

Kilroy Watkins



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On January 15, 1992, police arrested Kilroy Watkins, 21, in connection with the separate armed robberies of Vern Adams and Pete Veronas, and the murder of Leroy Porter, 6 months earlier.

Leading up to the arrest, Watkins had been at his former girlfriend's house when CPD was doing door-to-door searches at her apartment complex looking for suspects that fit their description of individuals that were involved in one of the robberies. The descriptions were very vague, but Watkins was put in a line up. Watkins was not identified by anyone, but he was not released. He was taken to Area 3 Violent Crimes for further questioning.

A day later he was interrogated by CPD Detectives Kenneth Boudreau and John Halloran for 36 hours, as well as Assistant State's Attorney Ronald Weidhuner. Watkins confessed to the murder of Porter.

Although there is no record that he told anyone that Boudreau and Halloran had abused him at the time, and his medical examination immediately after his confession recorded no bruising or physical injuries, at a pre-trial hearing Watkins moved to suppress his statement and quash the arrest. He testified at a hearing on that motion in June 1992 that Boudreau and Halloran tortured him, and that ASA Weidhuner witnessed some of this abuse. Halloran, Boudreau and Weidhuner denied these allegations under oath, and Judge Thomas Karnezis denied the motion to suppress.

At a bench trial in 1993 Judge Karnezis convicted Watkins of the murder of Porter, holding him accountable for the actions of Parrish Dawson, the actual alleged shooter. The prosecution theory was that Watkins was a "general" in the Black P-Stones and that he ordered Dawson, a member assigned to Watkins' "security", to shoot Porter, who was a Gangster Disciple. Watkins, however, says that although he was a member of the Blackstones, he was not a "general". He also says that he knew Dawson, and knew he carried a black handgun, but he denies that Dawson was ever his "security." He told the Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission (TIRC) that he had only seen Porter on the day of the shooting, whom he knew was a GD.

In two separate jury trials Watkins was also found guilty of both armed robberies. Watkins was sentenced by Judge Karnezis in 1992 to 10 years in prison for the Adams' armed robbery conviction, 15 years in prison in 1993 for the Veronas' armed robbery conviction, and 30 years in prison for the Porter murder conviction. All these sentences were to be consecutive, for a total of 55 years imprisonment.

On August 15, 2011 Watkins filed a claim of torture with the TIRC, in which he alleged that Boudreau and Halloran had physically and psychologically tortured him and coerced his confession. More than 8 years later the TIRC voted unanimously to refer his case for review to the Chief Judge of the Cook County Circuit Court. Watkins was paroled in January of 2019, 10 months before the TIRC issued its ruling. He also has had a post-conviction petition for relief (PCP) pending in the Circuit Court since 1999. Thus, do the wheels of justice slowly grind up their human fodder. Watkins has lost 28 years to this system, and while having served his sentence he is still marked as a convicted felon.

The torture of Kilroy Watkins

There is ample evidence in the official record that substantiates Watkins' account of his torture. Police reports confirm that when questioned about both of the robberies for which he was arrested, Watkins invoked his right to silence with both interrogating detectives and an assistant state's attorney. These robbery detectives were from a different unit and area of the police department than Boudreau and Halloran, the homicide detectives who secured his murder confession.

Watkins' invocation of his right to silence occurred immediately before he was interrogated by Boudreau and Halloran for the homicide conviction at issue. This is an extremely important point: This invocation of rights makes detectives' testimony that Watkins never invoked his rights during the homicide interrogation very likely a lie, and that his right to silence was not observed by Boudreau and Halloran. This makes his story of torture much more credible. It is also significant that Watkins' attorney at trial, Bruce Landrum, never raised this issue. He never moved to subpoena the detectives to whom Watkins had refused to speak without an attorney.

The only material evidence against Watkins at trial was the written statement of Kristen Campbell, 15, obtained by Detectives John McCann and Bribiesca, both of whom have been implicated in torturing suspects. In her statement she said that she saw Watkins and his co-defendant, Dawson, chase Porter. Her statement said she saw Dawson shoot porter. ***She recanted her statement at Watkins' trial***, however.

A friend of Watkins, Darren Brandt, was prepared to testify that he and Watkins were together a block away when Porter was shot. Although he had been subpoenaed, Brandt was not in court, and Judge Karnezis would not grant a continuance to allow Brandt to appear.

In addition to an affidavit from Brandt, in his PCP Watkins submitted affidavits from Thomas Anderson and Edward Robinson, all of whom said Watkins was not involved in the murder of Porter. Although the court dismissed his PCP as untimely, that decision was reversed by the Appellate Court and sent back because his petition was dismissed as untimely without finding that the petition was frivolous or without merit.

Watkins amended his PCP to include newly discovered evidence that had emerged since 1999 that Boudreau and Halloran were part of the Jon Burge torture ring that had tortured suspects, including affidavits from 20 survivors of that torture. At a 2011 evidentiary hearing on his PCP before Judge James B. Linn five such survivors testified - Enrique Valdez, Clayborn Smith, Marcus Wiggins, Josephus Jackson, and Harold Hill. Watkins also presented 15 additional affidavits from torture survivors.

In January of 2011 Judge Linn denied Watkins' PCP, noting that neither Watkins nor the State had called Boudreau or Halloran to testify, and that Valdez, Smith, Wiggins, Jackson, and Hill "appeared to be absolutely guilty of what they were accused of," even though this had no bearing on the matter of their torture. Hill was later exonerated. Although he filed several motions for reconsideration, all of which were denied, Watkins has not appealed this ruling.

In its decision to refer Watkins' case to the Circuit Court for review the TIRC noted that "there exists, for both Boudreau and Halloran, a substantial body of allegations of engaging in systematic conduct aimed at obtaining confessions by torture. This evidence includes references to such alleged conduct in published Illinois judicial opinions, media reports of overturned convictions, and City settlements with accusers. TIRC records indicate Boudreau has been accused of misconduct, abuse or coercion by approximately 38 people, and Halloran by approximately 37 people. Completed TIRC Case Dispositions have determined that there was sufficient evidence linking Boudreau and Halloran to allegations of torture of certain TIRC claimants to advance those cases to Post-TIRC Court hearings."

The TIRC specifically noted that Harold Hill and Derrick Flewellen were exonerated and sued the City of Chicago for their abuse and wrongful conviction and imprisonment. TIRC noted that in several cases Boudreau and Halloran refused to testify, citing the Fifth Amendment protection, noting that "in a civil proceeding a negative inference can be drawn from [that] fact."

TIRC also noted that in testifying in the Hill case in 2008 "Halloran asserted the 5th Amendment when asked whether he or Boudreau choked, punched, screamed at, refused food to, threatened, or used physical force to obtain a false confession from Kilroy Watkins in 1992, or whether he withheld exculpatory information from police reports in cases he investigated at Area 3." Two years later, however, in another deposition in the Hill case Halloran denied these things.

For all these reasons the TIRC referred Watkins case to the Circuit Court in spite of some contradictions in all the evidence. "The Commission concludes by a preponderance of the evidence that there is sufficient evidence of torture" in Watkins' case for such a referral.