Chicago Torture Justice Memorials

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CHICAGO — Today, a coalition of Chicago City Councilmen, torture survivors, activists and attorneys drew together to demand the passage of an Ordinance providing Reparations for the Chicago Police Torture Survivors. The ordinance is currently pending in the Finance Committee, and it has the support of 26 Alderpeople, possible Mayoral candidate Karen Lewis, Mayoral candidate Dr. Amara Enyia and Amnesty International, USA.

The Chicago Torture Justice Memorial Project (CTJM), a group organizing around the Reparations Ordinance, called attention to the cruel irony that former Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge was being released from prison today. Burge will be able to enjoy the benefits of his police pension funded by Chicago citizens' taxpayer money, while the vast majority of Burge torture survivors have not received a penny in financial compensation from the City or any services or assistance needed to heal from the effects of the torture they and their families continue to suffer from.

Burge was convicted of obstruction of justice and perjury in June of 2010 after he falsely denied in a federal civil rights suit that he and detectives under his command engaged in acts of torture and physical abuse. In January of 2011, he was sentenced to serve 4 ½ years in prison. Today, he was released from the Butner Federal Correctional Institution to a halfway house in Florida.

Aldermen Proco Joe Moreno (1st Ward) and Howard B. Brookins (21st Ward) filed the Ordinance in Chicago's City Council on October 16, 2013. The Ordinance is now supported by a total of 26 Alderpeople, including: Joe Moore (49th Ward), Roderick Sawyer (6th Ward); Roberto Maldonado (26th Ward), Pat Dowell (3rd Ward), Will Burns (4th Ward), Leslie Hairston (5th Ward), Toni Foulkes (15th Ward), Lona Lane (18th Ward), Willie Cochran (20th Ward), Ricardo Munoz (22nd Ward), Michael Chandler (24th Ward), Danny Solis (25th Ward), Walter Burnett Jr. (27th Ward), Jason Ervin (28th Ward), Scott Waguespeck (32nd Ward), Deborah Mell (33rd Ward), Rey Colon (35th Ward), Nick Sposato (36th Ward), Emma Mitts (37th Ward), Brendan Reilly (42nd Ward), Michelle Smith (43rd Ward), James Cappelman (46th Ward), John Arena (45th Ward), Ameya Pawar (47th Ward).

Describing the need for the ordinance, Alderman Moreno said "The damage done by these individuals is irreversible and will remain a stain on Chicago's reputation and collective consciousness for decades to come. It is our duty to help these victims and their families, and it is a moral and ethical imperative. It is our hope that the healing and forgiving process can begin with the passage of this legislation."

Anthony Holmes, one of Burge's first known victims, said in support of the ordinance, "Burge tortured me with electric shock and suffocation in 1973. I was a witness against Burge at his

perjury trial, but I have never received one penny in compensation because of the statute of limitations. I now work delivering newspapers. The ordinance will bring some amount of justice to me and many other survivors."

The Ordinance serves as a formal apology to the survivors; creates a Commission to administer financial compensation to the survivors; creates a medical, psychological, and vocational center on the south side of Chicago; provides free enrollment in City Colleges to the survivors; requires Chicago Public schools to teach a history lesson about the cases; requires the City to fund public memorials about the cases; and sets aside $20 million to finance this redress - the same amount of money the City has spent to defend Burge, other detectives and former Mayor Richard M. Daley in the Chicago Police torture cases.

The ordinance provides an equal amount of money -- $20,000,000 -- to compensate the survivors of Burge's reign of torture as the City has already paid that amount to defend Jon Burge, Richard M. Daley and others responsible for these egregious acts.

"Now, that Burge has been convicted, no one can legitimately question that Burge and others engaged in these heinous acts of torture. It is now time for the City of Chicago to take full responsibility for the egregious harm inflicted by Burge and his men and pass this legislation to provide the torture survivors and their family members the compensation and services they so richly deserve," said Joey Mogul of the People's Law Office and Chicago Torture Justice Memorial Project (CTJM), who represents Anthony Holmes and numerous other torture survivors.

Alice Kim, of CTJM said "It's about financial compensation, but also a formal apology, a public memorial and history lessons in Chicago schools would go a long way towards fully reckoning with these horrific atrocities."

Adam Green, University of Chicago professor and CTJM member said: "We call today for our elected officials, our leaders and our neighbors to stand up, at last, and right wrongs which devastated the lives of over a hundred young men and women from 1972 to 1991, discrediting our city for twenty years and beyond, to the present day.

CTJM looks forward to having a hearing on the Reparations Ordinance in the Finance Committee in the coming weeks.

Over 120 African American men and women were subjected to torture that was racially motivated and included electric shock, mock executions, suffocation and beatings by now convicted former Police Commander Jon Burge and his subordinates. Although Burge was convicted for perjury and obstruction of justice stemming from the torture cases in federal court in 2010, scores of Chicago Police Torture survivors continue to suffer from the psychological effects of the torture they endured without any compensation, assistance, and they have no legal recourse for any redress.

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