

Chicago: Free police torture victim Gerald Reed!

written by Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression
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Armanda Shackelford, mother of Gerald Reed. Photo: FightBack! News

Statement from the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, the Chicago Torture Justice Center, and Mamas Activating Movements for Abolition and Solidarity.

Judge Thomas J. Hennelly has attempted to illegally reverse the order of another judge, Thomas V. Gainer, who vacated the conviction of Gerald Reed and ordered a new trial. Gainer vacated Reed's conviction after overwhelming evidence that his "confession" to a double murder in 1990 was the fruit of horrible torture by police working under Cmdr. Jon Burge, torture so extreme that it broke his thigh bone.

The 100 people packed into Hennelly's courtroom on Friday, Feb. 14, 2020, were stunned when Hennelly announced his decision to send Reed back to prison to serve a life term. They left seething with anger, and in tears. Armanda Shackelford, Reed's mother and a leader of the Chicago Alliance, responded in disbelief. "I never would have thought that this judge would do what he did today," she said.

Frank Chapman, co-chairperson of the Chicago Alliance, declared: "Judge Hennelly's ruling today was unheard of. It was outrageous and a racist insult to Black and Brown communities.

"Gerald Reed has gone through a seemingly endless process started by the Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission. He's been in prison almost 30 years. His evidentiary hearing regarding the torture he suffered at the hands of Jon Burge's minions was conclusive. Judge Gainer vacated his conviction. By what right does Judge Hennelly think he can just undo this order?

"Judge Hennelly had only two options: get on with a new trial or dismiss the case. He arbitrarily conjured up a third option that really doesn't exist: he reversed Judge Gainer's order, sending Reed back to prison to serve a natural life sentence."

Veteran courtroom observers say that Judge Hennelly's action is unprecedented and illegal. A circuit court judge has no authority to reverse the decision of another circuit court judge. Many feel that his action is cause for his removal from the bench. Reed's attorneys are reportedly considering an appeal seeking a writ of mandamus, ordering Hennelly to correct his unlawful decision.

Civil-rights lawyers recall that it was Hennelly who, as a prosecutor, led the conviction and death sentence of Burge torture victim Aaron Patterson. Patterson was spared only because Gov. George Ryan pardoned him and set him free in 2003, at the same time that he emptied death row and declared a moratorium on executions.

"Now is the time for this governor, J.B. Pritzker, to stand up and sign the papers freeing Gerald Reed from the torture he continues to endure in prison. The people will take this demand to his door, and we'll be there until it's done," Chapman declared.

The Chicago Alliance is campaigning for Gov. Pritzker to pardon all survivors of police torture in Illinois. In this case some are also demanding that Chief Judge Timothy Evans intervene.

"This turn of events in the Gerald Reed case just exposes the criminal justice system for what it is: criminal, racist and unjust. Due process means nothing in this system," Chapman added. "The time to end this torture is now, and the governor has the power to do that."

Significantly, Hennelly's boss as a prosecutor was once none other than Robert Milan, the special prosecutor appointed to Reed's case.

**CALL
GOVERNOR
J.B. PRITZKER**



We demand the
immediate pardon of
Gerald Reed and all
police torture survivors.
J.B. Pritzker,
DO YOUR JOB!!!

**DEMAND A PARDON
FOR GERALD REED!**

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