

PART 1:

Introduction:

Imagine yourself in the 1950s. You walk down a street lined with pastel houses and neatly mowed lawns. Voices on radio speak optimistically, promising freedom and prosperity - “the land of the free”, they called themselves.

But, outside the studio, the tune is different. Same soil, same cities, same air, yet everything else is divided. Children walk to different schools, commuters sit in different train cars, drinking fountains stand side by side, indicating who may drink. Even in death, cemeteries are split, segregating people to their graves.

In small rural Indiana, a boy called Jim Jones grows up in poverty. His father, a WWI veteran, is destroyed by illness and disability and his mother, strong and independent, constantly works to keep the family afloat.

Jones’ childhood was dark and empty, like a canvas painted in black with light creeping through in thin slivers. He wondered about past groups of children playing games he was never invited to join . He roamed the streets alone, searching for something to hold onto, something to believe, something he never felt at home.

“Nobody gave me any love, any understanding. . . . Always was alone.” —Jim Jones, 1977

And then, he found something that changed the course of his life forever: **religion**.

A kind invitation would alter his path.

Myrtle Kennedy, a devout member of the Church of Nazarene in Lynn took pity on the lonely boy and invited him to join her at church.

Inside those walls, Jones watched closely - looking at the way preachers commanded the crowd with little intonations in their voice, how their gestures sent the crowd swaying in unison, as if in a trance. He saw how faith brought people together and how a powerful voice easily guided a crowd.

And one day, he realised something powerful, yet dangerous - if you can make people listen, you can make them obey.

This is the story of Jim Jones, a man who rises from obscurity and instigates the mass murder of over 900 people in the jungles of Guyana, South America.

This is a story of blinded faith and the thin line between devotion and destruction.

But before the jungles of Guyana,
Before the poison,
Before revolutionary suicide,
There was a boy

A boy who wanted to feel welcome,
A boy who wanted to belong,
A boy who wanted to be loved, but -
Deep down, a boy who wanted to control.

To understand how this boy would one day grow up to lead hundreds of people to their deaths, we have to go back in time -
Back to where it all began

ACT 1: THE RISE

Our story begins in the early 1930s.

The Great Depression has just hit America. Jobs are scarce - men line up outside factories hoping for work and people are hungry, with families in small towns like Crete stretching every meal as far as they can to survive.

In one of many tiny houses, with dirt yards and peeling paint, lived a boy - Jim Jones.

His family's poverty forces them to move to a shack in Lynn, a place without water or electricity. Nights were filled with dread, while meals and other benefits only arrived when relatives could spare a little help.

Biographers describe Lynetta, Jones' mother as lacking "natural maternal instinct" and often neglectful. His father, a war veteran, struggled with illness and with his own prejudices. He was reportedly a member of the Ku Klux Klan and very much disapproved of Jim's friendship with a Black boy.

His parents were often emotionally absent, so he wandered the streets like a ghost, with nobody noticing when he left or when he returned.

Neighbours described Jones as a very weird child who had an unhealthy obsession with religion and death. He staged mock sermons for imaginary audiences, mimicking preachers he watched on the pulpit and showed an early interest in death rituals and ceremonies.

He also attended numerous churches, got baptised several times and went to the local library to learn about different belief systems and politics. He read widely - from Marxist ideologies to the books of authoritarian leaders to better understand how people gain control over others.

At school, he excelled academically but struggled socially. His intelligence couldn't change their perception of him as an intense, unusual boy.

The discrimination and segregation of African-Americans he had witnessed in his childhood and his father's affiliation with a white-supremacist group played a major role in influencing Jones' aversion to racism and later fueled his civil rights activism as a grown-up and a preacher.