events with the selectivity of hindsight, a form of recall that validates one's actions or makes some narrative or sense of memories. Oral accounts and testimonies raise issues about and offer insight into lived experiences and feelings at different historical moments. They help to explain the impact of events on individuals as well as the larger culture. Does oral history offer accuracy or truth? Is it more or less credible than traditional forms of history? As a version of the past, oral history offers the perspectives of individuals and invites us as contemporary citizens to decide for ourselves and to engage in richer, more varied and inevitably more complex notions about the past. In the process, there may not be one “truth” to be found, but many.

Tony Taccone, Artistic Director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre articulates the importance of this kind of inquiry in terms of its universal relevance - "The story, as it turns out, is ultimately not about a fringe lunatic movement whose desire to renounce any sense of individual responsibility resulted in disaster. Rather the tale is about all of us who seek to build a better community, who seek to improve our lives and the lives of our families, who seek a higher or larger meaning in a world fraught with instability and fear." (*The People's Temple* program, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, 2005)



Head writer Greg Pierotti performing a scene from *The People's Temple* at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre.
Still image from SPARK story, 2005.

ABOUT LEIGH FONDAKOWSKI

Leigh Fondakowski is a pioneer in the verbatim non-fiction performance techniques that The People's Temple project employed. She was commissioned to develop the play The People's Temple by Studio Z for a stage presentation at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Fondakowski is a member of the Tectonic Theatre Project in New York and has been one of the leading collaborating writers are two of Tectonic's important productions: Gross Indecencies: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde and The Laramie Project, the highly successful documentary theatre project about the murder of gay-college student Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming in 1998. Fondakowski also was a lead writer of the screenplay for the movie-version of The Laramie Project with her along with several of her Tectonic colleagues. Fondakowski conceived, wrote, and directed I Think I Like Girls with San Francisco's Encore Theater Company in 2001.

RESOURCES RELATED TO LEIGH FONDAKOWSKI

New York Movie Resources

http://movies2.nytimes.com/gst/movies/filmography.html?p_id=302423

The Laramie Project

http://movies2.nytimes.com/gst/movies/movie.html?v_id=259521

Tectonic Theatre Project, Inc.

<http://www.tectonictheaterproject.org>

PBS – The Newshour

Streaming video and streaming audio of the interview available -

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june05/jonestown_6-02.html

SFGate

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/04/22/DDGGHCC3DK1.DTL&feed=rss.entertainment>

SF Bay Guardian

http://www.sfbg.com/39/31/art_film_the_peoples_temple.html

SECTION III - RESOURCES

TEXTS

For a larger list of text resources, visit the *Jonestown and Peoples Temple Web site of the Department of Religious Studies at San Diego State University* at <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/Resources/resources.htm>. A special section on coverage of the 25th anniversary of the Jonestown tragedy from 2003 is also included on the site.

Chidester, David. Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988. Reissued 2004.

Ermachild, Melody. Jonestown: Frozen in Time. This World, 13 November, 1988 pp 10-11.

Fiensilber, Pamela. My Name is Jim Jones. San Francisco, 2003.

Hall, John R. Apocalypse at Jonestown. *Society* 16 (6): 52-61, 1979.

Hall, John R. Gone From the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History. New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1987. Reissued 2004.

Harrison, Milmon F. Jim Jones and Black Worship Traditions. In *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America*, eds. Rebecca Moore, Anthony B. Pinn, and Mary Sawyer. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2004.

Johnson, Doyle Paul. Dilemma of Charismatic Leadership: The Case of The Peoples Temple. *Sociological Analysis* 40: 315-323, 979.

Kahalas, Laurie Efrein. Snake Dance: Unravelling the Mysteries of Jonestown. New York: Red Robin Press, 1998.

Klineman, George, Sherman Butler, and David Conn. The Cult That Died: The Tragedy of Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple. New York, Putnam, 1980.

Layton, Deborah. Seductive Poison: A Jonestown Survivor's Story and Death in the People's Temple. New York, Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1998.

Levi, Ken. Violence and Religious Commitment: Implications of Jim Jones's Peoples Temple Movement. University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982.

Maaga, Mary McCormick. Hearing the Voices of Jonestown. Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1998.

Mills, Jeannie. Six Years With God: Life Inside Reverend Jim Jones's Peoples Temple. New York: A & W Publishers, 1979.

Moore, Rebecca. A Sympathetic History of Jonestown: The Moore Family Involvement in Peoples Temple. Lewiston, N.Y., Edwin Mellen Press, 1985.

