

JUSTICE ADVOCATES:

CITIZENS ALERT AND POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY TIMELINE

1967

Attorney Norman Lapping, longtime Evanston alderman Jack Korshak, social worker Jay Miller, accountant Fred Glick, and clergyman Stephen Whitehead establish Citizens Alert (CA) "to bring about better understanding between law enforcement agencies and the overall community, to the end that mutual respect shall characterize their relationship."

1969

In the pre-dawn of December 4, 1969, 14 heavily armed Chicago police officers storm an apartment at 2337 West Monroe Street, Chicago, and kill Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, two Black Panther leaders. The subsequent public outrage provides CA with a pioneering leadership opportunity to advocate for police accountability.

1970

Under the leadership of CA, community representatives start attending meetings of the Chicago Police Board (CPB), which were formerly closed to the public.

1971

CA spearheads a successful three-year public campaign to abolish the more than 100-year-old political Office of the Cook County Coroner and to establish the Office of the Medical Examiner.

1972

CA convenes Latino and African American plaintiffs to file the lawsuit *Camacho et. al. v. Conlisk*, alleging racial discrimination in hiring in the Chicago Police Department (CPD). This leads to court-ordered revision of hiring standards and establishment of hiring goals based on the racial makeup of the city. The U.S. Department of Justice enters the suit as a plaintiff, and that suit is joined with the suit of the African American Patrolman's League, already pending. As a result, some of the plaintiffs are hired.

CA releases the first issue of its periodical, *The Bridge*. It becomes a major channel of information about police issues between 1972 and 1985.

1973

CA presents a formal request to the CPB for changes in the psychological testing procedures in the CPD, and wins a guarantee from the police department for a comprehensive psychological screening program for police applicants.

At the urging of CA, a CPB information center is established.



Fred Hampton's bedroom after the police raid.





Ruth Wells, Citizens Alert's first Executive Director.



A volunteer with a CA Observer armband.

1974

In January 1974, the Guardians Police Organization, a national organization of Black police officers, bestows on CA Executive director Ruth Wells its first award to a citizen for "outstanding contribution as a civilian to the field of law enforcement."

Chicago Police Superintendent James Rochford agrees to hold quarterly "accountability sessions" about police issues with representatives of community organizations and Chicago's neighborhoods. The first accountability session takes place on July 3, 1974.

CA becomes one of the plaintiffs in the "Red Squad" lawsuit charging police surveillance of non-criminal activity. The CPD, the FBI and the CIA are ordered to refrain from spying on organizations involved in non-criminal behavior.

1975

In March 1975, CA holds its first major conference on police accountability in Chicago with the theme "Crime and police effectiveness."

CA organizes a conference on the Beat Representative program, the first community policing program in Chicago.

Cook County Board President George Dunne appoints Mary Powers, a CA board member, to the advisory committee for the establishment of the Medical Examiner's Office.

1976

CA launches its pioneering Neutral Observer program, with volunteers trained to monitor police behavior during public protests and demonstrations and report to the superintendent and at City Council hearings on police brutality.

CA neutral observers avert intensified racial conflict in Marquette Park by diverting African American motorists from driving into danger zone where enraged Nazis threaten violence.

1977

CA convenes a coalition of 35 community organizations to develop a proposal on the role citizen groups can have in the selection process for a new police superintendent.

1978

CA coordinates a session on the police use of deadly force at a statewide "Citizens Conference on Justice" in Springfield, Illinois. This leads to more meetings for CA with eleven other organizations concerned with this problem.

1979

In a press conference, Juanita Van Dorn, retired U.S. Air Force Captain and CA's Board President, challenges Mayor Michael Bilandic's reappointment of Police Board members during his lame duck tenure in office.

In another press conference, Van Dorn criticizes Mayor Jane Byrne's unilateral move to name nine persons to the Police Board and appoint the board's chairman and vice-chairman.

In her testimony before the Illinois House Sub-Committee on Deadly Force in Springfield, Van Dorn calls for a review of the Illinois laws that deal with police officers' use of deadly force.

CA holds its eighth annual fall conference, "You and Your Police." Rev. Wilbur N. Daniel, chairman of the CPB, is the keynote speaker at this conference.

