

"MOVE'S WORK IS TO STOP INDUSTRY FROM POISONING THE AIR, THE WATER, THE SOIL, AND TO PUT AN END TO THE ENSLAVEMENT OF LIFE - PEOPLE, ANIMALS, ANY FORM OF LIFE. THE PURPOSE OF JOHN AFRICA'S REVOLUTION IS TO SHOW PEOPLE HOW CORRUPT, ROTTEN, CRIMINALLY ENSLAVING THIS SYSTEM IS, SHOW PEOPLE THROUGH JOHN AFRICA'S TEACHING, THE TRUTH, THAT THIS SYSTEM IS THE CAUSE OF ALL THEIR PROBLEMS (ALCOHOLISM, DRUG ADDICTION, UNEMPLOYMENT, WIFE ABUSE, CHILD PORNOGRAPHY, EVERY PROBLEM IN THE WORLD) AND TO SET THE EXAMPLE OF REVOLUTION FOR PEOPLE TO FOLLOW WHEN THEY REALIZE HOW THEY'VE BEEN OPPRESSED, REPRESSED, DUPED, TRICKED BY THIS SYSTEM, THIS GOVERNMENT AND SEE THE NEED TO RID THEMSELVES OF THIS CANCEROUS SYSTEM AS MOVE DOES." - MOVE

The MOVE Organization

A Revolutionary Struggle for Black Liberation & Eco-Defense



This pamphlet was created and distributed by Warzone Distro
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The MOVE Organization was a radical movement that surfaced in Philadelphia during the early 1970's. Characterized by dreadlock hair, the adopted surname "Africa", a principled unity, back-to-nature green politics and an uncompromising commitment to freedom and equality, members practiced the teachings of MOVE founder JOHN AFRICA.



News and current forms of activism

In 1998, at age 47, Merle Africa died in prison. In 2015, at age 59, Phil Africa died in prison. The remaining 7 are Chuck Africa, Michael Africa, Debbie Africa, Janet Africa, Janine Africa, Delbert Africa, and Eddie Africa.

Ramona Africa acts as a spokesperson for the group and has given numerous talks at leftist events throughout the US and in other countries. Mumia Abu-Jamal, convicted of the 1981 murder of police officer Daniel Faulkner, was closely involved with MOVE. MOVE continues to advocate for Abu-Jamal's release as well as that of imprisoned MOVE members, whom the group regard as political prisoners.

MOVE maintains a website encouraging visitors to support imprisoned MOVE members. On the 25th anniversary of the 1985 bombing, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* created a detailed multimedia site containing retrospective articles, archived articles, videos, interviews, photos, and a timeline of the events.

<http://onamove.com/support/>



Community Involvement

During the early 1970's MOVE was based in the Powelton Village section of West Philadelphia. Members valued the personal discipline and physical strength derived from hard manual labor, and maintained a hefty work schedule of daily activities such as exercising, scrubbing floors, running dogs, chopping firewood, shoveling snow, sweeping the street, etc. Demonstrating their reverence for all forms of life, MOVE looked after neighbors' pets, helped homeless people find places to live, assisted the elderly with home repairs, intervened in violence between local gangs and college fraternities, and helped incarcerated offenders meet parole requirements through a rehabilitation program.

After adopting MOVE's way of natural living, many individuals overcame past problems of drug addiction, physical disabilities, infertility and alcoholism. MOVE purchased a large Victorian house at 309 North 33rd Street, which became their headquarters. One of MOVE's fundraising activities was a very popular car wash at this location. At regular study sessions for people interested in the teachings of JOHN AFRICA, MOVE welcomed dissenting views as an opportunity to showcase their belief and sharpen their oratorical skills, which they knew would be tested in their revolutionary struggle.

"IT IS THE POSITION OF MOVE TO CONFRONT ANY SPEAKER, SO-CALLED INFORMED PERSONALITIES, ALLEGED LEADERS WHO SAY THEY HAVE ANSWERS TO THE VERY SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF PEOPLE, AND DEMAND THAT THEY SUBSTANTIATE, QUALIFY WHAT THEY ARE SAYING OR STOP MISLEADING PEOPLE. INFORMATION IS IN THE ABILITY TO INFORM. AND WHEN YOU HAVE NO INFORMATION TO GIVE, YOU CAN ONLY MISINFORM. THIS IS THE STATED POLICY OF MOVE, TO STAMP OUT MISINFORMATION, FOR WHEN YOU DO NOT HAVE A SOLUTION, ALL YOU CAN OFFER IS THE PROBLEM." -MOVE

Public appearances and media coverage

MOVE began attending public appearances of such noted personalities as Jane Fonda, Dick Gregory, Alan Watts, Roy Wilkins, Julian Bond, Richie Havens, Walter Mondale, Buckminster Fuller, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Caesar Chavez, and Russel Means. When questions were taken from the audience, MOVE challenged the speakers. Many were receptive, some were hostile, but none could refute JOHN AFRICA's wisdom.

To expose injustice, oppression and disrespect for Life, MOVE used strategized profanity and non-violent protest in demonstrations at zoos, pet shops, political rallies, public forums and media offices. By 1974, MOVE was appearing in public with increasing frequency protesting the abuse of Life in any form.

