

The MOVE Activist Archive

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Introduction and History of MOVE

Founded in West Philadelphia in the early 1970's, the MOVE Organization is a collective of Black naturalist revolutionaries whose dedication to fighting systemic injustices brought them into conflict with state apparatuses. After police raided their communal home in 1978, nine MOVE members—the MOVE 9, which included the parents of MOVE Activist Archive leader Mike Africa Jr.—were brutally arrested and unjustly politically incarcerated for 40 years. In 1985, the city of Philadelphia dropped a military-grade bomb on MOVE's home, murdering six adults and five children, and destroying 61 Black-owned homes as police and fire department personnel intentionally let the fire produced by the bomb burn. The bombing of the MOVE Organization is a definitive moment in the history of state violence towards revolutionary black resistance in Philadelphia.

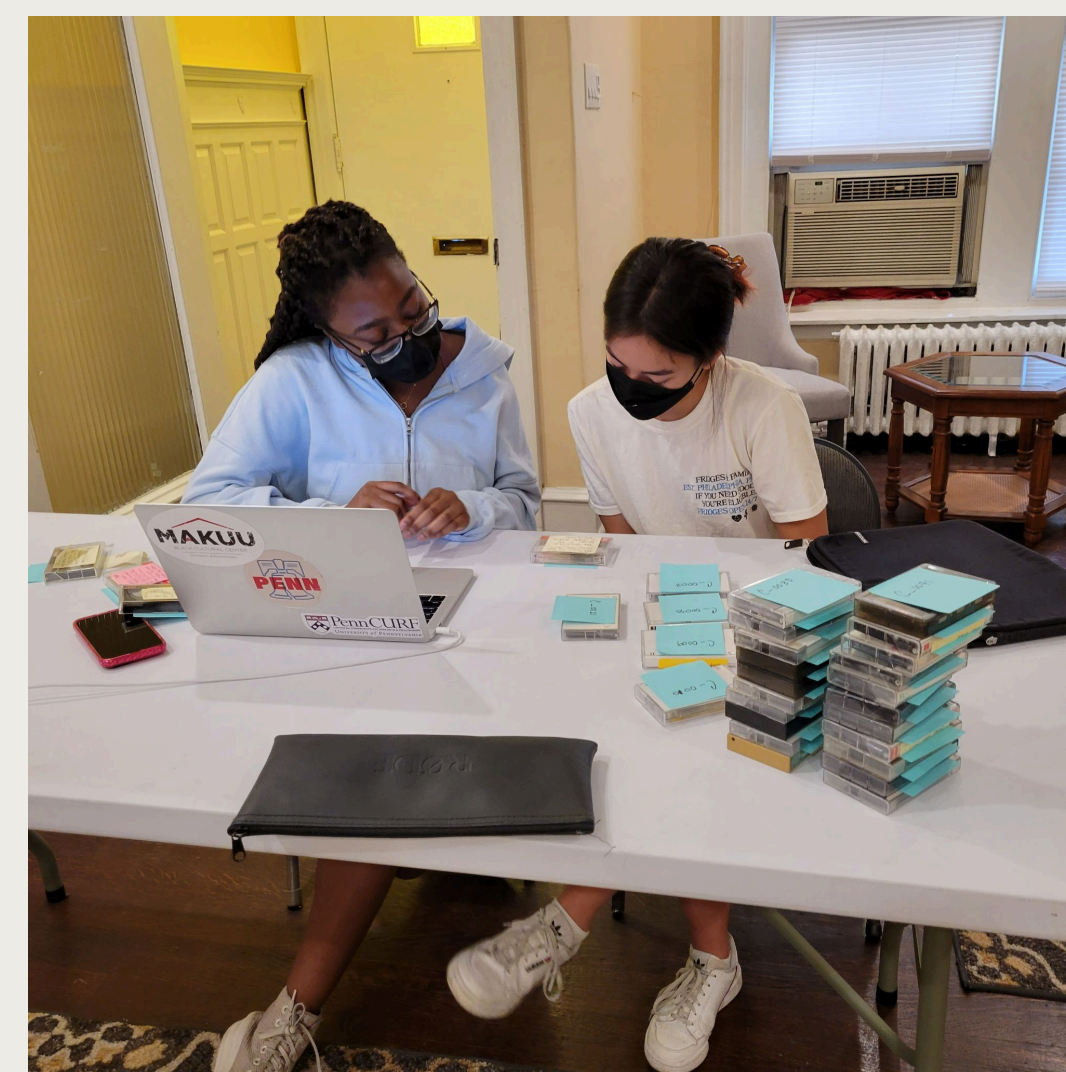
Origins of the MOVE Activist Archive

The MOVE Activist Archive is the culmination of decades of work. Mike Africa Jr.'s grandmother and aunt started this archive by collecting hundreds of news articles, videos, audios, and original writings about MOVE and the work that went into them. They would notate and correct articles that were false or misrepresenting MOVE. They recorded particular clips of news segments and used them for indepth research. Particularly Louise James, Mike's aunt, was a prolific writer and much of her work still applies to social issues today. Mike is the 3rd generation in his family to hold on to all of this history that tells MOVE's story by those who lived it. Many of these documents can not be found in the city government's "MOVE archive." It is significant that the original archivists of this archive and the preservation of MOVE's history were Black women revolutionaries, not of the same government that bombed MOVE. Mike and Professor Krystal Strong have worked for years to organize an official archive and this summer of 2022 held its first archive processing events.

With hundreds of items to organize, there is a team of professional archivists overseeing the technical aspects of preserving and organizing the documents and tapes. Professor Krystal Strong directs all participants and the general workflow of the event. Because not all of the documents are labeled or have written descriptions, Mike Africa Jr.'s presence is essential for giving context and backstory to any given document. Monique Perry, a graduate student at Penn, documented through video and audio each of the processing events. These events were and will continue to be held at the Paul Robeson House. At the archive's current stage in the archiving process, the processing events are mostly documentation and description of each item and filing it away to be inspected closer later.

