



PROGRAM MODEL

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**CHICAGO TORTURE
JUSTICE CENTER**
Communities healing from police violence

PROGRAM MODEL

The Chicago Torture Justice Center (CTJC) was born out of the historic legislation that granted reparations to survivors of police torture. CTJC seeks to address the complex impact of racialized state violence, including but not limited to police torture, police violence, sexual assault and rape at the hands of police, oppression inflicted on LGBTQ communities, harm caused by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and losses associated with incarceration and the carceral system at large.

We recognize that true healing of communities targeted by oppressive systems is not possible without simultaneously working to dismantle these systems. We acknowledge the many different ways communities are impacted by policing and state violence. Attempts to categorize these harms often serve to further divide and isolate those most impacted while shifting our gaze from the multitude of ways the state sanctions and perpetuates violence across communities. All forms of oppression are harmful and our communities have the right to access healing for the trauma they have sustained.

We understand that the medical industry in the United States is organized around profit, creating a system where reimbursement is the primary determinant of medical practice rather than research and care. The Center's program model intentionally challenges mainstream structures and processes set by the insurance and medical-complex that often pre-determine a limited, narrow, and profit-driven path to healing.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

WE UNDERSTAND that oppression and state violence is traumatizing and racialized. Operating from a definition of oppression offered by Prentis Hemphill that “oppression is how society controls the organization and distribution of trauma,” we move to intentionally and unapologetically disrupt and dismantle the many intersecting systems of harm while prioritizing resources and care to those communities that are most impacted.

WE RECOGNIZE the impact of state violence ripples across individuals, families, and communities and consequently requires intervention across all three. Our interventions seek to preserve the dignity of all our participants and recognize they are held in connection beyond themselves, and the experts of their own lives.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE that some members of communities of color may not have direct, personal experience of police violence, yet the trauma they experience daily as a result of over-policing and institutionalized racism is real and requires intervention.

WE BELIEVE that trauma lives in our bodies and requires a culturally appropriate expanded definition of what healing looks like. In addition to one-on-one, family, and group therapy, healing is found in re-connecting to our bodies, building relationships with one another and our communities, and telling our truths and being believed.

WE ASSERT that it is our inherent right to heal and it is possible for everyone. Helping individuals heal from state violence and institutionalized racism is an integral part of justice work. This work requires that barriers to support are eliminated and that services are accessible to all—including those currently incarcerated and people with disabilities—through offering a myriad of ways that people can receive support.

THERAPEUTIC APPROACH

Trauma-Informed Care: An approach that recognizes the potential for re-traumatization in service delivery and that emphasizes safety, trust, and transparency.

Psychosocial Accompaniment: An approach that centers the respect for and dignity of the survivor, and emphasizes the cultural and historical nature of harm.

Harm Reduction: An approach that destigmatizes behavior and uses a spectrum of strategies to cope.

Community Counseling: An approach that recognizes that an individual’s psychological development is closely aligned with the nature and behavior of social institutions. These institutions can impair or improve the wellness of individuals, families and communities. Healing activities must develop awareness of the role of social institutions in the lives and health of community members.



POLITICIZED HEALING

The Chicago Torture Justice Center approaches the work from a decolonized lens and rejects the notion that the only option for healing is enduring oppressive forces. Instead, CTJC operates from a politicized healing framework.

Politicized healing is the belief that our healing is political and our politics are healing. It is a framework that is rooted in an understanding that trauma is both a structural issue and an individual one. Racialized state violence inflicts harm on the individual, familial, and communal levels. Because of this, we understand that transformation requires a comprehensive approach to fully support those suffering from the compounded effects of trauma caused by state violence. Healing cannot happen unless we simultaneously dismantle the very systems at the root of our experiences of trauma and harm and tend to the very real daily life struggles that result from generations of on-going trauma, organized abandonment/disinvestment, and state-sanctioned violence.

Politicized healing addresses the harm—felt by individuals and communities—caused by historic and evolving systems of oppression. It affirms that it will never be enough to treat people for trauma and then send them back into a world where systems of harm remain intact, to perpetuate that same trauma without intervention. Politicized healing includes telling our truth unapologetically and being believed, releasing shame, building empathy and power, and being re-membered back into community.

Through the practice of politicized healing, we are able to:



HEAL

We engage in a self-determined process of restoring ourselves and connecting to others and what we care about.



DISMANTLE

We unapologetically expose and deconstruct systems of harm.



CREATE

Build reparative power towards new paradigms that we collectively imagine for our communities.



OUR PRACTICES

Trauma-informed care: A collaborative, participant-centered approach that prioritizes safety, trust, and transparency and recognizes the potential of retraumatization in treatment.

Psychosocial accompaniment: An approach that allows us to join our participants and support them in their struggles so we may advocate on their behalf in the spaces they occupy—whether virtual or physical.

Art Therapy: A form of therapy that uses the expression of creativity and art to process trauma.

Community Counseling: At the core of our counseling model is the belief that all people have a right to live a life of dignity, and that individuals must be empowered to preserve this dignity. This approach requires services and strategies that educate community members, advocate for those needing support, and influence public policy for systemic transformation. Not only do we offer healing services in our offices at the Center, but we also meet participants out in the community where services often have the greatest impact.

Somatic practice: Developing awareness of how the trauma we experience lives in our bodies and how we can use body-based practices to process the trauma held in our bodies. This approach teaches embodiment of new practices in order to expand choices of what is possible.