"IF OUR PROFANITY OFFENDS YOU, LOOK AROUND YOU AND SEE HOW DESTRUCTIVELY SOCIETY IS PROFANING ITSELF. IT IS THE RAPE OF THE LAND, THE POLLUTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT, THE BETRAYAL AND SUFFERING OF THE MASSES BY CORRUPT GOVERNMENT THAT IS THE REAL OBSCENITY." -MOVE

The mainstream media began a long history of inaccurate, distorted and misdirected coverage. MOVE's unique appearance, alarming profanity and unconventional behavior got prominent attention, but their penetrating analysis and proposed solutions were largely ignored as were their extensive community assistance efforts. While those who actually met MOVE members could see their remarkable strength and health, dehumanizing news accounts perpetuated the falsehood that members never bathed and were unhealthy.

Protests of unfair coverage by the Black-owned *Philadelphia Tribune* were resolved when the editor agreed to run a column entitled, "ON THE MOVE." Coordinated by JOHN AFRICA to be written by MOVE members, the feature ran for about a year, starting in June of 1975.

Frank Rizzo and the Police

Throughout the 1970's, Frank Rizzo was the premier figure in Philadelphia government. He started as a street cop and rose through the ranks, eventually serving as Police Commissioner from 1967-71.

During this time, he gained notoriety for his "tough-guy" law enforcement tactics and racist attitude. In Philadelphia's Black ghettos, Rizzo's predominantly white police force was resented, feared and hated.

Capitalizing on his name recognition and tough on crime image, Rizzo mobilized sufficient voters to be elected mayor of the city for two terms from 1972 until 1980. Having built his career on opposing Black efforts to challenge the status quo, he ran the city with a prominent and heavy-handed police force that had a national reputation for brutality.

a target for death by the police department. The MOVE Commission issued its report on March 6, 1986. The report denounced the actions of the city government, stating that "Dropping a bomb on an occupied row house was unconscionable. Following the release of the report, mayor Goode made a formal public apology. No one from the city government was charged criminally but the only surviving MOVE member, Ramona Africa, was charged and incarcerated on riot and conspiracy charges.

In 1996 a federal jury ordered the city to pay a US\$1.5 million civil suit judgement to survivor Ramona Africa and relatives of two people killed in the bombing. The jury had found that the city used excessive force and violated the members' constitutional protections against unreasonable search and seizure. Philadelphia was given the sobriquet "The City that Bombed Itself."



Philadelphia police bomb MOVE home

In 1981 MOVE relocated to a row house at 6221 Osage Avenue in the Cobbs Creek area of West Philadelphia. After the move, neighbors complained for years that MOVE members were broadcasting political messages by bullhorn. However, the bullhorn was broken and inoperable for the three weeks prior to the bombing of the row house.

The police obtained arrest warrants charging four occupants with crimes including parole violations, contempt of court, illegal possession of firearms, and making terrorist threats. Mayor W. Wilson Goode and police commissioner Gregore J. Sambor classified MOVE as a terrorist organization. On May 13, 1985, the police, along with city manager Leo Brooks, arrived in force and attempted to clear the building and execute the arrest warrants.

This led to an armed standoff with police, who lobbed tear gas canisters at the building. The police said that MOVE members fired at them; a gunfight with semi-automatic and automatic firearms ensued. Commissioner Sambor then ordered that the compound be bombed. From a Pennsylvania State Police helicopter, Philadelphia Police Department Lt. Frank Powell proceeded to drop two one-pound bombs (which the police referred to as "entry devices" made of FBI-supplied water gel explosive, a dynamite substitute, targeting a fortified, bunker-like cubicle on the roof of the house.

The resulting explosions ignited a fire that eventually destroyed approximately 65 nearby houses. The firefighters, who had earlier deluge-hosed the MOVE members in a failed attempt to evict them from the building, stood by as the fire caused by the bomb engulfed the first house and spread to others, having been given orders to let the fire burn. Despite the earlier drenching of the building by firefighters, officials said that they feared that MOVE would shoot at the firefighters. Eleven people (John Africa, five other adults and five children aged 7 to 13) died in the resulting fire and more than 250 people were left homeless. Ramona Africa, one of the two survivors, stated that police fired at those trying to escape.

Mayor Goode soon appointed an investigative commission called the PSIC (aka MOVE Commission), chaired by William H. Brown, III. Police commissioner Sambor resigned in November 1985, reporting that he felt that he was being made a "surrogate" by Goode. Goode, on the other hand, feared the Philadelphia Police Department as he had received intelligence indicating that he had been marked as

Philadelphia's overblown and unrestrained police department was a prime example of the type of injustice the system precipitated, so it was inevitable that MOVE would start to speak out against them. As with other issues, this was done using peaceful demonstrations. When MOVE successfully focused attention on police abuse, many community groups across the city sought MOVE's assistance with similar demonstrations in their own neighborhoods. As a result of this activism, the police began a concerted campaign of harassment against MOVE, breaking up demonstrations by arresting MOVE members on disorderly conduct charges or violations of whatever local ordinance could be made to apply.