At the invitation of the U.S. Department of Justice, CA serves as a resource at a "National Conference on Police-Minority Cooperation" in Washington, D.C.

1980

CA wins a major victory when Chicago Police Superintendent Richard Brzeczek issues General Order 80-20 restricting situations where off-duty officers can carry firearms.

Sixteen-year-old Glenn Jones, accused of purse snatching, is shot to death, while handcuffed, by a security guard at Cabrini-Green Housing Projects. With the State's Attorney about to close the case, CA presses the U.S. Attorney's office into action. A grand jury brings charges of manslaughter but the guard is acquitted. Cabrini-Green residents request the formation of the CA/Cabrini-Green Committee, which meets monthly for several years.

1981

CA's Mary Powers addresses the annual meeting of the National Association of Medical Examiners. In her speech, she emphasizes the responsibility of Medical Examiners in exposing police brutality.

1982

CA establishes a hotline for assistance and complaints about police brutality and abuse.

When two Public Defenders visit CA's office seeking records of police abuse by cattle prods, CA becomes aware of torture by Chicago police and begins decades of community education and involvement to investigate and prevent such abuses.

1983

For the fourth time since 1977, CA convenes a city-wide coalition of organizations to have public input in the process of selection of a new Chicago police superintendent. Mayor Harold Washington accepts the coalition's recommendations by scheduling two public hearings where, for the first time in Chicago's history, citizens present their criticism and expectations to the three final candidates for the position of police superintendent.



CPD Supt. Fred Rice with Juanita van Dorn.



Community members participate in a meeting of the police board, circa 1979.

1984

CA urges the CPB and the Superintendent to move the Office of Professional Standards (OPS) to a neutral location and to decentralize the complaint process by establishing satellite offices. Consequently, the OPS is moved from the CPD headquarters to a more neutral location. A CA representative shares the speaking platform at the open house marking the newly relocated main OPS office with both Mayor Harold Washington and Superintendent Fred Rice.

CA cosponsors its first national conference on police accountability in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The three-day conference brings together 125 participants from 18 states.

CA provides research at three successive Police Board meetings. Consequently, Superintendent Fred Rice agrees to reevaluate pursuit policy, resulting in severe restrictions, including a requirement for supervisory consent and radio monitoring throughout every pursuit.



The 4 CA award recipients in 1985: Officer Schober, Detective Lavery, Officer Hickey, and McDermott.

1985

CA honors John A. McDermott, founder and publisher of the *Chicago Reporter*, with its first Reverend Willie Baker Award for outstanding public service. CA also commends three police officers with Citation of Honor Awards for outstanding police performance and integrity.

The CPB launches an overdue review of the CPD rules and regulations. Dr. Norval Morris, head of the review, seeks out CA's assistance. Many of the recommendations made by the committee appointed by CA are incorporated into the revised rules and regulations which were made public in early 1987.

1986

CA dispatches neutral observers for demonstrations in Chicago against the U.S. intervention in Central America.

1987

CA calls for a moratorium and a review on high-speed chases by police in Chicago.

A longtime goal of CA is reached when the CPB newly appointed by Mayor Washington schedules quarterly public meetings in neighborhood settings.

CPD Superintendent Fred Rice presents CA with a special award acknowledging the organization's outstanding interest in relations between the police and the public and its contributions to police reforms.

1988

CA cosponsors two conferences in Chicago: first, the Chicago Ethics Conference resulting in its membership in the newly formed Chicago Metro Ethics Coalition; and second, a conference entitled "Wrongful Convictions and the Death Penalty."

1989

CA forms the Coalition to End Police Torture and Brutality, responding to allegations that Police Commander of Detectives Jon Burge and his officers and detectives had been torturing African American suspects to obtain confessions.

Mary Powers of CA and members of the Coalition appear before the CPB and raise for the fourth time in a row their demand that Jon Burge be fired from the CPD.

CA testifies at hearing of City Council emphasizing the aldermanic responsibility for oversight of police policy and financial settlements to families of persons dying in custody.

1990

At a Police Board meeting in March 1990, CA reiterates the call for a re-evaluation of the policy regulating high speed chases.