Moore, Rebecca. The Jonestown Letters: Correspondence of the Moore Family 1970-1985. Lewiston, N.Y., Edwin Mellen Press, 1986.

Moore, Rebecca, Anthony B. Pinn and Mary R. Sawyer, eds. Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America. Bloomington: University of Indiana, 2004.

Nugent, John Peer. White Night. New York, Rawson, Wade Publishers, 1979.

Reiterman, Tim, with John Jacobs. Raven: The Untold Story of The Rev. Jim Jones and His People. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1982.

Reston, James, Jr. Our Father Who Art in Hell. New York, Times Books, 1982.

Robbins, Thomas. Religious Mass Suicide Before Jonestown: The Russian Old Believers. *Sociological Analysis* 47: 1-20, 1986.

Sawyer, Mary R. The Church in Peoples Temple, in *Peoples Temple and Black Religion in America*. eds. Rebecca Moore, Anthony B. Pinn, and Mary Sawyer. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2004.

Stephenson, Denice ed. Dear People: Remembering Jonestown, San Francisco, California: California Historical Society, 2005.

U.S. Committee on Foreign Affairs. The Assassination of Representative Leo J. Ryan and the Jonestown, Guyana Tragedy. U.S. House of Representatives, 96th Congress, First Session. Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1979.

Wessinger, Catherine. How the Millennium Comes Violently. Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1998.

Wright, Lawrence. A Reporter at Large: Orphans of Jonestown. The New Yorker, November, 1993: 66-89.

WEB SITES

Cited by the Religious Movements Homepage: People's Temple, Internet Links.
<http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/jonestwn.html>

Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and People's Temple - This Web site is designed to give personal and scholarly perspectives on a major religious event in recent U.S. history. Its primary purpose is to present information about Peoples Temple as accurately and objectively as possible. Created by Rebecca Moore and her colleagues in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the University of North Dakota, it is sponsored and housed at the Department of Religious Studies at San Diego State University. It is the single best site for gaining perspective and accessing information about Jonestown. In addition to providing primary source materials generated by People's Temple, it offers transcripts of more than 100 audiotapes, and summaries of hundreds more. It contains the most complete list of those who died in Jonestown, along with photographs and personal data with the intent of humanizing those who gave their lives to the cause they believed in. - <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu>

Jonestown.com – This was the homepage of Laurie Efrein Kahalas, a Peoples Temple survivor and author of *SNAKE DANCE: Unravelling the*

Mysteries of Jonestown. The Web site describes itself as “a one-of-a-kind investigation into one of the most devastating events of the 20th century...It includes materials available nowhere else.” The site temporarily went off-line, but is now archived at “Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple.”

http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/Jonestown_com/home.htm

Culture Vulture – A description of the play and playwright Leigh Fondakowski -
<http://www.culturevulture.net/Theater8/PeoplesTemple.htm>

Jonestown massacre +20: Questions Linger - CNN coverage of the 20th anniversary of the Jonestown suicides/murders, with articles on efforts to declassify government documents, and other items. Unfortunately the links to related sites no longer work.

<http://www.cnn.com/US/9811/18/jonestown.anniv.01>

ReligiousTolerance.org – “Doomsday, Destructive Religious Cults: A general description of Peoples Temple” – A link to a brief history of Peoples Temple and the Jonestown deaths is appended. The site presents the suspicion that the suicides/murders were the result of the community's fear of retribution by the United States government.

http://www.religioustolerance.org/dc_jones.htm

Jonestown – Although this site is sponsored by anti-cult activist Rick Ross, and thus has an anti-cult perspective, it contains interesting and current news stories about the group, such as the fact that Guyana government officials in November 2004 called for a new investigation of Jonestown.

<http://www.rickross.com/groups/jonestown.html>

FBI Web site contains a number of published files on Jonestown, including those related to Congressman Leo J. Ryan and others killed on the Guyana airstrip.
<http://foia.fbi.gov>, search for *Jonestown*

RELATED ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

American Alliance for Theatre and Education - Organization dedicated to promoting standards of excellence in theatre and theatre education, connecting artists, educators, researchers and

scholars with each other, and providing opportunities for our membership to learn, exchange, expand and diversify their work, their audience and their perspectives - <http://www.aate.com>

Arts Education Partnership -

A national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations that demonstrates and promotes the essential role of the arts in the learning and development of every child and in the improvement of America's schools - <http://aep-arts.org>

