

# Newsletter

APRIL 2023

## Sean Tyler and Reginald Henderson continue fighting for Certificates of Innocence



Brothers Sean Tyler and Reginald Henderson are torture survivors who were wrongfully arrested, convicted, and sentenced as teenagers 1994. They each served over two decades in prison, and were finally exonerated of their sentences in 2021. Since their exoneration, the brothers have petitioned the state of Illinois to grant them Certificates of Innocence so that their records can be expunged and they can move forward without facing the barriers of having a felony on their record. Twice now, the State's Attorney's Office has postponed their petitions, forcing Sean and Reginald to again await justice after spending decades wrongfully incarcerated. Reginald, who no longer lives in Chicago, must drive three hours each way to attend mandatory court hearings, making it difficult to maintain a consistent work schedule and plan ahead.

After the last hearing on March 6th, Reginald was asked by a reporter, "does it feel like you have chains on you again?" and he replied, "The chains on my hands didn't allow me to save my mother. The chains on my hands didn't allow me to work a job without getting kicked off. What are we supposed to do? Us African American men get out here after all these years and you push us back to the same slums to die in! Enough is enough!"

Though Kim Foxx's office has made historic strides in exonerations for those framed and tortured by the police, her office has made it possible for the courts to continuously traumatize survivors by challenging certificate of innocence cases. Black men in particular, who have been tortured and framed in Cook County, remain convicted and criminalized at alarming rates. How can someone be innocent enough to be exonerated but not innocent enough to gain a certificate of innocence? Enough is enough!

Stay tuned for updates, as the next hearing is on May 4th.

## Mothers of the Movement

*For Women's History Month, we spoke to mothers in our community who inspire us. Meet Dorothy Holmes and Anthanette Marshbanks are mothers, grandmothers, and activists who have fought and continue fighting tirelessly for justice for their sons, alongside others who have lost their loved ones to police violence.*

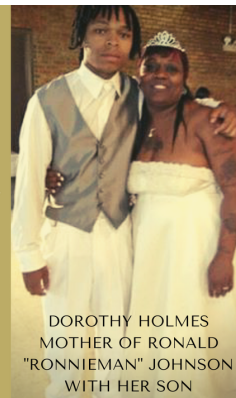
### "Us mothers were also tortured"

*An interview with Dorothy Holmes. Dorothy's son Ronald "RonnieMan" Johnson was killed by Chicago Police on October 12, 2014*

#### Tell us a little bit about yourself.

**Dorothy:** I'm a mom of three, even though my son is no longer here, I still say he's still mine. I'm a grandmother of eleven grandkids: eight girls, three boys. Everybody at CTJC knows them. I lost my son in 2014. I was a single mom when I raised all my kids. I did what I had to do to make sure they had a roof over their heads. I think the hardest part was when I lost my only boy. I was lost for a minute, but I knew I couldn't accept what they were saying. That's how I met a lot of BYP 100, Black Lives Matter, BLM Chi, Aislinn, CPAC, Frank [Chapman]. I met a lot of different organizations that stood out there with me on the front line: rain, sleet and snow. We stood out there marching, shutting the expressway down, shutting the streets down. Our voices were being heard, sitting down on City Hall. Whatever we had to do to get attention on these murderers, we did it. We did it. We shut it down. And I met mothers from Brazil and California. I've been to California. I've been to Colombia. I met mothers there. I've met a whole lot of people. We met through the circumstances of losing our kids, but I met them.

You stole my child.  
You hoped I would go away.  
You underestimated my love.  
I will never give up.  
I will be a voice for my child.  
I am not alone.  
There are many like me.  
By circumstance united.  
Together we will be heard.  
We will never stop fighting.



