

To: MOVE Commission

From: Jackie Meyle

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RE: 6221 Osage Avenue Bombing Investigation

On May 13, 1985, police officials bombed the house on 6221 Osage Avenue in Philadelphia that was home to MOVE members. This disaster destroyed 61 homes, left 250 homeless, and killed six adults and five children. There were many factors that caused the bombing of the house on Osage Avenue. The first factor was the group MOVE was allowed to exist above the law for many years until this disaster. The second factor was Mayor Wilson Goode did not react appropriately to the situation. He was considered to be non-confrontational about the situation and chose not to act against MOVE. The last factor that contributed to the disaster on Osage Avenue was the planning of the assault on the house was hurried and poorly executed, resulting in poor communication between departments. These factors ultimately led to the disaster at 6221 Osage Avenue.

The first factor contributing to the Osage Avenue disaster on May 13, 1985 was that the group MOVE was allowed to exist above the law for many years. The feud between the police and MOVE started in the 1970s during such time, members of the MOVE group were arrested multiple times. The members of MOVE were allowed to harass their neighbors without any repercussions from the law. For example, Lloyd Wilson complained about being assaulted by Frank Africa, the leader of the MOVE group. Wilson stated that police officers stood by and allowed Frank Africa to assault Wilson. This incident should have resulted in the arrest of Frank Africa for assaulting a Wilson. MOVE was able to act as they saw fit. The residents of neighborhood were essentially hostages to the MOVE group. At one point, the city's policy barred operating departments from carrying out their responsibilities with respect to MOVE because it was a "police matter". This should not have been happened. No one is above the law, and in this situation, the members of MOVE were allowed to put the lives of others in danger.

The second factor that contributed to the Osage Avenue disaster was Mayor Wilson Goode did not react appropriately to the MOVE situation. Wilson's policy toward MOVE was one of appeasement, non-confrontation, and avoidance. During the beginning of his administration, Goode was told that his plan of action would be doomed to fail. If Goode had confronted the situation during the beginning of this administration, the disaster might never have occurred. When he did decide to take action, Goode was not hands-on with the plan of operation. He only held 2 high-level meetings. During both of these meetings Goode prevented a detailed discussion of the police plan. A person with authority making decisions that involve confrontation with civilians should have a detailed discussion about every plan involved in the operation. Goode also made the mistake of not considering the bomb proposal. He paused for only 30 seconds before approving the idea. A proposal of this much importance should have been considered for months. If Goode had been proactive about the MOVE issue during the beginning of this administration, he could have created a plan that would not have ended with homes destroyed and people killed.

The last issue that contributed to the disaster the planning of the assault on the house was hurried and poorly executed plan of action, resulting in poor communication between departments. The hurried plan of action led to numerous errors and oversights. For example, one of Goode's directives was to pick up the MOVE children before the assault on the house. Even though Goode, Commissioner Sambor, and his planners knew that this directive was not implemented, the assault was allowed to proceed. Goode and Sambor should have confirmed with every member in the assault that the children were moved. This would have prevented the death of five children. There was little attempt to draw on resources inside and outside the city government. A hostage negotiator could have been called and could have resulted in better execution of the plan. There were no contingency plans in place and decisions were made on a whim, such as the bomb drop. The communication systems were not given any consideration. This resulted in slower communication between channels. If attention was given to the communication channels, there decision to let the bunker burn could have been avoided.

The person to blame for the disaster at 6221 Osage Avenue is Mayor Wilson Goode. His non-confrontational approach and avoidance of the situation resulted in allowed the MOVE group to act above the law. Allowing them to violently resist law enforcement made it much more difficult to get members out of the house. He gave little consideration toward his plan of action. He avoided the problem for the first 16 months during his administration. It took the city less than a week to mobilize. They also tried to execute their hurried plan in the span of 24 hours. This shows that the problem with MOVE was not taken seriously. Goode was dealing with a violent, armed group who had children living in the house. He did not have time to give this his full consideration when he decided to allow a bomb to be dropped on the house.

