



MOVE

America's worst forgotten tragedy
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Only **twice in U.S. history** has the government willfully bombed its own citizens.

The first time was in the Greenwood district of Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921—otherwise known as the Black Wall Street Massacre, which has recently garnered lots of worthwhile attention. But the other tragedy is still mostly unknown...

On May 13th 1985, the Philadelphia city police—in coordination with the Mayor and the state government—dropped a bomb from a helicopter onto the family home of MOVE founder and peaceful revolutionary John Africa, killing six adults and five children, burning down 61 residential homes, and leaving 51 people homeless.

Now is the time to tell this story.

MOVE is a narrative, multi-season, limited television series that culminates with one of the most horrific social injustice incidents in American history—the MOVE bombing—but also explores the victories and atrocities that led to that fateful day in 1985, including the formation of the MOVE organization, rampant racism in the Philadelphia police system, the prosecution of “the MOVE 9” in 1978, and the ongoing fight for equality for all.

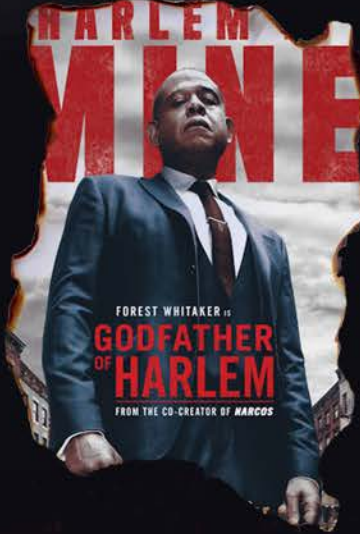




COMPS



SELMA
(2014)



**GODFATHER
OF HARLEM**
(2019)



DETROIT
(2017)



**WHEN THEY
SEE US**
(2019)

THE COORDINATOR

Before founding MOVE in the early 1970's, John Africa was known as Vincent Leaphart. He lost his mother at an early age and blamed the hospital where she was being treated for her death. This planted the seeds of distrust in "the system" which were later exacerbated when he was drafted into the Korean War.

Vincent developed a disdain for the American idea of social classes, and decided to change his name to John Africa to represent the continent where he believed life began. He grew his hair out into dreadlocks and wore a simple wardrobe of t-shirts and jeans. He began preaching the benefits of a raw foods diet and natural births. He believed in doing what was morally right.

Despite having an IQ of 79, being deemed "educationally retarded", and only completing four grades in school, **John Africa self-published a book titled *The Guidelines* to address the issues he cared about most: air pollution, animal abuse, child abuse, domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol, crime, manic depression, and police brutality.**

Through these words, he thoughtfully constructed a way of life for his loyal followers.



THE MOVEMENT

John Africa was 41 when he founded the MOVE organization and 54 when he was unceremoniously murdered by the state.

In those 13 years, he amassed a devoted following of peaceful, progressive, activists who believed as he did, including **Delbert, Janine, Janet, Eddie, Merle, Phil, Carlos, Sue, Pam, Rhonda, Ramona, Chuckie, Frank, C.P., Mike, Conrad, and Debbie**, who all adopted the surname Africa.

MOVE stood for causes that were revolutionary at the time: eating raw fruits and vegetables, naturalism, minimalism, etc. Unfortunately, their mission was misunderstood and, for decades, used inaccurately by the government and the media to denigrate and otherize the movement in the U.S and around the world.

They were made to look like savages.

THE BACKLASH

It wasn't long before the organization and its members became the target of the notoriously racist former Police Commissioner turned Mayor of Philadelphia, Frank Rizzo.

From 1972 to 1978, MOVE members were arrested 193 times and involved in 93 subsequent court cases due to peaceful protests, including those aimed at the Philadelphia Zoo.

MOVE believed animals should be uncaged and in their natural habitat. The organization's protests gained worldwide media attention and the support of American celebrities Jane Fonda, Dick Gregory, and Jesse Jackson.

Despite their nonviolent actions, MOVE members repeatedly experienced police beatings and aggression. These confrontations escalated and eventually resulted in a fatal standoff.

THE MOVE 9

On August 8th 1978—under the direction of former Police Commissioner and current Mayor, Frank Rizzo—the MOVE family home was surrounded by 500 police officers who riddled the house with thousands of bullets and released hundreds of gallons of water from deluge cannons. **Inside were men, women, children, and almost 50 rescue dogs the organization was caring for.**

In the haze of bullets that day, Officer James Ramp was killed.

Despite the evidence of their innocence, which pointed to friendly fire as the cause of death—evidence that was destroyed by bulldozers mere minutes after their arrest—**nine MOVE members were convicted of murder and sentenced to 30 to 100 years in prison.**

Eddie, Janet, Janine, Debbie, Merle, Phil, Chuck, Mike and Delbert became known as the MOVE 9, most of whom **spent over 40 years in prison** despite protesting their innocence the entire time.

Television cameras were rolling when police finally breached the flooded home and forced the members out, including Delbert Africa who was assaulted on film.

Officers beat him in the head with a helmet, broke his jaw with the butt of a shotgun, kicked him repeatedly, and dragged him by his dreadlocks. **Unfortunately, these stories of police brutality have remained relatively unchanged in the years since.**



Actual photos from Delbert's brutal beating at the hands of police

MORE ANTAGONISM

On May 13th, 1981, John Africa was charged with various weapons offenses and conspiracy by the Philadelphia federal court. He was tried along with his MOVE brother Alfonso Africa.

