

Witness Assails Goode As 'Mayor of Murder'

MOVE Bombing Inquiry Hears Testimony

By Bill Peterson
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PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 9—Louise James, a sobbing and defiant former member of the radical group MOVE, today called Mayor W. Wilson Goode a "mayor of murder" who "burned . . . alive" her son by ordering the police bombing of the group's row house last May.

James, whose son, Frank Africa, was among seven adults and four children killed in the compound, told a commission investigating the incident that Goode acted that day "out of political expediency" and appointed the commission to provide a justification for his actions.

"Take everything you hear about MOVE, take it individually, take it collectively, add to it . . . and convince me that the bombing, the cold-blooded murder of 11 individuals, was justified," she said, sobbing. "There's no sorrow greater than the sorrow of a mother who has lost a child," she declared.

She said MOVE members, although controversial and unpopular, "were people who died a terrible death." James said women "broiled" and children "roasted as they tried to escape" the house after a rooftop bombing ignited an inferno.

"My God, how could any mother

know this and support him [Goode], cover up for him, make excuses for him?" she asked.

The appearance of James and her sister, LaVerne Sims, another former MOVE member, was a high point in the first two days of the panel's televised hearings, which are expected to last four weeks. Their brother, John Africa, founded MOVE, a small band of self-described back-to-nature revolutionaries.

Both women harshly criticized the panel. "This investigation is a farce, a circus . . . an attempt to destigmatize Philadelphia" and "further defame MOVE's character," Sims said.

Sixty-one row houses were destroyed in the blaze that followed the bombing, and 250 persons were left homeless. Goode is to testify within the next few days.

MOVE members moved into James' row house on Osage Avenue in West Philadelphia four years ago. Bennie Swans, a city crisis consultant, said MOVE made "a conscious decision" in 1984 to "alienate and aggravate" neighbors, hoping their complaints to officials would provoke a confrontation that would lead to releasing MOVE members imprisoned for various reasons.

Neighbors complained repeatedly to city officials about vile odors, health-code violations, MOVE children eating from garbage cans and obscenities shouted from a MOVE rooftop loudspeaker.

Lloyd Wilson, who lived next door to MOVE, said thousands of bugs from the compound "totally took over our house," biting his two children in bed, crawling on walls and even infesting the oven.

"One day, I pulled the shade up, and the window was black with bugs," the softspoken jeweler said. "I almost vomited. We had bugs we couldn't identify. If you hit them, they would get right back up."

As a "good neighbor," Wilson said, he told MOVE members that he intended to use a sulfur bomb to kill the bugs and was greeted with a tirade. "The bugs are our brothers and sisters," he said one MOVE member told him.

Wilson said Gerald Ford Africa, the MOVE "defense minister," told him that, if the bugs were killed, "when the revolution starts, your family will be the first to go."

City officials did little to deal with problems, Wilson and others said today. Wilson said that, when he complained to Goode's top aide, managing director Leo Brooks, Brooks told him that "only an act of God" would improve the situation.

"It was a political football that no one wanted to handle," said Clifford Bond, a schoolteacher and neighborhood leader. "We were caught as pawns between MOVE and the city, and no one gave a damn."

"I lost my trust through this whole ordeal," Bond said.