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IN QUIET MEMORY OF MOVE FIRE FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, THE CITY BOMBED THE GROUP'S WEST PHILA. COMPOUND. IN RECENT YEARS, ATTENTION HAS SHIFTED TO MUMIA ABU-JAMAL'S CASE.

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Ramona Africa **has** no quarrel with **the** fact that **MOVE** is far overshadowed these days by **the** international tumult surrounding death-row inmate **Mumia** Abu-Jamal.

"While **MOVE** may not get **the** publicity, **the** media hype, that **Mumia** gets, his very life is at stake here," Africa says. "He should get **the** publicity. His life is on **the** line."

The MOVE disaster on Osage Avenue quietly marked its 15th anniversary yesterday, and Africa, 45, **the** group's minister of communication, **has** remained rarely **in the** public eye - at least locally.

In an interview recently, Africa said **the** group would stage no demonstrations yesterday, as it did on **the** debacle's fifth and 10th anniversaries - **the** latter, a six-hour rally at a Center **City** union hall. Nor, she said, **has MOVE** as yet planned any protest for **the** Republican National Convention **in** Philadelphia.

Although Web sites ring **the** world proclaiming **Abu-Jamal's** innocence, **MOVE's** own site went dark some months **ago**. Abu-Jamal was convicted **in** 1982 **of** killing Police Officer Daniel Faulkner,

Though **MOVE's** confrontational style and clashes with its **West** Philadelphia neighbors had long made it notorious throughout **the city**, **the** group first drew international **attention in** 1985, when **the city bombed the group's** fortified compound during a violent confrontation.

The bomb started a **fire** that destroyed **the MOVE** house and 60 neighboring rowhouses, horrifying **the city**. Eleven bodies were found **in the** rubble, including those **of** five children.

Also slain was **the group's** founder, John Africa, who had preached **the** organization's confusing anti-technology and anti-authority doctrine. All members **of the** group, for example, took **the** surname Africa and **the** name **MOVE** is not an acronym.

Although severely burned, Ramona Africa was **the** only adult **to** survive **the fire**. After spending seven **years in** prison on riot charges, she pursued a federal lawsuit against **the city**. **In** 1996, a federal jury found **the city of** Philadelphia used excessive force and awarded a total **of** \$1.5 million **to** Africa and two other plaintiffs, relatives **of** slain **MOVE** members.

Africa, however, appealed a separate part **of the** verdict **in** which **the** trial judge gave immunity **to the city's** former **fire** and police commissioners, key officials **in the** confrontation.

Two **years ago**, **the** U.S. Court of Appeals for **the** Third Circuit rejected her appeal, as well **the city's**. But neither Africa nor **the city** appealed that order **to the** U.S. Supreme Court, thus clearing **the** way for a payout **to** Africa. **The city** paid up **in** late 1998, cutting a check for \$564,378.47. **Of** that, \$500,000 was **the** sum **the** jury had awarded Africa. **The** remainder was interest accumulated while **the city** pursued its appeal.

"My **case has** been resolved. **The** Third Circuit turned it down and that was **the end of it**," Africa said recently, explaining her decision not **to** appeal **to the** U.S. high court. "We're not about spinning our wheels. We're not about fruitless energy-burning."

Africa, unlike **the** other plaintiffs, did not have **to** share her jury award with her attorney. Attorneys for **the** others **in the case** took up **to** 40 percent **of the** awards under contingency-fee agreements, but Africa's attorney struck no such deal with her. (Under court rules, however, all **the** attorneys had their costs paid by **the city**; **in** all, they were paid \$1.4 million.)

On May 13, 1985, hundreds **of** police officers surrounded **the group's** compound at 6221 Osage Ave. and ordered everyone out after hearing neighbors' complaints that abuse from **MOVE** had made life on **the** block intolerable. **The** neighbors cited, among other problems, **the** din **of** amplified political harangues from **the group's** exterior loudspeakers.

MOVE refused **to** come out, and a gun battle broke out between police and **the** group. As night approached, police dropped a bomb from a helicopter **to** destroy a rooftop bunker that officers said was a sniper's post. **The** bomb started **the fire** that spread from building **to** building.

Africa and 13-year-old Michael Ward, who was then known as Birdie Africa, were **the** only two **of the** 13 people inside **to** survive.

Since **the fire**, **MOVE has** lived largely without incident **in West** Philadelphia. Its members occupy three groups **of** houses, both halves **of** a twin on Kingsessing Avenue and houses on 56th Street and Catharine Street. Africa, however, said she had no fixed address.

Africa, born Ramona Johnson and a onetime Temple University political science major, is clearly **the** leader **of the** largely female group, whose membership numbers perhaps 20, including children.

MOVE long **ago** stopped recruiting. Any growth **has** come as **the** children **of MOVE** mature and take a place within **the** organization. Some **in MOVE's** next generation perform **in** a rap group known as **the** Seeds **of** Wisdom.

For **the** most part, Africa spends her time preaching **to the** choir, traveling **the** world **to** tell her story **to** sympathetic college students and leftist audiences.

In the interview, she ticked off **the** stops: Harvard, Princeton, Vassar **in** this country; Italy, France, Germany, Belgium abroad. She said her lecture fees range from as little as \$50 **to** as much as \$4,000.

"No, I don't have a job," she said. "But I work. I work every day. I bring funds into **the** organization every day through honorariums."

Her speech urges people **to** rally behind **the MOVE** Nine, members given long prison sentences upon their murder convictions **in the** 1978 shooting death **of** a police officer during a confrontation outside a **MOVE** compound **in** Powelton.

The MOVE Nine is down **to** eight. One **of the** group, all **of** whom were given 30- **to** 100-year terms, died **of** natural causes **in** prison **in** 1998. **The** earliest possible release **of** those still **in** prison is 2008.

And even as Africa's long legal fight **in** federal court **has** been put **to** rest, another legal struggle is gearing up **in** state courts on behalf **of the** remaining eight jailed **MOVE** members.

Renowned **in the** past for its refusal **to** use professional lawyers, **MOVE** finally hired an attorney, Paul J. Hetznecker **of** Philadelphia, **to** file a post-conviction appeal. He did so last fall, seeking a new trial for **the** eight convicts. His massive legal brief contends, among other things, that any shots **MOVE** fired **in** 1978 had been **in** self-defense.

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