“The System v John Africa” proceeded on July 23rd. The prosecutor believed he had an air-tight case, and pursued John and Alfonso for the harshest punishment possible.

Undeterred, John represented himself and Alfonso in the case. The jury deliberated for 6 days, returning a verdict of not guilty on all charges. John had outwitted the Harvard-educated prosecutor.

John Africa was the first person in history to gain a victory over the Federal Government while representing himself in court.

THE MOVE BOMBING

While the MOVE 9 served their unjust prison sentences, John Africa and his remaining followers moved to a new part of town to continue their lives. They moved to a predominantly Black, middle class neighborhood, and continued to live their peaceful, raw diet lifestyle.

Not long after, the city attempted to evict them from their new home without just cause. **Then, on May 13th 1985, Mayor Wilson Goode and the Philadelphia city police led by Gregore Sambor dropped a bomb from a helicopter onto on the MOVE family home, killing visionary peacemaker John Africa in addition to 10 others.**

An entire city block was burnt to the ground, destroying over 60 homes and leaving more than 50 people homeless.

The MOVE bombing, one of America's worst tragedies, has been criminally underreported and almost forgotten...until now.

THE AFTERMATH



IN MEMORY

of those lost in the bombing

John Africa (54)

Raymond Africa (50)

Conrad Africa (36)

Frank Africa (26)

Rhonda Africa (30)

Theresa Africa (26)

Katricia Africa (15)

Zanetta Africa (13)

Delitia Africa (13)

Phil Africa (12)

Tomaso Africa (9)



THE LEGACY

In 2017, students from the Jubilee School of Philadelphia successfully petitioned the city to place a marker at the site of the MOVE bombing:

The students went to Osage Avenue to commemorate the MOVE bombing and to witness the impact first hand, including the poorly rebuilt houses, many now uninhabitable. The trip's goal was to uncover why the city wouldn't acknowledge what the police did in the Philadelphia Black community over 32 years ago. During this visit, they noticed there was no marker, applied for it and started raising funds.

Students repeatedly asked why those responsible for the murderous assault were never held accountable. They said this failure helped pave the way for the current epidemic of police brutality." (Workers World)





A bronze statue of Frank Rizzo was erected in front of the Municipal Service Building facing Philadelphia City Hall in 1999. Calls for the statue's removal had grown louder in recent years and led to a pledge to have the it gone by 2021. However, **in the wake of the social unrest ignited by the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other victims of state-sponsored violence**, protestors were able to start what the city had to finish:

“Philadelphia took a step to heal a notable scar from its past early Wednesday morning by quietly removing the statue of the former mayor Frank Rizzo, who took a confrontational approach to black and gay people as police commissioner in the 1960s and ’70s.

But even as the city carted away the bronze statue, long criticized as a symbol of racism and division, it still had to confront fresh anger from protesters decrying police brutality as well as a wave of looting and destruction that have evoked some of the anguish of Mr. Rizzo’s era.” (The New York Times)

CITY

Good Riddance: The Frank Rizzo Statue Has Been Removed

In a statement announcing the removal, Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney called it “a deplorable monument to racism.”

The New York Times

Race and America > N.Y.P.D.'s Response to Protesters Three Weeks, 70 Cases George Floyd Transcripts Lessons from Camden, N.J.

Philadelphia Removes Statue Seen as Symbol of Racism and Police Abuse

Demonstrators had tried to topple the statue of Frank Rizzo, the former mayor and police commissioner accused of police abuses in the 1960s and 70s.

npr wnyc

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Frank Rizzo Statue Is Removed In Philadelphia: 'It Is Finally Gone,' Mayor Says

June 3, 2020 · 12:30 PM ET

BILL CHAPPELL

Jim #MaskUpPHL Kenney @PhillyMayor

The statue represented bigotry, hatred, and oppression for too many people, for too long. It is finally gone.

6:24 AM · Jun 3, 2020

20.1K 5.1K people are Tweeting about this

PRESENT DAY

This past February, Chuck Africa was released from prison, and so ended the incarceration of the final member of the MOVE 9. **Unfortunately, Merle and Phil Africa died in prison, never getting to experience freedom.** Delbert Africa died this past June, after getting to see his family in freedom for the first time in four decades.

Ramona Africa, the lone survivor of the bombing, served 7 years in prison for “inciting a riot” as a result of the local government’s destruction of it’s own city. **She regularly speaks out on the brutality the Black community suffers at the hands of police and state violence.**

The MOVE Family continues to work in favor of the principals they were founded on all those years ago, proving that you can’t stop the fight.





Ramona Africa



Carlos Africa



Janet Africa



Sue Africa



Janine Africa



Eddie Africa



Pam Africa



Consuewella Africa



Debbie Africa



Mike Africa



Chuck Africa

REST IN PEACE



Delbert Africa



Merle Africa



Phil Africa



MOVE has a global following from Philadelphia to France to Dubai. Recent rallies in Philly at the former MOVE house have garnered thousands of supporters.

The goal of the series—in addition to telling the long-buried story of MOVE—is to raise awareness of police brutality, prison reform, and the MOVE revolutionary movement.

Millennials and Gen Z have shown a new level of dedication and compassion to social activist movements, it's clear there's a strong opportunity to connect with these demographics in a meaningful way.

Additionally, the project is perfectly situated for strategic partnerships with organizations such as the SPCA, PETA, REFORM Alliance, Coachella, Rolling Loud, 420, Made in America, etc.

There is a burning hunger for the truth of history to come out, and this is a truth that must be told.



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