



Chicago Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression
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CAMPAIGN TO FREE INCARCERATED SURVIVORS OF POLICE TORTURE (CFIST)

May 30, 2019

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Gov. J. B. Pritzker
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker,

We are a group of survivors, family members, and advocates of justice, concerned for the well-being and dignity of those who have unjustly suffered at the hands of the criminal justice system. Chicago has a confirmed history of torture within the police department that has wrongfully convicted hundreds of Black and Brown people. From 1972 well into the 1990s, over 100 people were tortured by former Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge and detectives under his command at Police Areas Two and Three in Chicago, Illinois. Further, we have evidence of the unlawful coercion, torture and wrongful conviction of dozens of men and women up to the present. We are guided by these truths, and by our love for our family members and our communities that have been ravaged by the effects of this mass and wrongful incarceration. We are looking to you to mark a turning point in this state's legacy and ask you to stand on the right side of history by recognizing this system's failings, and to free all those who have been tortured and wrongfully convicted by Chicago Police and prosecutors.

One of the leaders in this fight is Armanda Shackelford, mother of Gerald Reed, a man who has been incarcerated 28 years for a crime he did not commit, and whose imprisonment was a direct result of torture and coercion. His conviction was vacated six years after the Torture Inquiry Relief Commission deemed his case as a credible torture conviction, and yet he remains incarcerated. It is in her words we would like to ground our request, and illuminate the long-lasting effects of this legacy of torture:

My concern is for my son, Gerald Reed, but I don't want to just put it on my son-- too many men, and women, are locked up who shouldn't be there.

The things that family members go through because they have an incarcerated loved one are so painful. The person is going through torture, locked up in prison, and so are we. We are being tortured because we are thinking about them and we are wondering what they are experiencing.

Once you are locked up your torture isn't over, it's just getting started. The reason I know this is from what my son has told me about the events that have happened to him since he has been locked up, and it hasn't been nice-- officers getting him beat up and fighting. There is no care for people with mental health issues.

UNITY + STRUGGLE + ORGANIZATION = VICTORIES!

The unfairness, period, of what people are going through there. Some of the prisons don't have clean water. Some have been tortured so bad that their physical conditions have gotten so poor that it turns life threatening. And in order for them to get something done about it, it takes years. Getting adequate medical treatment while incarcerated is nearly impossible For my son it took them 26 years to make a decision on starting his surgery, and his surgery is yet to be completed. He has suffered for years, and his health is poor. It's not quite as bad as it was before, but ultimately he shouldn't be going through any pain because he shouldn't be there.

I mean this with all my heart: anyone I see getting out, it's a step in the right direction. It's not my son but it's someone who shouldn't have been there in the first place, they're out. And that makes me feel Gerald will be coming out too one day.

If it takes for you to go through specific cases, and examine them and make sure; look at those cases individually, and see what those cases tell you. If those cases tell you what we see, let those guys go-- let them go, they have suffered enough. Let them be home and make up a little bit of time, they'll never make up all that time, but let them go. They need some time with their families besides looking through those bars, sitting in a room where all those people are.

I wish you would free them, they need their freedom.

Governor Pritzker, we need your leadership to ensure that justice is served, and no innocent person suffers one more day. As one of our leaders, Regina Russell, so clearly articulates, "The mental, physical, and emotional abuse the inmates and their families endure every day is simply inhumane." We are asking for your commitment to this fight, and to act boldly in your response. You need to pardon all survivors of police torture and must immediately pardon all of the people that the Torture Inquiry Relief Commission has found to have claims that are "credible and merit judicial review for appropriate relief."

We would like to have a chance to talk with you about this humanitarian crisis in our state. We will be in touch with your office to set up a meeting as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

The Campaign to Free Incarcerated Survivors of Police Torture

Black Lives Matter, Chicago
Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression
Chicago Torture Justice Center
Innocents Demand Justice
Justice and Witness Ministry, Chicago Metropolitan Association, United Church of Christ
Rev. Otis Moss, III, Pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ
Dian Palmer, President, SEIU Local 73
Aislinn, Pulley, Co-Executive Director of the Chicago Torture Justice Center, Black Live Matter
Chicago, Insight Arts, and We Charge Genocide