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MOVE: Philadelphia's Forgotten Bombing

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In a fortified rowhouse in West Philadelphia, a bomb dropped by Philadelphia Police killed eleven MOVE members, including five children, and burned down sixty-five other houses after a lengthy standoff between the two groups. MOVE was a cult-like organization which eschewed technology, medicine and western clothing, where members lived communally, ate raw food, left garbage on their yards, and proselytized with a loudspeaker, frustrating the residents of Osage Avenue. The MOVE Bombing or what is called “May 13, 1985” in West Philadelphia, was a pivotal moment in the mayoral reign of Wilson Goode and was the first time a U.S. city bombed itself. The bomb dropped on the MOVE rowhouse with only marginal consequences to the city government because of previous encounters with MOVE and antipathy in the public towards the MOVE organization resulting in the group falling into obscurity.¹

¹ For further reading on cults in America, see Willa Appel, *Cults in America: Programmed for Paradise* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1983) which discusses the phenomenon of cults and how one is indoctrinated or breaks out of a cult. For further reading on African Americans and institutions see Dorothy K. Neman, *Protest, Politics and Prosperity: Black Americans and White Institutions, 1940-1975* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) or Annette Gordon-Reed, ed., *Race on Trial: Law and Justice in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) which discuss how African-Americans were treated by the police and in the court as well as other white dominated institutions during this period. For more on the MOVE organization, see J.M. Floyd-Thomas, “The Burning of Rebellious Thoughts: MOVE as Revolutionary Black Humanism,” *The Black Scholar* 32, no.1 (Spring 2002): 11-21 which argues MOVE was a radical and religious group which exemplified revolutionary black humanist thinking. To find more on the effect of the media on the perception of MOVE, see Kimberly Sanders and Judson Jeffries, “Framing MOVE: A Press’ Complicity in the Murder of Women and Children in the City of (Un) Brotherly Love,” *Journal of African American Studies* 17, no. 4 (December 2013): 566-586, which discusses how the coverage by the press led to an attitude of antipathy towards the MOVE organization. For more on the MOVE bombing and its aftermath, see Robin Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction: The City of Philadelphia versus MOVE* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Hizkias Assefa, *Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution: The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia* (New York: Praeger, 1988); Margot Harry, “Attention MOVE—This is America!,” *Sage Journals* 28, no. 4 (April 1987): 5-28; Georgia A. Persons, “The Philadelphia MOVE Incident as an Anomaly in Models of Mayoral Leadership,” *Phylon* 48, no. 4 (December 1987): 249-260; or John Anderson and Hilary Hevenor, *Burning Down the House: MOVE and the Tragedy of Philadelphia* (New York: Norton, 1987) which all discuss the bombing and how it affected the city of Philadelphia and the city government. Some primary sources are the records of the Philadelphia Special Investigation into the MOVE Incident at Temple University and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* which reported on the MOVE and the bombing while it was occurring.

Vincent Leaphart founded the American Christian Movement for Life, later shortened to MOVE, in 1972 in West Philadelphia and changed his name to John Africa. MOVE was primarily a black organization, although white people could join as well. As an antisystem, antitechnology group, its members ate only a diet of raw fruits, vegetables, nuts and eggs, used no technology, medicine or western clothing, and disposed their garbage in the backyard and used outhouses instead of conventional toilets. The children of MOVE, who were not allowed to attend school, were illiterate, and had never eaten cooked food or watched television. These were the first “pure” members of MOVE: they were raised to never be exposed to the corrupting influences of social and political institutions. Members protested outside of zoos or pet stores, often leading to arrests though the police did not believe MOVE was even potentially violent during the early 1970s.²

The other residents of Powelton Village did not have a great opinion of MOVE, which lived communally in three townhouses in the neighborhood. Powelton Village, located near Drexel University and the University of Pennsylvania, was a diverse and tolerant community and a haven for political activists. In 1976, neighbors began complaining about children playing in the yard without diapers and in unsanitary conditions. Due to Powelton residents’ complaints, the police set up twenty-four-hour surveillance on the MOVE townhouses. The next year, MOVE members began to sit out on the porch holding rifles, wearing berets, and using loudspeakers to lecture their

² Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction*, 27-29; Sanders, and Jeffries, “Framing MOVE,” Complicity in the Murder of Women and Children in the City of (Un) Brotherly Love,” 566-586; Floyd-Thomas, “The Burning of Rebellious Thoughts,” 11-21; Jack N. Nagel, “Psychological Obstacles to Administrative Responsibility: Lessons of the MOVE Disaster,” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 1-23; Assefa, *Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution*, 14-15.

neighbors. MOVE already held a reputation as a radical black organization, much like the Black Panthers, because of MOVE's emergence during the "Black Power" era. Many in Philadelphia believed that the public display of weapons to be the start of the organization becoming more militant.³

Tensions between the city and MOVE began to rise as neighbors in Powelton continued complaining about MOVE's actions and as the police department's surveillance of MOVE began to infuriate them. In the year between 1977 and 1978, MOVE left bomb-timing devices, though no explosives, in several hotels across the nation as well as in London. These devices were left with threatening letters stating that MOVE would strike for real unless Philadelphia stopped its harassment. The organization had begun a feud with the then-Mayor Frank Rizzo, who had previously served as Philadelphia's Police Commissioner and ran for mayor on a law-and-order campaign. MOVE's residency in Powelton Village came to a head in 1978 after the May 5th Agreement between MOVE and the city disintegrated. The city and MOVE agreed that the city would end the blockade and within 90 days MOVE members would relocate to a residence outside the city. MOVE saw the city as at the heart of the issue, and they stayed past the 90-day limit. While several organizations active in Powelton Village at the time were either pro-MOVE or supported negotiation with MOVE to allow them to stay in the neighborhood, MOVE and the police engaged in a protracted firefight resulting in the death of one policeman, Officer James Ramp, and the sentencing of nine MOVE members to jail for the officer's death.⁴

³ Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction*, 29-31; Nagel, "Psychological Obstacles to Administrative Responsibility", pages; Floyd-Thomas, "The Burning of Rebellious Thoughts," 11-21.

⁴ Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction*, 30-32; Nagel, "Psychological Obstacles to Administrative Responsibility," 1-23; Assefa, *Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution*, 20-37; Nine members of MOVE were convicted in the shooting of Officer James Ramp during the 1978 shootout with the police and were sentenced with thirty to one hundred years in prison. These members are known collectively as "The MOVE Nine".

After being forced out of Powelton Village, MOVE took up residence in a townhouse on Osage Avenue in Cobs Creek, West Philadelphia. At first, MOVE and the residents of Osage coexisted peacefully. In time, however, tensions began to grow as lifestyle differences emerged and the neighbors began complaining. MOVE left their garbage outside, collected animals and fed them food, they would take the neighbor's pets and remove their flea collars and they built pigeon coops. Most distressing to Osage Avenue residents was the MOVE children appeared to be malnourished and rummaged through their trash looking for food. The neighbors were told Wilson Goode would help them if they would just wait until after he had become mayor, but in late 1983 after the mayoral election, MOVE began to use bullhorns and loudspeakers to harass their neighbors.⁵

MOVE believed Mayor Goode had the ability to release the jailed MOVE 9 members, and they knew if they began to harass residents of Osage Avenue, a middle-class neighborhood and the bedrock of Goode's political support, the city would have to do pay attention to them. After he won the mayoral election, despite MOVE holding the block hostage to obtain the release of fellow members, Goode used a policy of avoidance, appeasement, and non-confrontation towards MOVE, attempting to avoid conflict in any way possible. City Operating Departments—Health, Water, Human Services, Streets—were barred by city policy from carrying out their responsibilities at the MOVE rowhouse. City officials believed MOVE would stop its harassment once they realized the city was ignoring them and would either change their belligerent behavior or leave the city. This

⁵ Assefa, *Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution*, 102-108; Nagel, "Psychological Obstacles to Administrative Responsibility," 1-23.

policy of non-confrontation and avoidance proved ineffective, and in 1984 the Philadelphia Police began to plan a course of action against MOVE, one of the first signs of what was to come.⁶

Mayor Goode told the police he needed a plan of action against MOVE in the spring of 1985. He wanted to explore the possibilities of arresting some MOVE members and obtaining a court order to hold the children. MOVE began fortifying their rowhouse in earnest in the fall of 1984 and the winter of 1985, building a bunker made of railroad ties, logs and steel plates on the top of their house and they used similar material to fortify the walls. In April 1985 they announced with bullhorns their intentions to kill the mayor or any police officer who approached the fortified MOVE house. Neighbors claimed they had seen men with rifles on the roof and in the bunker of the house and they held a press conference where they threatened to take matters into their own hands. On the morning of May 13, 1985, the police attempted to serve warrants for the arrests of four MOVE members. These warrants were for misdemeanor charges and primarily served to get MOVE out of the neighborhood. Mayor Goode also required that any officers involved in the 1978 shooting not be involved in the operation on Osage, but despite this, several of those officers were present in the assault force. At 5:30 A.M. outside the MOVE rowhouse, police used a bullhorn to announce the names of the members to be arrested for illegal possession of explosives and terroristic threats and gave the members fifteen minutes to surrender. MOVE refused. Police insertion teams then entered the houses on either side of the rowhouse. In response, MOVE shot at the police force from inside of the house. Over the next hour and a half, the Philadelphia police fired over 10,000 rounds of ammunition on the rowhouse and used explosives to blow holes in the walls. By 10:40 A.M. the front of the house was destroyed, but the fortifications MOVE had

⁶ Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction*, 32, 82-85; Nagel, "Psychological Obstacles to Administrative Responsibility," 1-23; Assefa, *Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution*, 110-111; Persons, "The Philadelphia MOVE Incident as an Anomaly in Models of Mayoral Leadership," 249-260.

installed in the winter had held, preventing the police from seizing the house. When it became clear their tactics had failed, Mayor Goode, during a televised press conference, announced he would take the house by any means necessary.⁷

After the press conference, the police began to plan another way to force out the eleven people in the house, including the use of explosives. They began assembling an explosive entry device around 4:30 P.M., and around fifteen minutes later, Mayor Goode approved the use of the entry device. Then, at 5:27 P.M., the police dropped an explosive package from a helicopter onto the bunker of the MOVE house. When the bomb exploded it did not remove the bunker; rather, it ignited a gasoline tank. Instead of trying to contain the resulting blaze, the police and fire commissioners decided to let the bunker burn. It was not until 6:32 P.M. that the fire department turned on its hoses and it took until 9:30 P.M. for them to take more active steps to contain the fire. The fire raged on until 11:41 P.M. engulfing 61 homes, damaging 110 houses, killing John Africa and the ten other occupants of the MOVE house, five of them children, and leaving 250 men, women, and children homeless.⁸

The bombing of the MOVE rowhouse should have been pivotal event in the history of Philadelphia, showing the incompetence of city officials in an explosive finale. Yet, after the bombing, Mayor Goode and the Philadelphia Police Department received an outcry of support from around the country. The Los Angeles Police Chief at the time, Daryl Gates, defended the use of an explosive device, declaring it “a sound tactic”. Gates also stated “[Mayor Goode] has provided some of the finest leadership [he had] ever seen from any politician” and that he hoped

⁷Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction*, 87-94; Assefa, *Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution*, 111-113; Nagel, “Psychological Obstacles to Administrative Responsibility,” 1-23.

⁸Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction*, 95-96; Assefa, *Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution*, 113; Nagel, “Psychological Obstacles to Administrative Responsibility,” 1-23.

“[Mayor Goode] ran for national office”. Michael Nutter, then an assistant to a city councilman said “[MOVE] is a group of people whose philosophy is based on conflict and confrontation”. Roy Innis, who was the chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), called Mayor Goode’s handling of the crisis “heroic”. Tom Cremans, the former director of Accuracy Systems Inc which sells munitions to police departments, said “the police exercised remarkable restraint in not using the device earlier”. However, the bomb squads of many cities were reluctant to comment on the incident, not wishing to criticize their fellow officers.⁹

Despite those speaking in favor of the mayor and the Philadelphia Police Department, not all law enforcement officers were complimentary of Philadelphia’s handling of the MOVE crisis. The director of the American Federation of Police, Gerald Arenberg, believed “They broke every rule in the book” when it came to their handling of the MOVE incident and the bombing. James Fife, a police lieutenant in New York City, described it by saying, “They burned down the village to save the village” before continuing, adding that the actions taken by the Philadelphia Police Department were “really unheard of”. According to Fife and Arenberg, many police departments have small armored tanks that can be used to batter doors down without endangering the lives of the officers and Arenberg stated the Philadelphia police “just weren’t using all the equipment available to any modern police department”. The MOVE bombing captured the attention of the world, and as many law enforcement agencies weighed in on the actions of the Philadelphia police, so too did the media, both national and international.¹⁰

⁹ Ron Wolf, William K. Marimow, Steve Lopez and John Woestendiek, “How the Bomb Decision was Made,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 17, 1985; Tom Infield, Doreen Carvajal and Robert J. Terry, “MOVE Letter Threatened Fire Two Days Prior to Assault,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 20, 1985; William K. Stevens, “Police Drop Bomb on Radicals’ Home in Philadelphia,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1985.

¹⁰ Tim Weiner, “Experts on Police Procedure Criticize Bombing of House,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 15, 1985.

The media took a largely critical view of the MOVE incident and Mayor Goode. Many newspapers around the world were unsympathetic to the siege of the MOVE rowhouse and called Philadelphia a “war zone”. Front-pages of many newspapers showed pictures of smoldering rowhouses in West Philadelphia. The *Washington Post* referred to the pictures as resembling “war-torn Beirut” and the *New York Daily News* called the bombing “a terrible, unnecessary, and costly blunder”. The MOVE bombing attracted national attention with newspapers in France paying considerable attention to the MOVE incident, the *France-Soir* had an aerial photo of the devastation and *Liberation*, a French tabloid, called the incident “one of the most unbelievable urban guerrilla operations that America has ever known”. In Moscow, a newscaster reported: “six dead, 60 houses destroyed, hundreds homeless—such is the sinister result of a bloody slaughter which was launched by police”. The *San Francisco Chronicle* was extremely harsh in its criticism, writing there was “no excuse” for the bombing and it was “an astonishing example of overkill”. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* was also critical, calling it reckless and including comments from people such as Burton Caine, the president of the Philadelphia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) who called the bombing “totally unjustified” and New York Mayor Edward Koch who stated that “if [he] had a police commissioner so stupid to allow a bomb to be thrown into a house, [he] would remove him”. The *Dallas Morning News* focused on the residents of the 6200 block of Osage. One resident, Kevin Young, called the bombing “unjustifiable” and said Osage “is not a battle zone”. Harry Smeck, another resident, said that he was “totally

disgusted” with the city and how it had handled the crisis. These harsh comments about the administration and its action were widespread after May 13, 1985 and its actions that day.¹¹

Despite all these critical reports, some newspapers were more supportive of Philadelphia and the mayor. The *New York Times* referred to MOVE as a radical group, focused more on the complaints from the neighbors against MOVE and framed the incident as a city reacting against behavior that was well out of the norm for a working-class African-American neighborhood. In the *Times* article, Dee Peoples, the owner of a store two blocks away from the MOVE house, said that “all you hear is aggression. You sleep with it, you wake up with it, you live with it” about living near MOVE. The *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote about MOVE’s strange philosophy and how while it was, in theory, a “philosophy of anti-materialism, pacifism and concern for the environment,” in practice “its history was replete with violence, obscenity and filth”. The *Chronicle* article stated that Donald Glassey testified John Africa “had planned an armed confrontation with police and had MOVE members make bombs and buy fire arms”. The *Lexington Herald-Leader*, like the *Times*, described MOVE as a radical organization and framed the siege as MOVE refusing “to leave the house under an eviction order from police”. The *Herald* article also discussed the neighbors’ complaints of “assaults, robberies, and a stench at the house”. The Philadelphia administration’s actions during this crisis were highly criticized and opinion on

¹¹ Jane Eisner, “Media Blitz West Philadelphia Disaster Makes Front-Page Headlines Around the World,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 16, 1985; “Police Overkill,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 15, 1985; “Police Tactics Questioned – Experts Call Use Of Explosives in Siege Situations ‘Reckless’,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, May 15, 1985; “225 Left Homeless By Philadelphia Fire – Uprooted Residents Sorrowful, Angry; Mayor Defends MOVE Incident,” *The Dallas Morning News*, May 15, 1985.

them was highly divided among news sources around the city and the globe, but it was a much different story among the Philadelphia public.¹²

Many of the Philadelphian public believed they were receiving biased news reports from the media. One woman from Valley Forge stated she “believed the mayor did a commendable job,” and “[the press was] questioning the mayor too much”. Many tourists visiting Philadelphia in the aftermath of the bombing had a similar reaction: “MOVE? It could have happened anywhere.” There was no feeling the MOVE incident would negatively affect Philadelphia from those visiting. One resident of Northeast Philadelphia, Eli Teper, complained the police “used too little force” and “criminals should be treated as such.” Some, like Steward Beatty, also of Northeast Philadelphia, thought the bombing was justified and it was “nice to see that somebody can still make decisions instead of doing nothing,” while a tourist from Mississippi, Felix Kogan, agreed completely with the actions taken against MOVE, and like him, some in Philadelphia supported the police actions against MOVE. Steve Harmon, a resident of West Philadelphia, said the bombing of MOVE was “like Vietnam”. While the media and the police around the country were divided on the MOVE incident, most people in Philadelphia appeared to see it as a tragedy but were overall still supportive of the mayor and the city.¹³

The media discussion about the incident shifted closer to the view of the public: while it was a tragedy, most blame rested on the shoulders of MOVE. Two days before the bombing, MOVE sent a letter threatening to set fire to their rowhouse and the neighboring house should the

¹² Eisner, “Media Blitz West Philadelphia Disaster,”; Stevens, “Police Drop Bomb on Radicals’ Home in Philadelphia,”; “MOVE’s Strange Philosophy of Militancy and Escapism,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 15, 1985; “Radical Group Holds Police at Bay,” *Lexington Herald-Leader*, May 14, 1985. Donald Glassey was a MOVE member who became a government informant.

¹³ Joyce Gemperlein, “Visitors Say the City’s Image Will Survive,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 19, 1985; Stevens, “Police Drop Bomb on Radicals’ Home in Philadelphia.”

police attack. This letter began, “If MOVE go down, not only will everyone in this block go down, the knee joints of America will break and the body of America will soon fall.” Then the letter threatened, “Before we let you mutha f-s [sic] make an example of us we will burn this mutha f-in [sic] house down and burn you all up with us”. The city administration began using the letter to attempt to paint MOVE as the group that began the fire that burnt down sixty-one houses and killed eleven people. The Police Commissioner Gregore Sambor stated it was his “personal opinion” that MOVE “started or assisted” the fire. Commissioner Sambor went on to say he was “convinced that MOVE people saturated those roofs with gasoline”. Mayor Goode said the letter showed MOVE was “a group that was bent on absolute destruction, a group that was, in fact, a guerilla group inside an urban area”. The Mayor also stated that the release of the letter was not meant as evidence that MOVE started the fire but that the letter “says what it says, in [his] opinion”.¹⁴

In lockstep with the theory of MOVE burning down the street, the city began to discuss how the entry device used was extremely safe and could not have caused the fire. The explosive device used in the bombing was known as Tovex TR-2, manufactured by the Du Pont Company, who described Tovex TR-2 as “one of the safest explosives on the market”. Before the decision to use Tovex as the explosive device on the MOVE house, the Philadelphia Police Department secretly tested different explosives on lumber structures; however, Tovex TR-2 was not meant for above ground buildings but was instead developed for underground use primarily in mining. The media began to use the Du Pont Company’s label of Tovex as an extremely safe explosive to push the idea the fire was not the fault of the city. Mayor Goode took issue with the word bomb as well, explaining that “what [he] approved to be used was an entry device, which was to take and

¹⁴ Tom Infield, Doreen Carvajal and Robert J. Terry, “MOVE Letter Threatened Fire Sent Two Days Prior to Assault,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 20, 1985. The MOVE letter is transcribed in “MOVE Letter Threatened Fire Sent Two Days Prior to Assault.”

somehow remove the bunker from the top of the house. There was no intent to destroy the house”. The city attempted to paint MOVE as the aggressors, thereby framing the actions they had undertaken as merely providing law and order.¹⁵

Shortly after the bombing, and amid calls for an official investigation into the administration’s actions, Mayor Goode announced his intentions to create a special investigation into the event. A special commission which had no members of the Goode administration, would examine the incident. William J. Green, Mayor Goode’s predecessor, said the MOVE Special Commission “has serious, tough questions to ask [the] administration about how it conducted itself” and “there are many, many unanswered questions and in some cases contradictions that cannot and should not and must not...be swept under the rug”. The former mayor also said the city should release the police intelligence files on MOVE so “everyone in Philadelphia would know what the premise of [the] decisions were”. Despite Green’s harsh words on the city’s actions, Robert S. Hurst, the then president of Lodge 5 of the Fraternal Order of Police, said “the ultimate responsibility of the widespread property destruction remains squarely on the members of this terrorist organization known as MOVE” and public opinion in Philadelphia supported this idea. In a poll conducted by Teichner Associates of Philadelphia, 71 percent of respondents believed the mayor did a good or excellent job dealing with MOVE. Even with the support from the Philadelphia public, the commission was necessary for answering the questions on the city’s actions during this incident.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ron Wolf, William K. Marimow, Steve Lopez and John Woestendiek, “How the Bomb Decision was Made,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 17, 1985; Infield, Carvajal and Terry, “MOVE Letter Threatened.”

¹⁶ Larry Eichel and Robin Clark, “MOVE Death Toll Reaches 11 Goode to Pick Panel for Probe,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 16, 1985.

The MOVE Special Commission hired several people to conduct their investigation. James R. Phelan, one of the FBI's explosive and counterespionage experts before he left the bureau two years earlier, and Charles King, an expert in the cause and spread of fires, were brought in to investigate the explosives used in the bombing. The original report on the explosive device indicated the only explosive used was Tovex TR-2. However, three months after the incident, Officer William C. Klein, testified he had also included C-4 in the device when he had assembled it. The commission also hired six other investigators to work underneath the lead investigator, Neil P. Shanahan. These investigators came from Connecticut, Chicago, Virginia, Maryland, as well as the Philadelphia area. William H. Brown III, the chairman of the commission, said the "search for the highest-quality, professional investigators [was] long and wide-ranging". Brown added these investigators brought "the skills and expertise essential for the investigation to fulfill its mandate". The investigators specialized in anti-terrorist programs, major violent crime, and homicide. As the inquiry continued, it became very critical of how the city managed the MOVE incident.¹⁷

As the MOVE Commission's hearings occurred, these testimonies began to paint Mayor Goode in an unflattering light. In his testimony, the mayor portrayed himself as misinformed and misled by his subordinates; he was as much a victim as a leader. He depicted himself as a leader who confirmed the decisions others made. This was odd, as Goode's managing style as both city manager and mayor was very detail oriented. An assistant to the District Attorney, Bernard L. Siegel, testified before the grand jury that he had heard "the mayor [say] to the police commissioner, 'You are the professional and you need not keep me advised of all the details'". When the District Attorney, Ed Rendell, was asked about this statement, he thought it was

¹⁷ Larry Eichel, "MOVE Commission hires Former FBI Explosives Expert," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 6, 1985; Larry Eichel, "Commission Hires 6 Investigators", *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 19, 1985. Investigators named in article are Clyde E. Berry, James J. Creaturo, Frank L. Eccles, Albert J. Jordan, Thomas J. Mowrer, and Edward Scott Jr.

“somewhat unusual for Wilson [Goode]” before adding that the mayor’s “management style has always been to get involved in all the significant details”. The hearing revealed the mayor’s attempts to distance himself from the MOVE incident as it was occurring by purposefully asking to not get all the details. This opened Goode up to considerable criticism, the most significant from former Mayor William Green, who said Goode was pushing a theory of “reverse Nuremberg” responsibility, he could not be responsible for the incident because he had only accepted the recommendations from his subordinates. Charles Bowser, a member of the commission, criticized Goode in a less direct way, stating “the only person who had the foggiest notion of what was going to happen when the bomb dropped was a police lieutenant”. While these hearings demonstrated there was a major issue between MOVE and the other residents of the 6200 block of Osage, they also showed there had been poor communication and inaccurate or incomplete intelligence on the organization and incompetent leadership.¹⁸

When the MOVE Special Commission reached a decision on the actions of the administration and the police, their report stated Mayor Goode and his administration displayed “reckless disregard for life and property” in their actions. The report stated, “dropping a bomb on an occupied rowhouse was unconscionable and should have been rejected out of hand” and “the plan to drop the bomb was reckless, ill-conceived, and hastily approved”. Commissioner Gregore Sambor and Managing Director Leo A. Brooks were declared “grossly negligent” for not calling off the siege. The report also called the mayor “grossly negligent” in his actions and said he “clearly risked the lives” of the children who had been killed in the house and this was “unjustified homicide”. Within the report, the commission condemned the mayor saying he “failed to perform

¹⁸ Larry Eichel, “D.A.: Goode Wanted No Details\ Rendell Testifies on MOVE,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 23, 1985.

his responsibility as the city's chief executive by not actively participating in the preparation, review, and oversight of the plan". Goode "abdicated his responsibilities as a leader when, after midday, he permitted a clearly failed operation to continue [posing] great risk to life and property". Despite believing MOVE to be an "authoritarian, violence-threatening cult," the report declared the 10,000 rounds of ammunition fired into the rowhouse had been "excessive and unreasonable" and "the failure of those responsible for the firing to control or stop such an excessive amount of force was unconscionable" especially with children inside the building. The commission's findings were overwhelmingly negative for Mayor Goode, and though this could have caused him to lose popularity within the city, that was not the case.¹⁹

The MOVE Special Commission's harsh criticisms of Mayor Goode were labeled as devastating by allies of the mayor, but the newspaper coverage of the report was largely supportive. An editorial in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, written shortly after the report was released, stated the author "[disagreed] with those who think Wilson Goode should resign", and noted Philadelphians should not just judge the mayor on the MOVE incident, but should instead "judge him on his entire first term". Mayor Goode also received a large outcry of support from his church followers after the report. The *Inquirer* reported "more than 250 people...gathered to pray for Mayor Goode", and the Reverend U. O. Ifill Sr. described the prayer services as "a demonstration of the endemic support the mayor has in the black community". Despite the findings of the MOVE Special Commission, Mayor Goode's support in the city stayed strong and only grew.²⁰

¹⁹ Thomas Ferrick Jr., "Report on MOVE Finds Goode 'Grossly Negligent' in Decisions Children's 'Homicide' is Alleged," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 2, 1986.

²⁰ Acel Moore, "Bringing On The Problems Wilson Goode Sometimes Is His Own Worst Enemy," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 20, 1986. Russell Cooke, "Praying For Goode: The Faithful Rise Up," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 13, 1986.

Over the next couple of years after the MOVE disaster, Wilson Goode's reputation began to recover. In an interview more than a year after the MOVE incident, Goode said that "[he] had some difficult days and difficult times in [his] administration, but [he had] done a lot of good, constructive things". John F. White Jr., a city councilman, said "the administration has demonstrated far more experience over [the] year". Goode's reputation slowly recovered as the incident faded from memory, overshadowed by more flattering endeavors such as Goode successfully ending a strike involving 14,000 city employees, which created more confidence in him and his administration. During this period, the city had a major trash and sanitation issue which Mayor Goode proposed a trash-to-steam plant to be built in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. When several police officers were arrested on bribery and corruption charges, Mayor Goode was able to help restore confidence in the Police Department by implementing a reform package aimed at restructuring the department. It seemed, in the initial aftermath of the MOVE disaster, that Goode's political career was over, but over the following two years he worked tirelessly to repair his image.²¹

In 1988, his reputation restored and with the city's collective goodwill, Goode ran for reelection against former mayor and police commissioner Frank Rizzo. It was a highly contested election, with the difference being only a slim margin of 17,176 votes out of 652,307 total votes. In Rizzo's concession speech, he warned Mayor Goode that he would "have to deliver or [he is] going to be right on him". Despite all the bad publicity that his actions against MOVE had brought

²¹ Russell Cooke, "For Goode, A Year of Recovery," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 4, 1987; Robin Clark, "Police Reforms Unveiled Goode Begins Search for Chief," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 20, 1985; Thomas Ferrick Jr., "Report on MOVE Finds Goode 'Grossly Negligent' in Decisions Children's 'Homicide' is Alleged";

him, Goode's rehabilitation of his image helped him beat Rizzo and become mayor for his second term.²²

Thirty years after the MOVE bombing, National Public Radio looked back at MOVE and learned that, despite the amount of media coverage it had at the time, many younger Philadelphians never even knew it had occurred. Tasneema Raja, an editor on an NPR show who grew up only twenty minutes north of Philadelphia never learned about MOVE in class, only learning about it from her father. Gene Demby, also from NPR, who grew up in South Philadelphia in the 1980s never discussed MOVE in class. Robin Wagner-Pacifici, who studies fringe radical groups at the New School, believes that other radical groups never identified with MOVE's antitechnology, pro-animal rights, and quasi-Rastafarian beliefs leading the group to be forgotten when discussing these radical groups. These groups, such as the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas and the Weaver family in Ruby Ridge, Idaho had beliefs which overlapped and mentioned each other in their manifestos, but "none of them mentioned MOVE". Unlike the Branch Davidians who faced off against the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, or the Weaver Family who were sieged by the FBI, the Philadelphia police department bombed MOVE. This was not a showdown between a fringe radical group and the federal government, but with the local government. A lack of connection between the general public and MOVE's core beliefs, as well as the city's general ambivalence toward the group, have caused the MOVE bombing to fade into obscurity.²³

²² Christopher Hepp and H. G. Bissinger, "Rizzo Concedes Defeat Says He'll Remain Active in Politics," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 24, 1987.

²³ Gene Demby, "I'm From Philly. 30 Years Later, I'm Still Trying To Make Sense Of The MOVE Bombing," *National Public Radio*, May 13, 2015, accessed November 4, 2018, <<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/05/13/406243272/im-from-philly-30-years-later-im-still-trying-to-make-sense-of-the-move-bombing>>. Gene Demby, "Why Have So Many People Never Heard Of The MOVE Bombing?," *National Public Radio*, May 18, 2015, accessed November 4, 2018, <<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/05/18/407665820/why-did-we-forget-the-move-bombing>>.

Goode's victory over Rizzo for a second term as mayor was the first sign that the MOVE incident held minimal lasting significance to the city outside of Osage Avenue. The second sign was that schools in Philadelphia do not teach about MOVE, children living in Philadelphia do not learn about a major event in the history of the city. An event where the mayor bombs their own city, destroying sixty-one houses and killing eleven people, five being children. The MOVE bombing should have ended Wilson Goode's political career, as well as the careers of the others involved in the decision making that led to the siege of the MOVE rowhouse and subsequent bombing of its bunker. This should have been an event woven into the very fabric of the city, instead it was forgotten—the perpetrators allowed to stay in office and to repair their image, their victims faded into obscurity.

The MOVE bombing is an enormous black spot in the history of Philadelphia, and yet its occurrence is rarely, if ever, mentioned. That the bombing held no lasting impact in the psyche of Philadelphia is an affront to the deaths of those eleven MOVE members. While something needed to be done about MOVE, bombing their rowhouse was too far. Despite two grand juries on the bombing, no one from the city administration ever faced any consequences resulting from their part in burning down sixty-one houses and killing eleven people. That there has been no major lasting effect on the city of Philadelphia as a result of the MOVE bombing is a disgrace and a disservice to those whose homes burned in the blaze and those who perished as a result of the city's actions.

Annotated Bibliography

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 1985.

The only major daily newspaper in Atlanta, Georgia, historically conservative. The *Journal-Constitution* had some largely critical articles about the police action against MOVE.

Dallas Morning News, 1985.

A usually conservative newspaper primarily focused on Dallas, the *Morning News* reported briefly on the MOVE bombing and was very critical of the Philadelphia Police Department and the Mayor's actions.

National Public Radio, 2015.

NPR is a news organization that seeks to create a more informed public, it reported on MOVE and the city thirty years after the events of the MOVE bombing, attempting to understand the bombing 30 years later and trying to understand why no one has heard about it in Philadelphia.

The New York Times, 1985.

The *New York Times* is a highly respected newspaper that prides itself on accurate and unbiased reporting, it had a couple of articles involving MOVE during the 1980s, offering support and criticism of each side in the conflict.

Lexington Herald-Leader, 1985.

The *Herald-Leader* is a newspaper focused in Lexington, that ran several articles on the MOVE bombing and the police, all of which were critical of the bombing.

Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission (MOVE) records, 1954-1986. Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission. Temple University Library.

The Special Investigation into the MOVE Bombing was ordered by Mayor Goode and investigated into the incident and held televised hearings on the bombing. These are the records taken by that investigation

The Philadelphia Inquirer, 1985-1987.

The *Inquirer* reported on the MOVE organization and the bombing of it as well as many other events including the 1978 shootout involving MOVE and the police, some of these articles were critical of the police or of MOVE, while others were supportive of either group.

San Francisco Chronicle, 1985.

The *Chronicle* had very strong national and international reporting and wrote several articles on MOVE and the city of Philadelphia both critical and supportive.

Secondary Sources:

Anderson, John and Hilary Hevenor. *Burning Down the House: MOVE and the Tragedy of Philadelphia*. New York: Norton, 1987.

This book discusses the aftermath of the MOVE bombing, following one of the members through their trial, this book asks if the MOVE bombing was unique or if it was part of a larger experience in America.

Assefa, Hizkias. *Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution: The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia*. New York: Praeger, 1988.

This book discusses the MOVE organization and crisis in Philadelphia and seeks to investigate what occurred leading up to the bombing to discover insights into how to resolve other, similar crises.

- Floyd-Thomas, J.M. "The Burning of Rebellious Thoughts: MOVE as Revolutionary Black Humanism." *The Black Scholar* 32, no.1 (Spring 2002): 11-21.
 This article posits the antagonism of mainstream America towards MOVE was shown in the negative media portrayals of the organization. Floyd-Thomas argues MOVE exemplified a consciousness that was radical and religious.
- Gordon-Reed, Annette, ed. *Race on Trial: Law and Justice in American History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
 This book contains twelve original essays that discuss cases which illustrate the treatment of race in American history and how race has affected the outcome of those cases.
- Harry, Margot. "Attention MOVE—This is America!" *Sage Journals* 28, no. 4 (April 1987): 5-28.
 This article discusses the MOVE bombing from the side of the MOVE members offering an argument that it was the white power structure that led to the MOVE bombing.
- Nagel, Jack N., "Psychological Obstacles to Administrative Responsibility: Lessons of the MOVE Disaster," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 1-23.
 Provides a look into how the behavior of Mayor Goode towards the MOVE organization and how it impeded the responsible and rational handling of the issue.
- Newman, Dorothy K. "*Protest, Politics and Prosperity: Black Americans and White Institutions, 1940-1975.*" New York: Pantheon, 1978.
 This book discusses the access African Americans have to the institutions of American life: work, education, housing, health care; which are predominately white institutions.
- Persons, Georgia A. "The Philadelphia MOVE Incident as an Anomaly in Models of Mayoral Leadership." *Phylon* 48, no. 4 (December 1987): 249-260.
 This article discusses how the MOVE incident was outside the bounds of normal crises and argues that Mayor Goode's actions could not be predicted, and the outcome evolved around the struggle over symbolism and the control of government force.
- Sanders, Kimberly, and Judson Jeffries. "Framing MOVE: A Press' Complicity in the Murder of Women and Children in the City of (Un) Brotherly Love." *Journal of African American Studies* 17, no. 4 (December 2013): 566-586.
 This article looks at local press coverage of MOVE and the bombing to see the ways in which it affected the attitude of the people living in Philadelphia. It argues the media coverage led to an attitude of indifference towards the MOVE bombing.
- Wagner-Pacifi, Robin. *Discourse and Destruction: The City of Philadelphia versus MOVE*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
 Looks at the MOVE organization to investigate the ways in which the stories that were constructed about MOVE led to violence and their perception in Philadelphia. The author argues that discourse was what led to the fiery end on Osage Avenue.