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***LET THE FIRE BURN PREMIERES ON INDEPENDENT LENS
MONDAY, MAY 12, 2014 ON PBS***

**Film Depicts the Violent Armed Conflict Between Philadelphia Authorities and
Members of the Black Revolutionary Group MOVE**

“There was a decision to let the fire burn.”
– Philadelphia Mayor Wilson Goode

(San Francisco, CA) — On May 13, 1985, a longtime feud between the city of Philadelphia and controversial radical urban group MOVE came to a deadly climax. By 5:00 p.m., police had already fired over 10,000 rounds of ammunition into the fortified MOVE row house that contained children and adults. On orders from local authorities, police then dropped military-grade explosives onto the roof of the house. Captured live on television news, the ensuing conflagration quickly escalated, resulting in the tragic deaths of eleven people (including five children) and the destruction of 61 homes. Only later was it discovered that authorities had decided to stand by and “let the fire burn.”

In this astonishingly gripping film, director Jason Osder has crafted that rarest of cinematic objects: a found-footage film that unfurls with the tension of a thriller. Using only archival news coverage, televised public hearings, documentary footage and interviews, first-time filmmaker Osder has brought to life one of the most tumultuous and largely forgotten clashes between government and citizens in modern American history. On the eve of the 29th anniversary of the actual events, *Let the Fire Burn* premieres on *Independent Lens*, hosted by Stanley Tucci, Monday, May 12, 2014, 10:00-11:30 p.m. ET on PBS ([check local listings](#)).

Founded in 1972 by John Africa (Vincent Leaphart), MOVE combined elements of a Black Power movement with aspects of a back-to-nature religion. Members took the surname “Africa,” wore their hair in dreadlocks, shunned technology, and promoted a diet of raw food. Grappling for a way to describe the group, reporters sometimes referred to MOVE as a “cult” and later as “terrorists.” By 1978, years of simmering tensions between the group and city authorities resulted in a gun battle that claimed the life of police officer James Ramp. Convicted of third-degree murder, nine MOVE members received sentences of 30-100 years.

Let the Fire Burn is more than just the story of a little-known American tragedy. It is an epic illustration of how intolerance and fear can spiral into unthinkable acts of violence.

The film is dedicated to Michael Moses Ward (Birdie Africa), the only child to survive the 1985 fire, who passed away on September 13, 2013 at the age of 41.

Visit the *Let the Fire Burn* companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/let-the-fire-burn/>) which features information about the film, including an interview with the filmmaker, and links and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

About the Filmmaker

Jason Osder (Director/Producer) is an assistant professor at The George Washington University's School of Media and Public Affairs and a partner at Amigo Media, a color-correction, post-production, and training company. Osder co-authored *Final Cut Pro Workflows: The Independent Studio Handbook* with Robbie Carman, his partner at Amigo, and creates online training courses for Lynda.com. Osder received an MAMC in Documentary from the University of Florida.

CREDITS

Directed and Produced by	Jason Osder
Edited by	Nels Bangerter
Original Music by	Christopher Mangum
Associate Producer	John Aldrich
Executive Producer	Andrew Herwitz

Presented by the Film Sales Company and the George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The senior series producer is Lois Vossen. More information is at www.pbs.org/independentlens. Join Independent Lens on Facebook at www.facebook.com/independentlens.

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