ArtsEdge -

The arts education initiative of the Kennedy Center, offering a range of programs, curricula, links, and resources for educators - <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org>

California Alliance for Arts Education -

The CAAE promotes, supports, and advocates for visual and performing arts education for preschool through post-secondary students in California schools. - <http://www.artsed411.org>

California Arts Council -

The state's arts council, including grant programs, the arts license plate, and links to other arts organizations, as well as updates on the state's funding for the arts - <http://www.cac.ca.gov>

California Department of Education: Visual & Performing Arts Education - Complete overview of the state's arts initiatives, including Arts Assessment, Arts Taskforce, Arts Funding, Policies, and Legislation - <http://www.cde.ca.gov/shsd/arts>

National Endowment for the Arts -

The Federal arts agency, supporting arts and arts education through grants to organizations, states, and institutions - <http://www.arts.gov>

Theatre Bay Area

Includes calendar & listings of programs, workshops, auditions, grants etc as well as a Bay Area online magazine - <http://www.theatrebayarea.org>

Young Audiences of Northern California -

Area arts education non-profit offering K-12 programs in dance, music, theatre, and the visual and literary arts - <http://www.ya-nc.org>

National Endowment for the Arts -

The Federal arts agency, supporting arts and arts education through grants to organizations, states, and institutions - <http://www.arts.gov>

VIDEOS

Selected examples of documentaries structured around interviews and personal testimony

The Laramie Project (DVD) by Moises Kaufman. A play produced in 1998 by ten New Yorkers who went to Laramie, Wyoming, to investigate the 1998 hate murder of college student Matthew Shepard. After interviewing more than 200 residents, they created a deeply moving play about bigotry and tolerance that was subsequently made into a film for TV by HBO. To obtain the script - <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/>

Charlie Victor Romeo – In the fall of 1999, the New York City Theater Company collective called “Unconscious” opened Charlie Victor Romeo at a small, way-off Broadway theater on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The script consists entirely of excerpts from transcripts of “black box” sound recordings of flight crew conversation during air disasters. The title came from the phonetic alphabet representation for CVR, the abbreviation for Cockpit Voice Recorder. Charlie Victor Romeo has been filmed by the US Air Force as a training video for pilots. Available through [Pomegranate Arts](#).

Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert Macnamara 2003 (VHS) directed by Errol Morris. A film about the former US Secretary of Defense and the various difficult lessons he learned about the nature and conduct of modern war. Available from Amazon.com

The Trials of Henry Kissinger 2002 (VHS) directed by Eugene Jarecki. The Trials of Henry Kissinger builds a case that the former Secretary of State and National Security Adviser should be held to account for war crimes, much like Yugoslavia's Slobodan Milosevic and Chile's Augusto Pinochet have been in recent years. Available from [First Run/Icarus Films](#).

Daughter from Danang 2002 (VHS) directed by Gail Dolgin and Vincente Franco, is an emotional documentary organized around interviews about the mixed race daughter of an American serviceman and

Vietnamese woman. She has been separated from her family for twenty-two years and the reunification unleashes a confusing clash of cultures and complex emotions. Available from Amazon.com and NAATA <http://www.naatanet.org/shopnaata/order/index.html>

The Thin Blue Line 1998 (VHS) directed by Errol Morris. A powerful documentary that makes its case of a man wrongly convicted for murder by a corrupt justice system in Dallas County, Texas through interviews and testimonies. Available from Amazon.com.

The Weather Underground. 2002 (VHS) directed by Sam Green and Bill Siegal. The remarkable story of The Weather Underground, radical activists of the 1960s, and of radical politics at the time of the Vietnam War and its aftermath. The film interviews many of the activists from that period who reflect on the movement, their motivation and idealism and the reasons for the downfall. Available from Amazon.com.

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

California Historical Society
678 Mission Street, San Francisco
415 357 1848 – check for visiting hours

A substantial collection of materials connected with the Peoples Temple lives in an archive housed at the California Historical Society. The CHS and the archive are open to the public - <http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org>

THEATRE RESOURCES

The following theatres include documentary theatre and historical productions in their offerings.