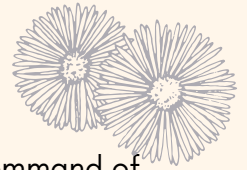
Harm reduction: An approach that destigmatizes behavior and utilizes a spectrum of strategies to reduce harm while upholding participants' right to self-determination and agency.

Communal care: Actively and intentionally build informal mechanisms for staying connected to community members and encouraging practices of mutual aid and support.

Community Organizing: An approach that works to dismantle systems of harm and build community power through strategizing, skill building, and cross-movement coalition building.



WHO WE SERVE



CTJC would not exist without the persistent resistance of survivors tortured under the command of Jon Burge. They led a multiple decades long fight for justice and repair and it is because of their persistence and resilience that we are able to do this work. Their vision and commitment to their communities led the Center to make an intentional decision from its opening to serve all survivors of police and state violence—both direct and indirect. This includes survivors of police torture under Burge and his midnight crew, other survivors of police torture, family members whose loved ones have been killed or harmed by police, individuals who have been raped or sexually assaulted by police, community members targeted and harassed by police, individuals harmed and detained by the state as a result of their immigration status or religious affiliations, and all those who because of the color of their skin, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or religion live their daily lives under an ever present threat of danger and loss of freedom or life by the state.

HOW WE SERVE

INDIVIDUAL

- **One-on-one therapy**, including psychotherapy and art therapy, provided by the Clinical Team or when necessary, by external licensed clinicians.
- **Supportive resources** for incarcerated survivors including our monthly newsletter that offers resources for coping strategies while incarcerated, letter writing for emotional support, court support as their cases move through the system, and connection through programs like the CTJC book club.
- **Case management** services provided by our Case Manager, Learning Fellows, or when necessary, by outside referrals.
- **Re-unification support** provided by the Center's Peer Reentry Team to help community members returning home from incarceration. CTJC's Reunification Support Services seek to address the harms that have been created, fostered and maintained by the carceral system by offering support that is individualized, holistic, politicized, transformational, collaborative, and liberatory.
- **Somatic therapies** like acupuncture or cranio-sacral therapy when pandemic conditions allow.
- **Court accompaniment** provided by the Organizing Team and other CTJC members.
- Through our community counseling model, all services are provided at CTJC, in-home, or virtually during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

FAMILY

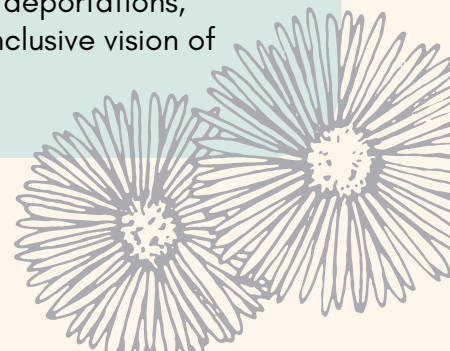
- **Family therapy** provided by the Center's clinical team, or by outside licensed clinicians when necessary.

GROUPS

- **Weekly support groups** for survivors of torture.
- As we become more aware of the needs of the community, we will tailor groups to meet them. We anticipate offering other therapeutic or peer groups, including an art therapy group and a grief group.

COMMUNITY

- **Community meetings:** Held monthly for impacted individuals to build connection and organize toward a collective vision of a world without police violence.
- **Speakers Bureau:** Supports survivors in sharing their stories with audiences across the city and beyond, with a particular emphasis on bringing to life the Chicago Public Schools Reparations Won curriculum. Through this transformative partnership, students and survivors create a powerful connection that results in deepened learning and deepened healing.
- **Healing resources:** Our original workbooks, zines, postcards, and toolkits are free and available to our community both in and out of carceral control.
- **Trainings:** CTJC creates learning spaces for community members directly and indirectly impacted by policing and those supporting them, including sessions in Know Your Rights and Navigating Racialized Trauma.
- **Politicized Healing Collective:** Our six-month training cohort creating shared healing space for organizers responding to racialized state violence. By exploring the connections between policing, community disinvestment, terror inflicted by ICE and deportations, ongoing surveillance, and the threat of evictions, the PHC creates an inclusive vision of sustained cross-movement power building.



OUR STAFFING PHILOSOPHY

Care for staff: Staff Development, Embodiment Training, Support Groups

- **We prioritize** growing in ways that center survivors and about half of our current staff are formerly incarcerated, including direct survivors of police torture. We are dedicated to creating the time and support everyone on our staff needs and consistently ask: what does directly impacted leadership that isn't exploitative look like? How do we invite our staff to bring their full selves into this work, and respond to their own trauma? **Learning Fellow** positions at CTJC offer structure for survivors to grow on a self-determined course of development as part of our staff, and time and support to bring their gifts to the field.
- **Employee Support:** The Service Reflection Hour (SRH). The SRH allows clinical and non-clinical staff members to come together in a safe environment to reflect on the personal impact of counter-transference, secondary trauma, and engaging in systems change.
- We offer **Embodiment** and other training with the understanding that team members are impacted by trauma in various ways, and that their healing and wellness is an integral component of the Center's ability to work effectively and in alignment with our values.
- **Survivors Support Group** allows staff that have experienced state sponsored torture and incarceration to also be re-membered back into a community of concern. Their presence also provides encouragement and direction for newly released survivors.




CTJC is located at 6337 South Woodlawn Avenue in Chicago. There is no cost or financial burden to use our services. We hope that if you have experienced state violence you will give us a call at 773-966-6666 or email us at info@chicagotorturejustice.org.

With thanks to our community whose photography and design support made the Program Model possible: Christin Adams, Beth Awano, aidan frierson, Jean Melesaine, Sarah-ji, and Gabe Schendler.

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