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***Opening the Black Box: The Charge is Torture Among Trio of SAIC
Exhibitions on Local and U.S. Justice Systems***

Exhibition Programs Free and Open to the Public

Chicago—**The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC)** proudly presents *Opening the Black Box: The Charge is Torture* through Friday, December 21 at SAIC's Sullivan Galleries (33 S. State St., 7th Floor). SAIC also co-presents several upcoming exhibition programs that are free and open to the public.

Co-organized by the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials Project ([CTJM](#)), this exhibition showcases over 70 proposed monuments to memorialize documented cases of torture by the Chicago Police. From 1972 to 1991 more than 110 African American men were allegedly tortured in Chicago's Area 2 district under Sergeant Jon Burge's command, and many of the victims signed coerced confessions that led to years of prison terms. Burge was fired by the Chicago Police Department in 1993 but given a full pension, and since this time the City of Chicago has gone out of its way to suppress this history.

The determined group of educators, activists, community organizers, artists, and lawyers behind the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials Project (CTJM) intends to keep this history alive and present. By inviting artists and justice seekers to submit proposals for speculative ways to memorialize the torture cases, the CTJM team seeks to honor the individuals, families, and communities affected by torture, as well as address the obstruction of justice that has occurred in the aftermath. A. Laurie Palmer, a CTJM organizer, artist, and SAIC faculty member says, "It's basically unfinished business. We want to bring greater justice for the people who were tortured and find some way to bring them greater reparations."

Through December 21, these proposed memorials—ranging from architecture to haiku, website to mural, community organization to performance—are featured in *Opening the Black Box*. As a contemporary merging of art and politics, this exhibition/collective memorial will bring forward the history of torture and inspire ideas for reparations for the torture survivors. CTJM organizer Alice Kim notes, "We want to urge Chicagoans and people all over the world to consider what happened here but in ways they hadn't considered before. Even the name, *Opening the Black Box*, refers to opening up this history and using the arts to do that."

Exhibition organizers include SAIC faculty members Kevin Kaempf, A. Laurie Palmer, Mary Patten, Sarah Ross, and Ellen Rothenberg, with graduate student J. Gibran Villalobos (MA 2013) as Curatorial Assistant. In addition to these SAIC faculty, the CTJM

organizing committee includes SAIC alumni and multiple other Chicago artists, writers, lawyers, activists, and scholars. The exhibition is made possible in part by support from The Propeller Fund and the Crossroads Fund.

The Sullivan Galleries concurrently presents two additional exhibitions exploring related themes of inequity within the U.S. justice system, SAIC alumna Laurie Jo Reynold's (MFA 2000) **Tamms Year Ten Campaign Office** and SAIC faculty member Tirtza Even's **Preview: An Assembly from Natural Life (work-in-progress)**, also on view through December 21.

SAIC Sullivan Galleries
33 S. State St., 7th floor
Free and open to the public
Tuesday–Saturday, 11:00 a.m.– 6.00 p.m.
312.629.6635 | | exhibitions-saic@saic.edu
www.saic.edu/exhibitions

EXHIBITION PROGRAMS

All held at the Sullivan Galleries, 33 S. State St., 7th floor

EXHIBITION TOUR of *Opening the Black Box* with artists and curators

Friday, November 9, 5–6:30 p.m.

Walk through the exhibition with various artists who contributed memorial proposals to the exhibition, as well as several torture survivors whose experiences informed, shaped, and inspired the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials Project. Visitors will also have an opportunity to meet and converse with exhibition curators and other activists involved with the project.

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT & HUMAN RIGHTS: An Evening of American Stories

Friday, November 9, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

After tours of *Opening the Black Box*, join the Midwest Coalition for Human Rights, Amnesty International, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, and the American Civil Liberties Union for an evening to consider the US's use of solitary confinement—addressed through art and story, highlighting three regionally diverse cases.