Actor's Theatre of San Francisco
533 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94102
415 296 9179
Web: <http://actorstheatresanfran.tripod.com>

American Conservatory Theatre
415 Geary Street, San Francisco, CA 94109
415 279 2ACT
Web: www.act-sfbay.org

Berkeley Repertory Theatre
2025 Addison Street, Berkeley, CA 94704
510 647 2900
Web: <http://www.berkeleyrep.org>

Eureka Theatre
215 Jackson Street, San Francisco, CA 94111
415 788 1125
Web: <http://users.rcn.com/eureka.dnai>

Intersection for the Arts
446 Valencia Street (at 15th), San Francisco, CA 94103
415 626 2787
Web: <http://www.theintersection.org>

Lorraine Hansberry Theatre
620 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA. 94102
415.474.8800
Web: <http://www.lorrainehansberrytheatre.com>

Magic Theatre
Fort Mason, Building B, Third Floor
San Francisco, CA 94123
415 441 8822
Web: <http://www.magictheatre.org>

Marin Theatre Company
397 Miller Avenue, Mill Valley, CA 941941
415388 5200
Web: <http://www.marintheatre.org>

Marsh Theatre
1062 Valencia Street, San Francisco, CA 94110
415 641-0235
Web: <http://www.themarsh.org>

New Conservatory Theatre Center
25 Van Ness Avenue, Lower Lobby
San Francisco, CA 94102
415 861 4914
Web: <http://www.nctcsf.org>

Traveling Jewish Theatre
470 Florida Street, San Francisco, CA 94110
415.285.8080
Web: <http://www.atjt.com>

Z Space Studio
131 10th Street, San Francisco, 94103
415.626.0453
<http://www.zspace.or>

SECTION IV – VOCABULARY

Charismatic

Magnetic, compelling, captivating
Implies power over other people through oratory or force of personality

Christian Social Gospel

The Social Gospel was an early 20th century Protestant Christian movement which placed its emphasis on the application of Christian principles to society's problems

Communal movements

Small, often rural, communities whose members share common interests, work and income and often own property collectively. These movements were popular in the 1960s and 1970s and members of communes attempted to live by alternative values, values that challenged the ethic of individualism, the traditional family unit and material possessions as all important.

Communism

Based on the political philosophies of Karl Marx, communism offered a view of society which equalized the social conditions of life; arguing for the abolition of inequalities in the possession of property by distributing wealth equally to all, or by holding all wealth in common for the equal use and advantage of all.

Conspiracy theory

Theory that maintains that events are the result of manipulations by two or more individuals or other secretive powers

Cult

From the French verb *culte*, and rooted in the Latin *cultus* meaning "care" and "adoration." Originally the word was used to mean "to worship or give reference to a deity." In common parlance, cult typically refers to a small, intentional community often led by a single leader, usually viewed as a spiritually innovative group. In this sense, the word

cult may simply signify a new religious movement on its way to becoming a denomination.

Fundamentalist

A fundamentalist is a religious person who adheres to the "fundamentals" of their particular religion or faith. Fundamentalists are often very conservative theologically and tend to be conservative in terms of politics and economics, although that is not always the case. In America, the term usually refers to a person of the Christian faith, although that does not have to be true.

Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) started as an underground terrorist group against the civil rights movement that freed the slaves after the American Civil War. Its name was derived from the English work clan and the Greek word *kyklos*, meaning "circle." Although in the late 19th Century it lost support, during the 20th Century, it has been revived with a few alterations. This group has been noted for its prosecutions against, Jews (as it later co-joined with neo-Nazis), foreigners, Roman Catholics, Communists, Homosexuals, Blacks, communists and organized labor

Marxism

Based on the political philosophy of Karl Marx, Marxism defines history in terms of class struggle between workers, who have nothing but their labor to sell and capitalists, who own the wealth and property and the means of production. Marxism envisioned that ultimately the working classes or proletariat would win the struggle and seize power. It is a philosophy that repudiates the notion of private property and the exploitation of the many by the few. The central tenant maintains that there should be equal distribution of wealth and property based on the principle of need rather than accumulation.

Messianic

Belief in the messiah, the coming of the Messiah or claim of an individual to be the Messiah

Pentecostal

The Pentecostal Church is a Protestant Christian denomination that grew out of the "holiness movement" which swept across various Christian communities early in the 20th century. There are two basic things that characterize Pentecostal churches and differentiate them from other Protestant groups: the first is the belief in a "Baptism of the Spirit" and the second is a belief in resultant *charismata* ("Gifts of the Spirit," like speaking in tongues).

Sect

Group adhering to a distinctive doctrine or leader. The term is sometimes used instead of "cult," and comes from the Latin *secta*, which means an "organized church body." That in turn is rooted in the Latin *sequi*, which means "to follow," and is used of "way of life," or "class of persons." It refers to a religious denomination or a dissenting religious group, formed as the result of schism (division; separation).