In order to avoid disasters like this in the future I recommend stricter policies for controlling weapons and explosives. When the situation includes civilians, especially children, there should be a process to get approval for using explosives. Another recommendation would be to have an effective planning process. Having a process that ensures the plan is thoroughly detailed and implemented could prevent disasters like this in the future. The last recommendation would be to have a better communication system. It is important to have a strong communication system within any organization. This allows for fewer errors especially when it comes to using weapons and explosives, or in a situation involving children. These recommendations would help prevent a disaster like the one on May 13, 1985 on Osage Avenue from happening again.

Attachment

In the Tompkins reading on page 370, the Japanese organization culture is explained. One term that I found interesting was collective decision making. This is achieved in Japanese culture by allowing all members of a department to participate in reaching consensus about what policies or decisions to adopt. This is a process that symbolizes collective responsibility and produces a high degree of commitment and support for final decisions (Tompkins, 2005). I believe if the officials involved in the Osage Avenue disaster adapted this way of decision-making than a more effective plan could have been implemented. If a consensus was made by every member of the departments involved than it would have taken a longer time to decide on a plan of action and it would have been a more effective way of planning an assault.

This also relates to Theory Z that is mentioned by Tompkins. This theory basically states that organizations that develop intimate relationships and a shared sense of purpose by means of value-driven cultures perform better than organizations that do not. I found this interesting because I do not believe that the individuals involved in the Osage Avenue disaster had a shared sense of purpose. It was known that Mayor Goode and the police were not in good standing with one another. The police were still angry with MOVE members who had killed a fellow police officer. They also had a long history of confrontations with MOVE, which created more friction between the two groups. Goode and the police were not on the good terms due to this feud and could not have resulted in a shared sense of purpose in regards to the plan of assault.

Another concept that I found interesting in the Tompkins reading was on page 379. Tompkins discusses the visionary leadership theory which holds that those in positions of responsibility must develop a clear vision of organizational success, articulate the values by which success will be achieved, symbolize vision and values in everything they do, and inspire organizational members to adopt the vision and values as their own. In the Osage Avenue disaster, Mayor Goode did not have visionary leadership. I do not believe that he inspired organizational members to adopt his vision and values as their own. He was a non-confrontational mayor who allowed violent members of the community to be above the law. Even the police officers were not on good terms with the mayor, nor were the other members of the neighborhood. He did not have a clear vision of success for his assault on the house on Osage Avenue. This resulted in the failure of the organization due to the loss of lives and homes.

In the Rainey reading on page 319, the path-goal theory of leadership is discussed. This theory holds that effective leaders increase motivation and satisfaction among subordinates when they help them pursue important goals. In the case memo, the leader in the situation, mayor Goode, did not show subordinates the value of the outcomes. Under this theory there are four leadership styles, one being directive. Goode does not fit under this category. Directive leadership involves giving specific directions and expectations. Goode did not do these things when planning the assault on the house. He allowed subordinates to create a plan of attack and Goode did not give any expectations of the outcome of the assault. Goode does however fit under the last category, participative. He allowed subordinates to express their opinions and suggestions. I believe he fits under this category because he gave subordinates the power to create a plan of attack on their own without an input from him.

Another theory in the Rainey reading was on page 320. Rainey discusses the life-cycle theory. This theory holds that leadership styles must fit the level of maturity of the group being led. In the case memo, I do not think that the individuals involved fit the level of maturity for their leadership position, particularly Goode. It took him over a year to confront the MOVE group. This should have been a priority when he first got into office. He did not act like a leader during his administration. Goode was not involved in the planning process. This shows that he could not handle the problem with the MOVE group.

The last concept I can relate back to the case memo would be from the Ashworth text. On page 169, Ashworth discusses how top leaders often decide what to do and then consider the consequences. They will make a decision based on very rudimentary information and do not wait for careful analysis. I think his advice to this issue would be beneficial if it was applied to the Osage Avenue disaster. His advice is to ensure you are looking ahead. You also need to be thinking and gaining perspective on the issues your agency faces and what will be coming your way. He also suggests making outside contacts.