



A Lavender Look at the Temple: A Gay Perspective of the Peoples Temple

Michael Bellefontaine

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For most of its history, the Peoples Temple existed under the radar. Most had never even heard of the church until news of the tragic deaths of more than nine hundred men, women, and children in the jungles of Guyana broke in November of 1978. The lives and deaths of the members of the Peoples Temple are ones that remain mostly misunderstood to this day. And for the gay and lesbian members and their families, the truth is sometimes even harder to find. Author Bellefontaine-an activist, a scholar, and proud member of the gay community-provides a new perspective of the Temple. His detailed research into the inner workings of the Peoples Temple is presented, with a special look at the lives of the gay and lesbian members of the Peoples Temple community. Their stories illustrate how their lives were influenced and affected by Jones and his "acceptance" of their sexuality. Bellefontaine looked deep into the historical connection between Jim Jones's Peoples Temple and the city of San Francisco, as well as the connection San Francisco's first gay councilman, Harvey Milk, had with the Peoples Temple. The power that acceptance-even false acceptance-can have on people is explored through the detailed accounts of members of the temple community. He tells the very human stories of those who died in Jonestown as well as how those who survived the horror and their families were deeply affected by the tragedy of November 18, 1978-and what we can learn from this event.

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