Segregate

Separate or keep apart, often associated with separation by race or religion; practice a policy of racial segregation

Socialism

Theory or system of social organization by which the major means of production and distribution are owned and managed centrally by the state, an association of workers or the community for the good of all

Utopianism

Idealistic schemes or beliefs that offer the promise of social perfection

SECTION V – PEOPLES TEMPLE HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Chronology of the Peoples Temple

From *Dear People: Remembering Jonestown*, edited by Denice Stephenson and published by Heyday Books in collaboration with the California Historical Society, 2005.

- | | | | |
|------|---|------|--|
| 1955 | Jim and Marceline Jones and a small group of parishioners establish Peoples Temple, an independent Pentecostal church in Indianapolis, Indiana | 1977 | Former members and relatives organize the Concerned Relatives and Citizens Committee to protest Jones' treatment of church members. Media coverage of Peoples Temple practices and political activities lead to government investigations of the church's financial and social welfare programs. Hundreds of Peoples Temple members, including Jim Jones move to Jonestown |
| 1965 | Jones' family and more than 100 Peoples Temple members move to Mendocino County in Northern California | 1978 | Congressman Leo J. Ryan organizes a fact-finding mission to Jonestown that ends in tragedy. On November 18 th , Ryan, 3 journalists and a Peoples Temple member are killed by armed Temple members. More than 900 hundred residents die from poison and 4 members die in Georgetown |
| 1969 | Peoples Temple builds a new church in Redwood Valley, a small rural community north of Ukiah. Membership grows to 300 | 1979 | Peoples Temple assets are frozen and placed under supervision of the San Francisco Superior Court. Congress holds a hearing about the death of Congressman Ryan |
| 1970 | Peoples Temple begins holding services in San Francisco and Los Angeles, later opening large churches in both cities | 1983 | Over \$1.8 billion in claims are filed against the Peoples Temple estate. After overseeing the burial of hundreds of unclaimed and unidentified bodies from Jonestown, the court recovers and disburses \$13 million in assets. Peoples Temple is dissolved and its records are placed with the California Historical Society |
| 1973 | Recruiting drives in African American communities increase the church's membership to over 2500. Peoples Temple votes to establish an agricultural and rural development mission in Guyana, South America | 1986 | Larry Layton is the only Peoples Temple member to be tried and convicted of conspiring to kill Congressman Ryan. |
| 1974 | Members travel to Guyana to secure a location for the mission, establish headquarters in Georgetown, Guyana's capital, and begin clearing land in the jungle for farming and building | | |
| 1976 | Peoples Temple officially moves its headquarters from Redwood Valley to San Francisco where members establish dozens of communal residences, become active in city politics, and publish their own newspaper, <i>People's Forum</i> | | |

SECTION VI – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES & DISCUSSION POINTS (See **RELATED STANDARDS** on the last page.)

NOTE: The correct name of the “Peoples Temple of the Disciples of Christ” does not include an apostrophe. The title of the theatre project is *The People’s Temple*, and is intended to distinguish the theatrical event from the name of the organization.

Understanding Intentional Communities (Cults)

Introduce students to the concept of religious and intentional communities and invite them to brainstorm their understanding of the concept. They should give examples to illustrate whenever possible. Move on to explain the origin of the term “cult” and its current usage. Explain that the word *cult* comes from the French *culte*, and is rooted in the Latin *cultus*, which means “care” and “adoration.” Originally, it was used to mean “to worship or give reference to a deity.” Today the term cult has a variety of meanings, such as:

- * devotion to a person, idea, object, movement, or work (as a film or book)
- * usually a small group of people characterized by such devotion

Excerpted from “Frequently Asked Questions about Cults, Sects, and Related Issues” at <http://www.cultfaq.org>.

Ask students to work in small groups and respond to the following questions. They may need time to research their responses.

- What was the appeal of Peoples Temple to its members?
- Why are such groups referred to as cults?
- Who refers to them as such?
- What is the appeal of such groups?
- What roles do strong, charismatic leaders such as Rev. Jim Jones play in the formation and duration of such groups?
- Do you know of anybody who has joined such a group and if so, why? What other examples of such communities do you know about?

Invite students to share their responses and discuss the issues surrounding the attraction of such organized communities. Refer back to Peoples Temple as a point of reference.

