

MOVE 9 members Janine and Janet released at last

written by Gloria Verdieu
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MOVE family celebrates release of MOVE 9 women, May 30. SLL photo: Berta Joubert-Ceci

After 41 years, all the MOVE 9 women are liberated, no longer incarcerated, finally released! Janet Holloway Africa and Janine Phillips Africa, the longest-held women political prisoners in the U.S., were freed on May 25, 2019.

As the news spreads throughout the world, we must remember that these

courageous political prisoners might have been freed years earlier if they had agreed to renounce the [MOVE Organization](#) and their deeply held revolutionary political and religious beliefs. But they held fast.

On the morning of Aug. 8, 1978, hundreds of Philadelphia cops and officials staged an attack on the MOVE Organization. Nine MOVE members — five men and four women — were arrested, convicted of murder and sentenced to 30 to 100 years in prison over the death of a cop who actually died as a result of “friendly fire.”

Judge Edwin Malmed stated for the record that he had sentenced each of them to the same amount of time in prison because the MOVE members, all of them Black revolutionaries, had declared “we are a family” and remained loyal to their beliefs.

For years, the Pennsylvania Parole Board denied the MOVE 9 parole, but refused to admit that the actual condition of parole was that these committed members denounce and leave the MOVE Organization.

Two members of the MOVE 9 — Merle Africa and Phil Africa — died while incarcerated, both under suspicious circumstances. Debbie Simms Africa was released on June 16, 2018, followed by Mike Africa on October 23, 2018.

At a “Welcome Home” news conference for Janet and Janine on May 30, Ramona Africa, the only adult survivor of the 1985 police bombing of the MOVE house, stated: “We’re a strong family that this system has worked hard to break up. Every one of them could have been out in half the time if we had compromised with this system, but nothing will make us compromise our commitment to John Africa and his teachings.”



Struggle-La Lucha's Berta Joubert-Ceci (center) with Janine and Janet Africa. SLL photo

'We are fighting for everybody'

Pam Africa, MOVE member and coordinator of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, said at the news conference: "A lot of people say they are so glad that our sisters are free. Our sisters went in there free with the teaching of John Africa. Teaching in there for 41 years. ... All my sisters needed was to be released."

MOVE members were not afraid to speak the truth on the inside and they continue to speak truth on the outside. Their number one priority is to work for the release of their three remaining incarcerated members: Chuck Africa, Delbert Africa and Eddie Africa.

Janine Africa declared: "For 41 years, they have tried to beat us down. They have

tried to take our health. They have tried everything to stop us because they couldn't stop us no other way.

"We have a family that is so strong and supportive. They had our backs and we rode on their strength and that made us strong. ... We can't stop talking about it because we know how important that is.

"We are out here fighting for everybody, whether you are white, Black, Chinese. ... We know this system is on pins and needles because we are coming out!"

The U.S. locks up more people than any other country in the world. Over 2.2 million people are in prisons, close to 3,000 on death row, and thousands upon thousands are in local jails because of the failed, racist criminal justice system.

How significant it is that these courageous women were released and reunited with their family on African Liberation Day in 2019, the year that marks 400 years since the first enslaved Africans arrived in Jamestown, Va.

Welcome home MOVE 9 sisters! We will continue to fight with you until the remaining MOVE 9 members are released. Free all political prisoners, prisoners of conscience and prisoners of war.

Listen to Mumia Abu-Jamal's commentary, ["MOVE Women: Janet and Janine Africa Free at Last"](#) at Prison Radio.



