

Chairwoman Catherine C. McVey
Board of Probation and Parole
Attn: Inmate Inquiry
1101 South Front Street, Suite 5300
Harrisburg, PA 17104

Re: Support for 2009 Parole of Eight Prisoners:

Debbie Sims Africa #006307, Janet Holloway Africa #006308, Janine Phillips Africa #006309, Michael Davis Africa #AM-4973, Charles Sims Africa #AM-4975, William Phillips Africa #AM-4984, Delbert Orr Africa #AM-4985, and Edward Goodman Africa #AM-4974

Dear Members of the Board,

Please parole Chuck, Debbie, Delbert, Eddie, Janet, Janine, Mike, and Phil Africa this year. They have caused no major disciplinary problems over the past three decades. They have spent most of their lives in prison; please allow them to be a part of and contribute to society as free citizens. People around the world, myself included, have many reasons for supporting parole for these eight prisoners.

Pertaining to the conviction: I believe in the innocence of the MOVE 9. Notwithstanding their innocence, MOVE 9's right to due process, their opportunity to defend themselves to charges for which they have now been imprisoned for three decades, was grossly violated.

-- The sentencing judge stated publicly that he did not have the faintest idea who shot the one bullet that killed Officer Ramp. Nine people cannot fire one bullet.

-- Officer Ramp was more likely shot by police "friendly fire," because it would have been ballistically impossible for MOVE to have shot Ramp, who was across the street from MOVE's house. Because of MOVE's position in the basement, bullets coming from there would have had an upward trajectory; yet the medical examiner testified that the bullet entered Ramp's "chest from in front and coursed horizontally without deviation up or down." Even the authenticity of official ballistics are in dispute. At a pre-trial hearing, in open court, the Judge allowed the prosecutor to literally use a pencil and eraser to change the medical examiner's report to conform with the medical examiner's testimony about the bullet's trajectory.

-- This theory about the bullet's trajectory could have been tested, but the city illegally demolished MOVE's house that very day, and police did nothing to preserve the crime scene- no inscribed chalk marks or measured ballistic angles. A few days before, a Philadelphia judge had signed an order barring the city from destroying the MOVE house, but this order was violated. In a preliminary hearing on a Motion to Dismiss, MOVE unsuccessfully argued that the city's destruction of their home prevented them from proving that it was physically impossible for MOVE to have shot Ramp.

MOVE prisoners have provided immense benefits to various communities. Even in prison, the MOVE 9 have kept down gang/racial violence in their prisons (as outside, they had peacefully settled gang wars/racial violence on the streets), helped female and male inmates establish relationships with their children outside of the prisons, cured fellow inmates of drug addiction and alcoholism, and helped incarcerated offenders meet parole requirements through a rehabilitation program.

The MOVE 9 have caused NO major disciplinary problems. Indeed, nowadays, inmates and guards look up to the MOVE 9 prisoners with admiration in prisons across Pennsylvania.

The MOVE 9, including Merle Africa who died in prison, have displayed model behavior and have served 2-3 times the standard sentences pursuant to their convictions. There is no reason the MOVE prisoners should be denied parole.

In the past, MOVE prisoners have been unfairly required to renounce MOVE and their deeply held religious beliefs, in order to be paroled. MOVE prisoners should be paroled and must not be subject to the optional stipulations, which are violations of First Amendment and other rights protected by the U.S. Constitution.

The “taking responsibility” stipulation unconstitutionally forces a prisoner to admit guilt in order to be granted parole. The above-named prisoners have always maintained their innocence. The First and Fifth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution clearly establish that it is illegal for you (or any government agent) to demand an admittance of guilt or to prolong imprisonment based on prisoners maintaining their innocence.

The “serious nature of offense” stipulation is also unfair and, moreover, unconstitutional. Things like the nature and the circumstances of the offense(s) were already taken into account when the judge sentenced the MOVE 9. To use this stipulation to deny the MOVE members parole is to re-sentence them.

Please do not impose these illegal stipulations.

In all respect and sincerity, please allow the surviving MOVE 9 members to return home to their families. Each of them has proven to be a valuable contribution to society- inside and outside of the prisons.

SINCERELY AND BEST REGARDS,

Date: _____