The Web site “Religious Tolerance.org” at http://www.religioustolerance.org/dc_jones.htm offers compelling reasons as to why people were drawn to the Peoples Temple community and made the decisions they made including:

- Jim Jones’ reported mental illness, aggravated by his use of drugs
- The group members’ intense fear of the imminent end of civilization
- The extreme isolation of the Agricultural Project
- Opposition and pressure from anti-cult groups, the media and the US government

The Peoples Temple mass suicide/murder was not unique. Encourage students to investigate other examples of mass suicide/murder and search for broader explanations. Students should continue to work in the same groups as before and select ONE of the following or another about which to report.

- Masada (73 CE – Common Era) - Jewish resistance after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE
- The “Benevolent Mother” movement of South Korean Park Soon-ja (29 August 1987)
- The Tijuana Mexican Sect (13 December 1990)
- The Branch Davidians in Waco under leadership of David Koresh (19 April 1993)
- The Order of the Solar Temple (22 March 1997, 23 December 1995, 5 October 1994)
- Heaven’s Gate (26 March 1997)

For their chosen topic ask students to produce a one-page summary of the circumstances and issues. The summaries should be written individually, although in sharing information with the whole class, each group should nominate a spokesperson to report on their findings

SPARKLERS:

“Flocking”

This group exercise by Eric Rhys Miller, ensemble member with the Traveling Jewish Theatre, is taken from the TJT education guide that accompanies their production, The Wonders.

Ask the group to stand close together in a clump, facing in one direction. Whoever is at the “front” of the group should begin to move, and the group follows their lead without looking, but using peripheral vision. When the leader turns, another person will be in “front” and become the leader. In this way leadership is constantly changing. The key is for the group to imagine themselves as a “flock,” as one organism, and to take and pass leadership. This can be done with two or more groups simultaneously. Music can be added to the mix.

Review the exercise with the group - how did it make them feel? Did they enjoy being part of the group? Did they enjoy taking leadership?

Initiate a discussion with students of *charisma*. Peoples Temple was inspired and propelled by the power of Jim Jones’ personality. Can students identify individuals in history who they would describe as charismatic leaders? Can they think of contemporary examples? What makes these people charismatic?

Invite students to debate the difference between “cult” and “religious (or intentional) community” this topic in class giving them an opportunity to prepare their arguments beforehand. Following the debate, ask students to organize the arguments in a short argumentative essay.

History Retold

The intention of this activity is to invite students to explore key themes in the history of Peoples Temple and to compare and contrast the differing accounts.

History is told from different perspectives depending upon the involvement of the individuals concerned – for example, a journalist will tell a different story from people who were directly involved either through a friend or relative or through direct experience.

Play the SPARK episode to introduce students to Berkeley Repertory Theatre’s dramatization of *The People’s Temple* portraying the motivations and ideals of its members and the historical circumstances that impacted the movement.

Key perspectives to compare are:

- The media representation of the history of the Peoples Temple
- Personal testimonies of members of the movement, relatives and friends
- Documented versions presented in archives and represented in photographs
- Historical accounts written by historians in the context of the times

Ask students to select ONE theme to research using the resources listed above. For example, to review the media coverage of Jonestown, the following Web site lists articles that are available on the Web.

[http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/JonestownReport/Volume6/25th anniversary coverage.htm](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/JonestownReport/Volume6/25th_anniversary_coverage.htm)

Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and People’s Temple offers both personal testimonies and scholarly historical perspectives. Its primary purpose is to present information about Peoples Temple as accurately and objectively as possible. The site provides primary source materials generated by the Peoples Temple, and offers the transcripts of more than 100 audiotapes, and summaries of hundreds more.

<http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/>

Dear People: Remembering Jonestown challenges perceived notions of the Jonestown tragedy, presenting letters, personal histories, reports, newspaper articles, photographs, and other documents—many published for the first time from the Peoples Temple Collection at the California Historical Society.

<http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org>.

Encourage students to attend one of The People's Temple Dialogues to investigate their chosen theme. The Z Space Studio is producing with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California Historical Society, and Heyday Books, a series of free public events in April and May 2005 designed to re-open discussions about Peoples Temple and the Jonestown tragedy.