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Mothers of the Movement cont'd

### How did you first encounter CTJC?

**Dorothy:** I remember being with Aislinn [Pulley] when I first lost my son. I was going to a lot of different meetings, and it was just something that clinged me to her. She was saying she was going to be part of CTJC, so I just stuck it out with her and went to their meetings. I sat in on a lot of little things, showed up at the meetings, listened to some of the Chicago torture survivors. It's like being at home with people that you don't know. It's just good vibes. On some of my hard days, I can go to CTJC. There might be somebody that's doing therapy, I can talk to the counselors there. We also had aroma therapy or someone that would come in and talk to us, like do massages and stuff like that. I recommend CTJC to other mothers that might want to get involved. Come out, listen. Because even though it's the Chicago Torture Justice Center, us mothers were also tortured when they took our kids away from us. We still share some type of pain with a lot of the guys and women who were wrongfully convicted that were taken away from their families. That's still pain. They have been very supportive.

### What was it like meeting other mothers?

**Dorothy:** When we first met, we all cried together. We had dinner together, shared space, shared our stories. We showed each other love, and let each other know, "You're not alone in this fight. There's a lot of other mothers out here, there's plenty of us out here like this." One thing I said was, "They took our kids away from us, and they're going to try to hurry up and pay us to shut us up". There's not enough money in the world to tell me I can't talk about what happened to my son.

### How do you keep going? Are there ways that you find joy and peace?

**Dorothy:** I stay busy a lot. I got to stay busy. I can't sit still because if I'm sitting still, my mind is racing, and I'm thinking about what happened to him.

A photo of Ronald "RonnieMan" Johnson



I started the RonnieMan Foundation. When I first started it, it was me, Fred Hampton Jr., Dalphne, and Rachel. We didn't have a lot of money, but I just wanted to do something because he got killed October the 12th, 2014, and his birthday was December the 14th. So I wanted to do something for him. I couldn't accept that he was murdered. Something I used to always do was go over there to the site where he got killed. I saw some kids out there and I wondered why these kids were watching me. One of the little guys walked up to me and asked, "Why are you always coming here?" I'm looking at him like, why is this little boy talking to me? I told him, "Well, my son got killed right here. He was my only son". He said, "Oh, wow. Can I give you a hug?" So the little guy gave me a hug and he said, "Well, you still got a son". And I'm looking at him and thinking, what is he getting to? He said, "You got me". And I'm looking at him like, man, I got to do something for these little kids over here in this neighborhood. So that's when I came up with giving back to that community over there. I've kept it going ever since then.

### You've spent many years giving back to the community. What are some of the ways that you remember and honor RonnieMan?

**Dorothy:** I do the RonnieMan holiday toy drive and the RonnieMan back-to-school book bag drive. Last year was my first year, where I put candy in different character bags, gave away Pampers to the parents that probably needed them over there in the area, wipes and hygiene items and stuff like that. So I'm going to do it again this year. Just something to keep his name alive, because I'm always fighting. There's a playground over there, and I have been fighting to try to get that playground renamed after him, and I haven't given up that fight yet. That's going to be my next step because it's like, no justice, no peace. My next step is to keep going, to get that playground renamed after him.

I always wanted a tree right there where he fell at. One day I went through there and I'm like, is somebody going to give me a tree? I'm going to buy my own tree and plant it. So I went through there and my daughter says, "Mom, it's a tree over there where my brother got killed". I'm like, "Stop playing with me. I just rolled through there. I didn't see no tree". But when I went through there, there was a tree out there. It's still there. It's growing there. When I go over there, I always put down some little artificial flowers because you can't really put a lot down over there.

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Mothers of the Movement cont'd

## Is there anything that you'd like to share with other women or other mothers who have had similar experiences as you?

**Dorothy:** I recommend that if somebody is going through something and they don't have the money to afford to go talk to a counselor or if they're being judged, then stop by CTJC. Ask if you can talk to someone inside CTJC. Share your story, open up. Because if you don't open up, nobody would ever know what you're going through. At CTJC, they don't judge you. They listen. That's what a lot of us mothers need, someone to listen to us instead of judging us or looking at us like dollar signs or as if we are crazy or as if we were the ones that pulled the trigger that took our kids. That's what keeps me going, because I can call, I can talk to people. I can express myself without them trying to say, "Oh, you're crazy", or, "We're going to put you on medication". I don't need medicine. I just need somebody to listen to me, to understand where I'm coming from. I buried a child.