Keynote speakers:

Robert King - Activist, Author, “Angola 3”

Tessa Murphy - Amnesty International

Opening remarks:

Heather Rice - National Religious Campaign Against Torture

For more information about this event, contact Claire Leslie,
cleslie@MidwestHumanRights.org

PHOTO REQUESTS FROM SOLITARY: Display and Discussion

Saturday, November 17, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Organized in conjunction with the exhibition “Tamms Year Ten Campaign Office,” this program presents the ongoing project in which [Tamms Year Ten](#) organizers asked the men housed at Tamms supermax prison to request a photograph of anything in the world, real or imagined. Members of the public were invited to respond by submitting images that fulfilled the prisoner’s requests. Requested photographs include: the Masonic temple in Washington, D.C.; what’s left of the Robert Taylor Homes; a heartsick clown with a feather pen; one prisoner’s mother in front of a mansion with money and a Hummer; Michelle Obama planting vegetables in the White House garden; any Muslim mosque or Moorish Science Temple in Chicago, Mecca, or Africa; and fallen autumn leaves. The public responses to these photograph requests will be on display at this event, and participating photographers will discuss their experience making the images. Men formerly housed in Tamms, the family members of current inmates, and other special guests will be on hand to respond to the project. SAIC photography faculty member Claire Pentecost will facilitate the conversation.

I AM MEMORY: Chicago Writers Against Torture

Thursday, November 29, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

With reception at 5:30 p.m.

An evening of readings dedicated to the survivors, their families, and their communities who endured unspeakable acts of torture at the hands of the Chicago Police. Performances and readings by Kevin Coval, Darby Tillis, Achy Obejas, Gary Younge, Quraysh Ali Lansana, Krista Franklin and others.

A FILM FESTIVAL AGAINST TORTURE

Saturday, December 15, 12:00–7:00 p.m.

A screening of three powerful films about torture, featuring discussions with the filmmakers:

12:00–2:00 p.m.

THE END OF THE NIGHTSTICK by Peter Kuttner, Cyndi Moran, and Eric Scholl

As victims speak out, THE END OF THE NIGHTSTICK investigates charges of institutional racism, violence and cover-up. It also tell the story of a resistance movement, as local activist groups, including the Task Force to Confront Police Violence, refuse to let testimonies of police violence remain buried.

2:15–3:30 p.m.

TO TURN A BLIND EYE by Jackie Rivet-River and John Lyons

This short documentary film, TO TURN A BLIND EYE, exposes police torture of African American Suspects by former police Commander Jon Burge. As investigative journalist Jon Conroy said, “...they all knew, all the officers, the State’s Attorneys as did many judges...and later there are 18 and there are 28 and there are 56 and now it’s at 112. These are just guys we know about, there are many we don’t.”

4:00–6:00 p.m.

BENEATH THE BLINDFOLD Ines Somer and Kathy Berger.

BENEATH THE BLINDFOLD interweaves the personal stories of four torture survivors who now reside in the U.S., but originally hail from different parts of the globe: South and Central America, Africa, and the U.S. This documentary paints a holistic portrait of survivors' experiences, their path to healing, and life after torture.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

A leader in educating artists, designers, and scholars since 1866, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) offers nationally accredited undergraduate and graduate degrees and post-baccalaureate programs to nearly 3,200 students from around the globe. SAIC also enables adults, high school students, middle school students, and children to flourish in a variety of courses, workshops, certificate programs, and camps through its Continuing Studies program. Located in the heart of Chicago, SAIC has an educational philosophy built upon an interdisciplinary approach to art and design, giving students unparalleled opportunities to develop their creative and critical abilities, while working with renowned faculty who include many of the leading practitioners in their fields. SAIC's resources include the Art Institute of Chicago and its new Modern Wing; numerous special collections and programming venues provide students with exceptional exhibitions, screenings, lectures, and performances. For more information, please visit saic.edu.

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