When the Media Makes History

A conversation about the issues facing investigative journalism and the impact the media has on public perception of tragic events

Before and After Jonestown: The Peoples Temple Collection at California Historical Society

A presentation of the papers and photographs in this unique archive

Peoples Temple: In Context of the Times

Discussion of how the Temple relates to and reflects the politics and popular culture of the 1960s and 70s

Being History: Personal Perspectives on Peoples Temple - A conversation with former Temple members and an exploration of the challenges archivists face when working with living history

Peoples Temple and the Ukiah Years

Grace Hudson Museum: Remembering Jonestown

If students are unable to attend any of these dialogue sessions, suggest that they draw their research from the wealth of available resources, many of which are cited above. They should compile their findings into a short report that includes copies of documents or articles, interviews or testimonies, photographs or other illustrative material. Importantly they should conclude the report with a review of the key perspectives uncovered.

Bring this activity together by inviting students to share their research and compare findings. In what way, for example, do the media offer different accounts from the reports of relatives and friends? Do accounts differ? How? Is there such a thing as historical "truth" to be gleaned?

SPARKLER:

- * Suggest that students arrange to interview one of the panelists from **The People's Temple**

Dialogues sessions, specifically people who are resident in the Bay Area. Contact them through the The Z Space Studio (415 626 0453), Berkeley Repertory Theatre (510 647 2900), or the California Historical Society (415 377 1848)

Berkeley Repertory Theatre offers free, 30-60 minute docent tours to schools about the production of *The People's Temple*. As an opportunity to further explore the issues raised by the play and the history of Jonestown, suggest that students invite a docent to visit their school – contact the box office at 510.647.2949.

Peoples Temple in the Bay Area - Historical Timelines

Jim Jones relocated the Peoples Temple to Northern California in the mid 1960s due in part to his perception of racism in Indiana. As one of the few interracial congregations in Indiana, the state provided an inhospitable home. In 1965, more than 100 Peoples Temple members moved to Mendocino County,, California and later built a new church in nearby Redwood Valley. Among the people that joined the church's working class families were young college students, seniors, and families from Northern California.

Due to its relationship to the local community, *The People's Temple* project has particular resonance in the Bay Area. Membership drives in Los Angeles and San Francisco had recruited 2,500 members by 1973, meaning that when the deaths in Jonestown occurred in 1978, the effects impacted the Bay Area particularly strongly, with so many former members, families and friends in this area.

To provide a historical context to explain why the movement took hold in the Bay Area in the 1960s and 1970s, invite students to research important social and political events and movements of the period. They should focus especially on civil rights, social protest and the racial politics of the period, examining them against the beliefs of the Peoples Temple. CNN may offer a starting point - <http://www.cnn.com/EVENTS/1997/mlk/links.html%20>.

Ask students to work in groups to construct a timeline that articulates key political and social

events from 1960, when John F Kennedy became President of the US, to 1978 when the mass suicide/murder at Jonestown took place.

Discuss the timelines with the whole group and draw out the key issues, ideas and influences that inspired Temple members. Ensure that students understand the relationship between social and political history and religious movements by juxtaposing the landmarks in the history of Peoples Temple identified in the historical timeline above and the timelines constructed by students.

Journalism and Theatre

This activity is based on Student Interview activity in the Berkeley Repertory Study Guide that accompanies the production

Leigh Fondakowski, the playwright and director of *The People's Temple* explains in the study guide for the project that "During the three-and-a-half year long development of the play, members of the writing team and I traveled the country interviewing former members of the Peoples Temple, relatives of those who died in Jonestown, journalists, scholars, public officials, attorneys and community activists."

Ensure that students understand that the play is composed of real interviews and dramatized from these interviews. The words were taken verbatim from these interviews and not edited for content. Emphasize to students that it does not tell the entire story, but offers a version of events as represented by the voices of those who were interviewed. If different survivors had been interviewed, it would be a different version. Similarly the interviews in this activity will offer a selective account.

Assign students the task of becoming interviewers themselves and challenge them to find an adult who was alive at the time of Peoples Temple and remembers the events or knows someone who was a friend or relative of a member of the movement. It may also be possible to trace someone who survived the experience – and is willing to be interviewed. Suggest that students start with the question "Do you know anything about Peoples Temple and/or Jonestown?" They should then continue the interview as they see fit. Ask them to transcribe the interview word for word either writing it down as

the interviewee is speaking or recording the interview on audio or videotape.

Divide the class into pairs and ask students to share their interviews with each other. The pair should choose one of the interviews to recreate for the class, with one student taking the role of the interviewer and asking the questions that were asked and the other responding. These enactments should represent the interview as closely as possible; they can be edited but should not be changed or embellished in any way.

Invite each pair to present the interview to the class. Conclude the activity by inviting students to review the presentations.