What is the MOVE Activist Archive?

The MOVE Activist Archive is a community archiving project dedicated to preserving and promoting the legacy of Black activism and radical resistance in Philadelphia, with the history of the MOVE Organization and their revolutionary struggle against state repression as a focal point. Led by prominent Philadelphia community activists Professor Krystal Strong and MOVE member Mike Africa Jr., the project sets out to redefine the historical narrative of the MOVE Organization based on archival materials preserved by the organization. The project's work this summer focused on processing and describing archival materials from the MOVE Organization (such as newspaper articles, cassettes and vhs tapes, etc.) as well as creating a virtual Black Resistance Tour of Philadelphia.



What is the Black Resistance Tour and why is it significant?



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The Black Resistance Tour is a virtual platform currently being created to showcase sites of Black resistance and protest across the city of Philadelphia. While a few of these spots, such as the 1967 Students Walkouts Marker or the Octavius Catto Monument in City Hall, are formally recognized by the city, many more don't have any markers at all. Some historical markers, like the one on 6221 Osage Avenue— site of the 1985 bombing that killed 11 members of the MOVE organization— were only erected very recently, after a long fight to have city officials acknowledge their wrongdoings. Other important spots of Black resistance, such as the Black Panther Party Headquarters once located at 1935 Columbia Avenue in North Philadelphia, no longer exist at all. Commemorating these places and increasing their recognition is vital to amplifying Black culture and preserving Black history in Philadelphia for future generations.

This summer, Move Activist Archive interns were tasked with writing detailed descriptions of each location on the tour. These descriptions will be made available online, alongside a video tour with MOVE member and activist Mike Africa Jr. This platform will soon be available to the public as an accessible resource and archive of the long history of Black resistance in Philadelphia.

Locations on the Black Resistance Tour

- Municipal Services Building
- Octavius Catto Monument
- 1967 Student Walkouts Marker
- Art Museum Steps ("Rocky Steps")
- John Coltrane House
- MOVE Headquarters in Powelton Village
- Philadelphia Zoo
- Freedom Now Rally Monument
- Mosque 12
- Paul Robeson House
- Malcolm X Park
- 6221 Osage Avenue (Site of MOVE Bombing and Historic Marker)
- Columbia Avenue (Cecil B. Moore Ave)
- Black Panther Party Headquarters
- UNIA Headquarters
- Church of the Advocate
- Freedom Theater
- 13th and Locust Streets
- Mumia's Community at 7th and Wallace
- No Goode Way