

Speaker 1: Hi, I'd like to thank you guys for coming tonight, and I'm just going to go through a very brief history of what happened in Chicago from the early '70s until right now. And so in the early '70s, this was, it is now a community service center that remarkably does restorative justice work, but in the 1970s, this is the area of two police headquarters. And so during this time a police officer was promoted to detective by the name of John Burge. John Burge had been in the military, served in Vietnam, also served in Korea, and came home after being trained as part of the military police and used some of the tactics that people thought to have happened in Vietnam, here in Chicago. And so some of those tactics involved the torture of prisoners or the torture of people who had been arrested by the police.

Speaker 1: This torture happened in area two, where you saw that area. That building is located on 91st and Cottage Grove. It still exists. It was known as the house of screams. And so journalists wrote about the house of screams because they interviewed people in the neighborhood, and the people in the neighborhood surrounding said that they had often heard the screams that came out of that building as police were torturing people throughout decades.

Speaker 1: This went on under several police commanders and one of the things that happened was electric shock, and this is an example of the black box. So this black box was used by people, area detectives in area two, who were under the command of John Burge, to get confessions. Many of these people went on to be sentenced to death. Illinois at that time had a death penalty and they went on death row.

Speaker 1: Some of them created an organization called the Death Row 10. And so these were 10 men who were on death row. They said that they were innocent of the crimes and they started to advocate on behalf of themselves and other people who were on death row and really talking about the torture that had happened in Chicago.

Speaker 1: So from '72 to '82, many people were saying, "We were tortured in police headquarters by John Burge and people under his command." No one believed them. And then there came an event where several state troopers were killed and two police officers, Chicago police officers, were killed and that's when everything began to come more into the public view.

Speaker 1: And this happened because, after the police were killed, John Burge and his detectives went throughout the South Side, I was living on the South Side at the time, door to door, anybody that they thought had any involvement, any history, any knowledge of what had happened. And they just would break into people's homes without a warrant. They would search people's homes without a warrant. They put guns to people's heads. They threatened people's children.

Speaker 1: So people came out to protest against this, at the time, Jesse Jackson was one. And then a very interesting person came forward, which was Renault Robinson, who was the founder of the African-American Police League in Chicago. So it was very interesting at that time to hear somebody on the police force come forth and say, "What the police

are doing in Chicago is wrong and something needs to be done about it." Lots of activism happened. People were really protesting the police torture that was happening.

Speaker 1: So from '82 to '92, all of this torture continued to happen. The person who was actually, the case that really brought it to light, was the case of Andrew Wilson. And Andrew Wilson was the person who was accused of actually killing the police officer, he and his brother, Jackie Wilson. So when they arrested Andrew Wilson, he had no injuries at all.

Speaker 1: This is Andrew Wilson the day after he was arrested and tortured by John Burge and people under his command. He appeared in court with these wounds. He said to the state's attorney, "I have been tortured. I have been put on a hot radiator and burned. Electric shock. A gun was put to my head. They played Russian roulette with me." And for the most part, his claims went unheard, even though he presented this way.

Speaker 1: So, there were actually doctors at the time who came forward to say, "We believe that this person was tortured and that there should be some kind of investigation." That doctor's report was also ignored and so the torture continued.

Speaker 1: Meanwhile, there were a number of grassroots community organizations organized to really get John Burge fired from the police force. This took from 1972 to 1992. John Burge had the complete support of his fraternal order of police. Many of the police commanders supported him. Daley, who was the state's attorney when a lot of these tortures happened, brought no charges against John Burge, and so the torture continued for decades.

Speaker 1: It is estimated that between 115 and 170 people were tortured at the hands of John Burge, almost all of them African-Americans. So John Burge is brought up on charges, not for torture, but for lying about the torture. He is found guilty. He is sentenced to four and a half years in prison. He served three and a half years.

Speaker 1: Many of us who have been activists for years felt, where is the fairness? Where is the justice in this? And there was a real push then, how do we get justice? And that's when the Chicago Justice Torture Memorials group came together, composed of a number of people, educators, activists, attorneys, survivors of torture, to say, "We want to fight for reparations, using art as a tool."

Speaker 2: We're going to take a brief moment to show some quilts that Dorothy Burge has also made. And Dorothy, would you like to speak about these?

Speaker 1: Thank you for holding them up. So let me just say that there's a long quilting tradition in my family. And when I was growing up, my grandmother, my great aunts, all quilted, and they would say, "You want to come and learn how to quilt?" And I would say, "No, absolutely not. I have no interest in that at all."

Speaker 1: And so, as I grew older, quilting became something that was very interesting to me. So I'm going to start with this quilt right here, which is the first quilt I made, and this was made for the DuSable Museum and exhibit that they did on lynching. And I live on 35th

and King Drive right across the street from Ida B. Wells, the Ida B. Wells house, where she lived until her passing. And she fought against lynching, came to Chicago to be able to continue that campaign, and then went on to do some incredible work here in Chicago.

Speaker 1: The second quilt is Juvenile Life Without Possibility of Parole. This is a quilt that I made when I heard about the activism that was happening to end juvenile life without possibility of parole. They are currently about 50 people in Illinois who were sentenced to that and we are still fighting to make sure that they don't spend the rest of their lives in prison. And what we're really asking for is, we're not saying, let people out, what we're saying is, "Can you please, after a certain amount of time, at least review their cases and review what kind of human beings they are and determine if it's okay for them to be free in this society." And so this quilt was made to really bring awareness to that issue.

Speaker 1: The quilt right there is to honor the passing of Nelson Mandela. And so there was a quilt exhibit that was held in South Africa, where they asked if quilters from the United States and quilters from South Africa could collaborate and do an exhibit about Nelson Mandela and his life. And so that quilt is one of a series of three, where it starts with him earlier in life, ending, him right here, Nelson Mandela, being the advocate and the attorney.

Speaker 1: And then the last quilt actually being Mr. President. That quilt is something that really started me and got me involved with a group called the Women of Color Quilters Network. We are quilters who do social justice art quilts. And I made that quilt because when Trayvon Martin was killed, I went down to protest and I was carrying Skittles and iced tea. I did not own a hoodie. So I put on my nephew's hoodie, who had left it at the house, and the more I walked around in the hoodie, the more I came to tears because the hoodie smelled like him and all I kept thinking was that this could have been my nephew. And so this quilt is called Trayvon Could Be my Son, and instead of carrying an actual protest sign, I carried this quilt. That's it. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Oh, this one, Troy Davis, another quilt that I made instead of making a sign. Troy Davis was on death row, and so the activism around Troy Davis was us all saying, "I am Troy Davis," because we believed Troy Davis to be innocent. Someone else actually confessed to the murder, but that did not matter either. And so it has some symbols from ancient Kemet, and this is Anubis, and Anubis is the person who sends or takes you to the higher power to see if you get an afterlife. The ankh is a symbol that's of everlasting life and then the Eye of Horus, which means God knows the truth. And so I put those symbols in there also. Thank you.