The fact that MOVE's headquarters was located in an area of real estate speculation on the border of a university campus brought further legal entanglement. Beginning in 1975, the complaints of some neighboring property owners led to involvement of the Department of Licenses and Inspections and ultimately a civil suit by the city against MOVE. On November 18, Judge G. Fred DiBona, one of Rizzo's associates, ruled that city inspectors with the assistance of the police, could enter MOVE's house to inspect it, but the case dragged on through numerous continuances and an appeal by MOVE to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

Police Brutality

MOVE never let the threat of being taken to jail interfere with planned demonstrations. Only a pre-selected group, which excluded pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers, would plan to get arrested if the cops started trouble. Yet events soon proved that police harassment was not limited to demonstrations alone.

Late in the evening of May 9, 1974, two pregnant MOVE women, Janet and Leesing Africa, were taking a short walk to the corner store to get something to eat. They were stopped and questioned by police officers who became abusive and slammed Janet stomach-first against a police car. The two were subjected to a very rough handling and jailed overnight without food or water. Both women lost their babies due to miscarriages. MOVE immediately began demonstrating at the 18th District police station where the incident occurred.

By 1975, clashes between MOVE and the police reached increasingly brutal proportions, though the city denied it's role in any abusive handling. Members at demonstrations were getting beaten bloody on a regular basis, yet MOVE's deep commitment only led to more determined protests. On April 29, 1975 a MOVE demonstration against ill-treatment of jailed members at the police administration building led to several arrests. Alberta Africa, who was pregnant, was dragged from

a holding cell, held spread-eagle by four officers and repeatedly kicked in the stomach and vagina by a matron named Robins, suffering a miscarriage as a result.

Despite police violence against MOVE individuals who had not even been born, many MOVE mothers did bear children, and did so naturally, without drugs or medical assistance, in accordance with JOHN AFRICA's teachings. Sue Africa, in spite of several police beatings throughout her pregnancy, had a son, Tomes, born at the 33rd street headquarters on August 4, 1975. Janine Africa's baby, Life Africa was born on March 8, 1976 but murdered by police less than a month later. (Tomes was later murdered by the city May 13, 1985.)

MOVE baby murdered

On March 28, 1976, seven jailed MOVE members were released late in the evening and arrived home after midnight. Officers in at least ten police cars and wagons pulled up in front of the 33rd Street house and said MOVE was creating a disturbance. When Chuck Africa told police to leave MOVE alone, officer Daniel Palermo grabbed him and began to beat him as other cops pulled out nightsticks and set upon MOVE members. Six MOVE men were arrested and beaten so viciously they suffered fractured skulls, concussions and chipped bones. Robert Africa was struck over the head with a nightstick that broke in two from the force of the blow. Janine Africa was trying to protect her husband Phil Africa, when she was grabbed by a cop, thrown to the ground with 3-week-old Life Africa in arms, and stomped until she was nearly unconscious. The baby's skull was crushed.

The next morning, MOVE notified the media that the police had brutally attacked them and that a baby had been murdered. An officer's hat and the broken nightstick were displayed outside MOVE headquarters. Police denied that any beatings took place or that a baby was killed. and claimed that the baby probably never existed because there was no birth certificate. They then arrested the member who had shown the hat and nightstick to the press, on charges of receiving stolen property. To prove the death to a skeptical media, MOVE invited the press and local politicians to dinner at their headquarters. Those accepting the invitation included city councilmen Joseph Coleman and Lucien Blackwell, and Blackwell's wife, Jannie. After the meal, the guests were shown the baby's body. (Jannie Blackwell herself was later elected to city council in 1991.)

MOVE's column in the *Philadelphia Tribune*, which had documented the birth of Life Africa 3 weeks earlier, ran a series of pieces covering the March 28th attack. Interviews with several neighbors who had witnessed the incident were featured. Yet no charges were filed against the officers involved in the baby's murder. Instead the District Attorney's office pursued prosecution of the six MOVE members arrested that night. MOVE was prepared to present evidence of a long-

standing Rizzo-directed campaign of harassment that culminated in the death of Life Africa.

But before all the testimony could be presented, Judge Merna Marshall dismissed the case, thereby thwarting the chance to prove a citywide conspiracy against MOVE in a court of law. Dismissing felony charges of aggravated assault on cops was virtually unheard of in Philadelphia.

1978 shoot-out

On August 8, 1978, a deadly end came to an almost year-long standoff with police over a court order requiring MOVE to vacate their Powelton Village house at 311 N 33rd Street. When police attempted entry, shooting erupted and Philadelphia Police Department officer James J. Ramp was killed by a shot to the back of the neck. MOVE representatives claimed that he was facing the house at the time and deny MOVE responsibility for his death. Seven other police officers, five firefighters, three MOVE members, and three bystanders were also injured.

The MOVE 9

Nine MOVE members were each sentenced to a maximum of 100 years in prison for third degree murder for Ramp's killing. Seven of the nine first became eligible for parole in the spring of 2008, but were denied it. Parole hearings now occur yearly.