## "Momma live your life to the fullest."

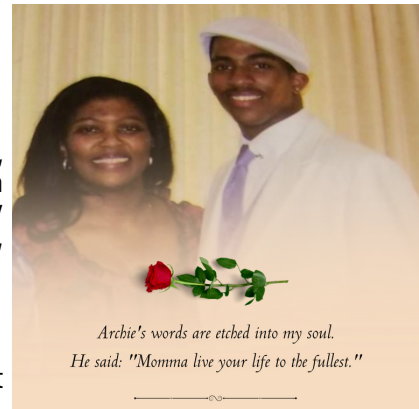
An interview with *Anthanette Marshbanks*. *Anthanette's son Archie Lee Chambers Jr. was killed by Calumet City Police on April 21, 2012.*

### Tell us a little about yourself.

**Anthanette:** I'm a native of Chicago Southside and raised by both of my parents, where I also completed primary and secondary education. I worked as a registered nurse for over two decades. I was a single mother who raised my children and I am a proud grandmother. I am caring, compassionate, a giver, kind, faithful, a loyal friend and a mentor.

### How did you first encounter CTJC?

I had attended Dorothy Holmes' event honoring her son Ronnieman at Washington Park.



There, I met Professor Yanilda from the University of Chicago. We talked about police violence, and I shared Archie's story. She extended an invitation for me to attend a Realizing and Implementing Strategies to End Police Violence (RISE) meeting at the Chicago Torture Justice Center on a Saturday morning. I attended and was introduced to the staff of CTJC. They welcomed me with open arms into a safe haven. They informed me that I was entitled to the resources at the Center. The entire staff of CTJC has been extremely caring, respectful, considerate, helpful, trustworthy and well-informed.

I said to myself this is where I belong.

### What are some things that you've done or experienced at CTJC?

**Anthanette:** I have been exposed to the rights and the wrongs with our justice system and policing issues. The staff of CTJC assists its members with various issues. As a participant of therapeutic counseling, I become involved in various programs and projects: The Freedom Songbook project, boxing, art therapy. In 2018, we traveled to Birmingham, Alabama for a Civil Rights Tour.

I attended a dinner for mother's from Brazil and Chicago. We weren't able to understand our spoken languages but we understood nonverbal communication of each other's pain. Families are forever impacted with the devastation of the loss of their loved ones and to be denied justice causes dreadful pain.

## We at CTJC and other mothers and survivors look up to you, your vulnerability, and your courage. Is there anything you'd like to share with other women or other mothers in our community?

**Anthanette:** I will continue to encourage, invite and refer survivors to various organizations for assistance through their pain.

I'm able to empathize and sympathize with other grieving families. When meeting other mothers, it's sad, depressing and heart-wrenching and irritating. The police are supposed to serve and protect citizens. People should not be killed or tortured by police.

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Mothers of the Movement cont'd

## What are some things that keep you going and what are some ways that you continue to remember and honor Archie?

**Anthanette:** I honor Archie through my activism, through using my voice and speaking publicly:

I have spoken at a Criminal Justice class at Governor State University and Social Justice class at the University of Chicago. I was on a panel discussion for the documentary of Mike Brown's story, Stranger Fruit. I attended a spiritual retreat in Barre, Massachusetts where I shared my story.

I will continue and have participated in various activities, events and projects which give me joy and peace as I honor my son Archie Jr. I will continue on this JOURNEY OF HEALING. The #1 PROJECT I participated in was a collaboration between the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Negaunee Music Institute, called Notes For Peace. They assisted parents who had lost loved ones due to gun violence to create tribute songs. For this collaboration, we put together the song "ONE RED ROSE" as a tribute to my son, Archie Lee Chambers Jr.

### The following was written by Anthanette Marshbanks:

You may hide me in plain sight but my God is able.

Archie's story has reached people from the following places: Australia, Brazil, Canada, South Africa, the United Kingdom and across America. I have been interviewed by journalists from Sweden and Poland. Yes, Archie's story is traveling the world.