- Were they surprised by their interviewee's answers – by what they knew or did not know about Peoples Temple?
- What did it feel like to perform someone else's words?
- Was it difficult to perform the interview precisely as they remembered it?
- How do they think an actor's process is different when working on these kinds of characters?

SPARKLER:

* Leigh Fondakowski was head writer with the Tectonic Theater's production *The Laramie Project*. This play was developed using a similar process, involving interviewing the residents of Laramie Wyoming to investigate a hate crime and create a dramatic play. Screen *The Laramie Project* film as another example of dramatic technique blending journalism and theatre. (See Resources-Video)

MEDIA MATTERS

Screen the SPARK story for students once all the way through, allowing time to absorb the story and understand what it is about. Afterwards, discuss as a group how the play, its content (story) and the people involved are represented, asking...

- What is the purpose of the segment?
- Who is the intended audience?
- How does the production value (camera work, music, narration, etc.) support your impressions?

- Is it interesting? Why? What reactions, ideas, or emotions did it stimulate?
- What is the intent of the SPARK program (persuasive, informative, etc.)?

After discussing these, screen the segment again and discuss the text and production values, such as:

Language

- Was vocabulary used that supports the intent?
- What kind of language was used?
- What images and/or effects were used?
- What devices were used and to what effect?

Camera Work

- How do the scene shots support the purpose?
- Does the camera work involve the audience?
- What features of the camera work contribute to the effect of the piece?

Music/Sound

- Describe the music/sound. Is the music in a specific style that supports the purpose? How?
- Is the music/sound important in the piece? Why or why not?

Ask students to write a 500 word summary of SPARK story about The People's Temple.

RELATED STANDARDS

VISUAL ARTS

Grade 8

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

1.1 Use artistic terms when describing the intent and content of works of art.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

4.2 Develop a theory about the artist's intent in a series of works of art, using reasoned statements to support personal opinions.

4.3 Construct an interpretation of a work of art based on the form and content of the work.

SECTION VII – RELATED STANDARDS

RELATED STANDARDS LANGUAGE ARTS

Grade 5

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

- 1.4 Select a focus, organizational structure, and point of view for an oral presentation.
- 1.6 Engage the audience with appropriate verbal cues, facial expressions, and gestures
- 2.1 Deliver narrative presentations:
Establish a situation, plot, point of view, and setting with descriptive words and phrases

Grade 7

Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

- 3.2 Identify events that advance the plot and determine how each event explains past or present action(s) or foreshadows future action(s).
- 3.3 Analyze characterization as delineated through a character’s thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions; the narrator’s description; and the thoughts, words, and actions of other characters.

Grade 8

Listening and Speaking

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

- 1.3 Organize information to achieve particular purposes by matching the message, vocabulary, voice modulation, expression, and tone to the audience and purpose.
- 2.5 Recite poems (of four to six stanzas), sections of speeches, or dramatic soliloquies, using voice modulation, tone, and gestures expressively to enhance the meaning.

Grades 9 & 10

1.0 LISTENING AND SPEAKING STRATEGIES

Comprehension

Formulate judgments about the ideas under discussion and support those judgments with convincing evidence.

1.0 WRITING STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.

Grade 11-12 – Listening and Speaking

- 1.3 Interpret and evaluate the various ways in which events are presented and information is communicated by visual image makers (e.g., graphic artists, documentary filmmakers, illustrators, news photographers).

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

- 1.4 Use rhetorical questions, parallel structure, concrete images, figurative language, characterization, irony, and dialogue to achieve clarity, force, and aesthetic effect.

RELATED STANDARDS THEATRE

Grade 2

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

- 1.1 Use the vocabulary of theatre, such as plot (beginning, middle, and end), scene, sets, conflict, script, and audience, to describe theatrical experiences.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

- 4.3 Students critique and derive meaning from works of theatre, film/video, electronic media, and theatrical artists on the basis of aesthetic qualities.
- 4.4 Identify the message or moral of a work of theatre

Grade 4

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

- 1.4 Identify a character’s objectives and motivations to explain that character’s behavior

Grade 7

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

- 4.2 Explain how cultural influences affect the content or meaning of works of theatre.

Grades 9-12 (Proficient)

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

- 2.2 Write dialogues and scenes, applying basic dramatic structure: exposition, complication, conflict, crises, climax, and resolution

3.0 HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXTS

- 3.2 Describe the ways in which playwrights reflect and influence their culture in such works.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

- 4.2 Report on how a specific actor used drama to convey meaning in performances.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at <http://www.kqed.org/spark/education>.



For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp>