

Working as a MOVE Activist Archivist

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Introduction

For ten weeks I worked with the MOVE organization as an archivist, with a personal goal of learning more about the complexities of it. The MOVE organization is quite often reduced to the 1985 bombing and while police brutality and state violence played significant parts in the organization, it is still very crucial to acknowledge that MOVE and its impact were much more than that; MOVE has a legacy that runs deep within Philadelphia and Black America based in community organizing and resistance to oppressive systems. The goal of this research project was to continue the archival work that members of MOVE had already began in order to build an official archive for the organization. We wanted material that had been stored at different MOVE members homes for years to be transcribed and photocopied so that those interested in MOVE could easily learn about it from the members themselves.

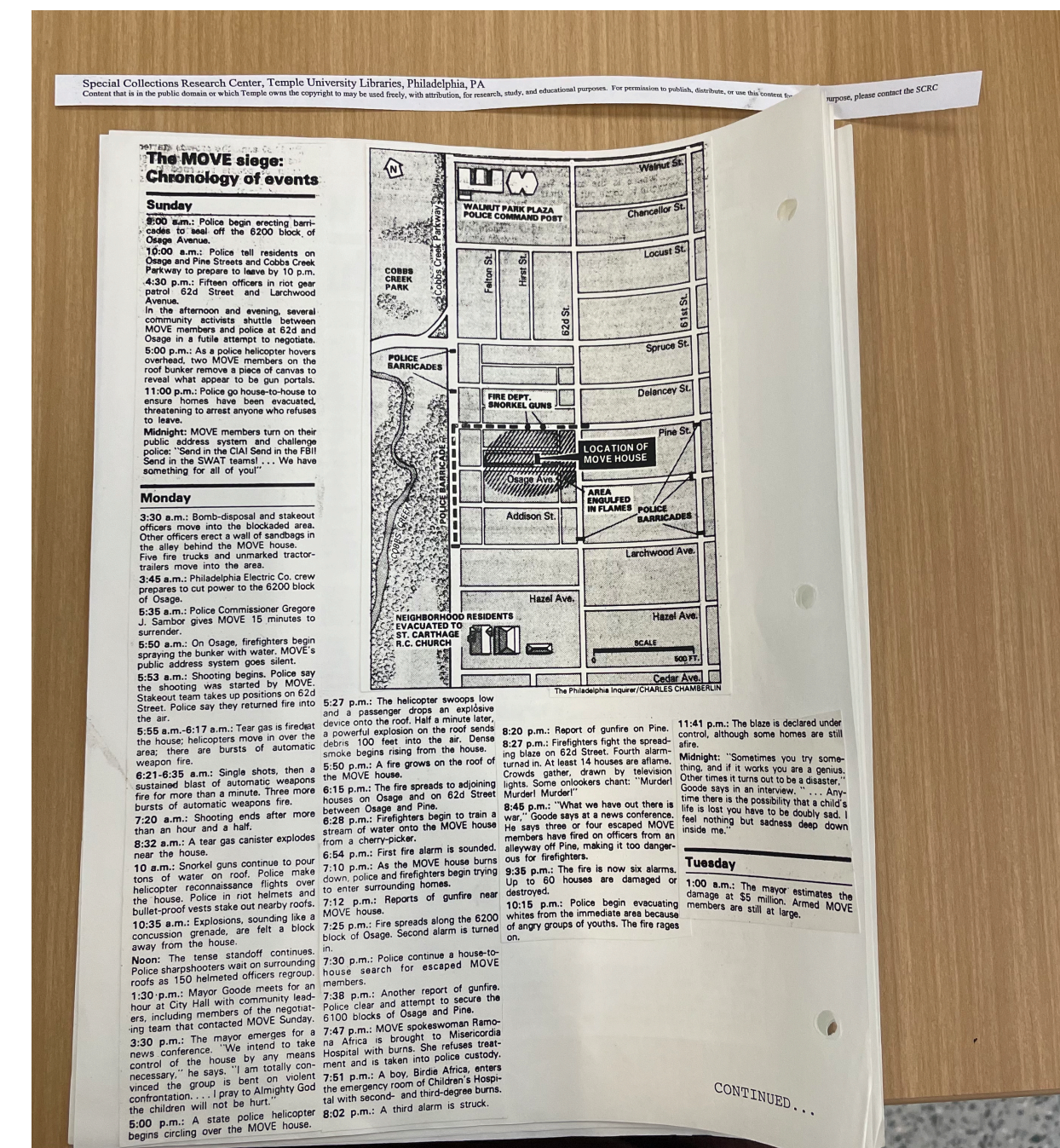
What is MOVE?

MOVE has been a powerful force in Philadelphia ever since John Africa founded the organization in 1972. MOVE was a radical communal organization focused on advocating against oppressive forces, like racism and police brutality. The group committed to a back-to-nature philosophy, practicing animal welfare and environmental protection. MOVE is a movement focused on resistance and so much more; it gives people a voice.

In 1978, police violence came to a peak, which included beating a member on camera, killing a MOVE baby, nine MOVE members being sentenced to extremely long sentences, the last person getting released only in 2020.

In 1985, the Philadelphia police bombed MOVE headquarters on Osage Ave in response to MOVE's resistance. Eleven people, including five children and six adults were killed and a whole entire block with over sixty homes was destroyed, displacing many individuals.

This year, the Penn Museum released a statement about holding the remains of one of the bomb victims without the family's knowledge. MOVE's current advocacy focuses on the return of the remains to the family and on the release of the wrongfully imprisoned journalist, Mumia Abu-Jamal who has been in prison for over 40 years.

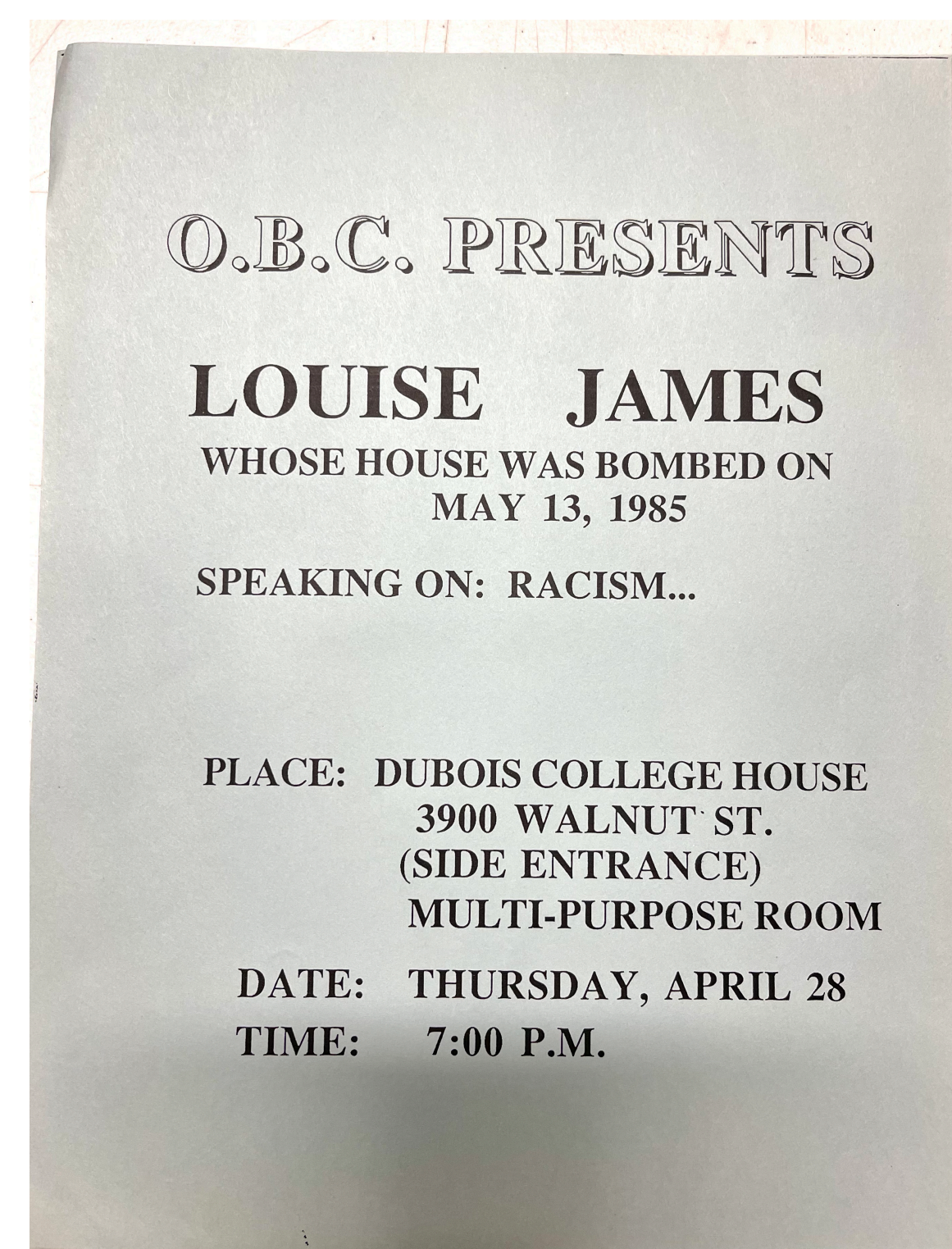


Document from Temple's Special Collections with a chronology of events that led up to the MOVE bombing and a picture that displays how massive the police barricade was

Procedure

It was important that we first established a base of knowledge about MOVE so we watched the documentary, *40 Years a Prisoner* and read "50 Years Ona Move" by Mike Africa Jr.

Our team visited the Special Collections Research Center at the Charles Library at Temple University in order to read through the archive collection the university had. I specifically reviewed a box that held newspaper articles about MOVE. Another part of my job included doing daily Google searches relating to MOVE, reading and summarizing articles written about the organization. In addition, I transcribed interviews, newspapers and letters relating to the organization.



Louise James, sister of MOVE founder, John Africa continuously advocated for MOVE through writing multiple letters to different political bodies in Philadelphia and newspapers and even speaking at our very own Dubois College House

Methodology

Our research focused on how different populations of people, such as those from Philadelphia, non-black, black, etc. viewed the MOVE organization. But more specifically we focused on how those within MOVE perceived the organization themselves. Oftentimes their stories were told *for* them whether that be by different media outlets or politicians, whereas our research shed a light on MOVE members' thoughts about *their* organization. We listened to oral histories, analyzing the emphasis the interviewee put on different words. When transcribing we paid attention to what words were capitalized or intentionally spelled differently and tried to understand the meaning behind these conventions.

Discussion

An apology without action is manipulation.

-Mike Africa Jr.

MOVE has continuously been the victim of harmful forces. It was not until 35 years after the MOVE bombing that former Philadelphia mayor, Wilson Goode apologized to the MOVE organization for the catastrophic damage it caused. Apologized for intentionally letting the fire that occurred after the bomb burn for over an hour but ironically spraying water onto the MOVE house before the bombing and firing round after round of shots into the MOVE house. This apology is manipulation because the demands that MOVE members have requested such as freeing Mumia Abu-Jamal have been ignored; the needs of MOVE members have been ignored. For the city of Philadelphia to really apologize it needs to work with MOVE members and listen and act on their needs.