I didn't have any supportive help from any outside organizations during my son's legal process.

ARCHIE WAS AN UNARMED BLACK MAN.

THE POLICE OFFICER - NO CONVICTIONS OR NO CRIMINAL CHARGES.

I WAS SERVED INJUSTICE.

No one was listening and the questions still remain:

WHERE IS JUSTICE WHEN A PERSON IS KILLED BY A POLICE OFFICER IN AMERICA?

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE POLICE OFFICER WHO KILLED

ARCHIE LEE CHAMBERS JR.?

Society was denied 100% transparency and now it has been over a decade. This information was never released to society.

My intuition tells me that portions of my son's case was LEGALLY SWEEPED UNDER THE RUG and NEVER TO BE REVEALED.

My son ARCHIE LEE CHAMBERS JR. (20) death resulted in part of me dying. My heart was shattered into a million pieces. I didn't believe that there were any words or amount of time which could heal this pain. I was living a never ending nightmare and depressed for five years.

This is the reason I joined this fight for Justice and Freedom for Them All.

One morning, I woke up and the Spirit of God spoke to me and said:

Romans 12:19: Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

I decided that day, I would live and not die. I declared the works of the Lord. I continue to experience agony and pain. I know that GOD is leading me, supporting me and holding me up. Now I'm able to reach out to help others to move through and away from the nightmare of losing a child.

Archie's words are etched into my soul.

He said: "Momma live your life to the fullest."

Happy Heavenly Birthday Son

Archie Lee Chambers Jr.

You're Forever Loved and Missed!



Archie Lee Chambers Jr.





## CTJC's anniversary is in May!



We first opened our doors in May of 2017, two years after the Reparations Ordinance was passed. This May, we celebrate our 6th anniversary as the first center in the United States dedicated to serving survivors of domestic police torture. We have some upcoming event throughout the month of May.

Although we know that many of you are not able to be physically join us, we celebrate, honor and remember all of our community on the inside through everything we do. **Please invite your loved ones to join!** We would love to meet them and be in community with them too.

For updates on the upcoming events, follow us on social media (IG/Twitter: @chitorture) or subscribe to our email newsletter: [chicagotorturejustice.org/newsandevents](http://chicagotorturejustice.org/newsandevents)

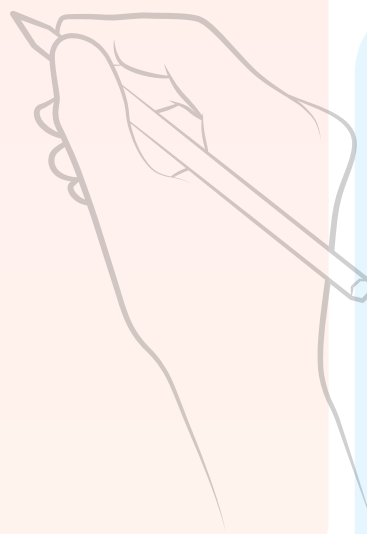
## VOICES FROM INSIDE

### Not my time to die...

*By Sharonda, originally performed for the Women's Justice Institute for Domestic Violence Month*

He hit me and the blood oozed,  
No time to think or we'd lose,  
Sex next? Nawh, I get to choose.  
But every ounce of me wanted to run  
When I saw that gun,  
No way in hell I'd leave my young.  
So, I stood my ground o his battlefield  
Self defense or a black woman against a white man is zero and nil.  
The Jurors, yeah they listened  
But couldn't quite understand,  
They strength and courage it take to defeat  
a mad man.  
From the incident, to the charge then  
Conviction I'm still fighting.  
Looking for justice in a system so misguided.  
Each day I deliberately hold my head high  
Giving hope to the helpless left in prison  
to die.  
Through the tough roads and hard turns  
I still found purpose in this journey  
But what I can not believe is the  
Abuse I suffered at the hands of two  
State's attorneys.  
As a matter of fact, make that three  
Senate Bill 2129 hasn't even enacted  
And he said he won't apply it to me  
Not because I don't qualify or haven't  
Served the mandatory minimum,  
But in his words an enemy of his friend  
is his enemy.  
Abuse, it comes in many different  
Forms, often overlooked.  
Winning all these convictions isn't sheer  
luck, it's that unprosecuted abuse of  
prosecutorial misconduct.

Stay Woke!!



## Save the Date for our Anniversary Events!

### May 6th - Volunteer Day

*Help us beautify our space by picking up litter, clean up and set up our community areas and do some planting around the space. Volunteers are welcome to bring a perennial plant(s) to add to the outdoor space!*

### May 20th - Anniversary Party

*Celebrate our anniversary with food, music, and community!*

## Where Do I Belong

*By Peter*

Where Do I Belong? I belong with my wife and Kids in either San Francisco or San Diego California, living extremely well. Wonderful house, mortgage paid in full, excellent job with the railroad. Benefits for my kids and family's well being. Becoming part of the union, nice family car, paid in full. Exceptional schooling for my kids and not looking over my shoulder every five seconds clutching a gun, thinking about who I have to watch or who I can trust to stay alive.

## Looking ahead: Black August reflections

Black August commemorates the movement for Black liberation that happened in California prisons in the 1970s. While in prison, George Jackson read and discussed political theory with his fellow inmates. Since his death, Jackson's writing in the form of letters has been published for others to learn from, and has served as an inspiration for organizers and freedom fighters across the globe. In August, we would like to publish your thoughts and reflections on Black August. What does liberation mean to you? What does it look like?

*To see your own work in our newsletter, please send it to us at:*

*6337 S. Woodlawn  
Chicago, IL 60637*

*Or email:  
info@chicagotorturejustice.org*

## Keeley Schenwar Memorial Essay Prize

*The annual prize is awarded to two writers who are currently or formerly incarcerated. This article was written by Truthout Staff, originally published on truthout.org.*

The Truthout Center for Grassroots Journalism is proud to host the annual Keeley Schenwar Memorial Essay Prize, for work authored by people who are currently or formerly incarcerated. Since 2021, each year, we have awarded two prizes for an original essay of 1,500 words or less on the topic of prisons, policing or a related subject. It may be written as a first-person narrative (although that is not a requirement). Each of the two winners is awarded a prize of \$3,000. The essays are published on Truthout.

This prize is in honor of Keeley Schenwar, who was a devoted mother, daughter, sister, friend, writer and advocate for incarcerated mothers. Keeley was incarcerated, on and off, over the course of 14 years. She wrote often, both poetry and prose, particularly focusing on her experiences of incarceration and addiction. Keeley spoke out publicly about the inhumanity of the U.S. prison system and wrote about her own experience of incarceration. She wrote this essay about giving birth while incarcerated, and the brutality of being separated from her newborn baby.

Keeley died on February 4, 2020. This prize is in the spirit of Keeley's desire for the kind of world where everyone can live a good life.

Keeley was the sister of Truthout Editor-at-Large Maya Schenwar, who also directs the Truthout Center for Grassroots Journalism. Keeley was one of the inspirations for Truthout's early and sustained dedication to covering the injustices and violence of incarceration and policing. The Keeley Schenwar Memorial Essay Prize is reopened each year on the anniversary of Keeley's death to continue drawing attention to the cruel realities of the oppressive systems she struggled against and wrote about.

Submissions to the contest are open as of February 27, 2023. The prize is open to people who are either currently or formerly incarcerated (in any form of confinement: jail, prison, detention center, electronic monitoring, or other). Essays can be submitted in two ways:

- They can be emailed to [essayprize@truthout.org](mailto:essayprize@truthout.org). (Feel free to submit your essay either as an attachment or within the body of the email.)
- They can be mailed to:

**Keeley Schenwar Memorial Essay Prize**  
Truthout  
PO Box 276414  
Sacramento, CA, 95827

Essays must be unpublished and unique to this contest; they should not be simultaneously submitted to other publications.

The deadline for submissions is June 1, 2023.  
Winners will be announced by September 1, 2023.

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