1991

In the wake of the Rodney King videotaped police brutality incident, CA convenes over 30 organization representatives from eight states in Chicago to develop strategies for a national consultation network on police abuse.

CA convenes a National Conference on Police Accountability, bringing to Chicago over 90 persons from fifteen states and two foreign countries for an intensive workshop with experts in civilian oversight of police, civil rights law, community activists and clergy. As a result, the N-COPA is established, with CA as the coordinating organization.

Under the persistent pressure from CA and its partners of the Coalition to End Police Torture and Brutality, Superintendent LeRoy Martin and the City Corporation Counsel's office agree (at the recommendation of the OPS) that Commander Jon Burge be fired for torturing suspects during interrogations.

In the lack of actions from the Illinois State and the federal government to launch an inquiry into the police torture scandal in the CPD, CA seeks international leverage and support with a letter to Amnesty International.

The CPD opens “a defensive driving” training facility with every police recruit required to complete a five-day course before graduation from the police academy. Officers already in service were to be given a two-day in-service training. This development is widely attributed to CA’s unrelenting urging at CPB meetings and its continued monitoring of pursuit regulations.

1992

CA mounts a campaign to overturn the SB 1789 bill, a state legislation meant to spare Jon Burge from charges of torture. However, the Coalition’s hope of preventing Burge from being spared for his torture crimes from 1972 to 1991 fell short.

CA convenes the second N-COPA conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

1993

The CPB fires Jon Burge. The Chicago Police Board’s president Albert Maule acknowledges that “for better or for worse,” CA kept the Burge police torture issue alive through the years.

CA convenes the third annual N-COPA conference in Dallas, Texas.

Commander Joseph L. Curtin of Area 5 police district, in a public meeting to which CA’s leaders are invited, credits the organization with the establishment of the new police “Driver’s Ed” facility adjoining his district station.

1994

CA convenes the fourth annual N-COPA conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The Coalition to End Police Torture and Brutality wins a major victory when two Chicago police officers are suspended for a racially motivated hate crime against eighth-grade African American youth George Risper in front of his classmates.

CA expands its information capacity with the publication of *Policing by Consent*, the journal of the N-COPA focusing on police-related topics and issues across the country. The N-COPA releases ten issues of the journal between December 1994 and August 1999.

1995

CA is the only non-law enforcement group invited by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to provide testimony on “Police Racism and Sexism” in a Washington D.C. briefing for its commissioners.

CA convenes the fifth annual N-COPA conference in Chicago. *Policing by Consent* has readership in 101 cities.

CA’s leadership for advocacy about police accountability is recognized through interviews with widely disparate sources such as WBEZ, Chicago Tonight, WGGL, Black Educational TV, The Washington Post, The Christian Science Monitor, and Young Black Brothers and Sisters.

1996

A survey of the CA’s hotline call records reveals that, in 1996, the organization’s volunteers respond to over 2,400 requests for help regarding police abuse, information and referrals in Chicago alone.

CA convenes the sixth N-COPA conference in Chicago.

1997

CA responds to over 3000 phone calls requesting information or referral on police-related problems.

CA convenes the seventh annual conference of N-COPA in Philadelphia, with participants from 51 cities and 22 states as well as England.

CA convenes the sixth Citywide Coalition for the Open Selection of Chicago Police Superintendent.

1998

CA hosts Pierre Sane, Secretary General of Amnesty International, and several members of his European staff who seek opportunities to meet with victims of police brutality and torture before launching Amnesty International’s 1999 report on human rights violations in the U.S.

Citizens Alert and N-COPA representatives serve as judges at a Tribunal on Police Misconduct held in Monterey, California, where they present the Seattle model for dealing with emotionally disturbed persons.

Gladys Lewis and Mary Powers, CA’s longest serving leaders, are honored by the African American Police League with two awards for “decades of service to the community.”

CA escalates its campaign for videotaping of police interrogations, serving as the community component of an interdisciplinary group working on this issue in the Chicago area and Springfield. CA recruits police brutality victims and police officers to testify at legislative hearings at the State House in Springfield on the need for videotaping detainee interrogations to prevent police and prosecutorial misconduct.

N-COPA co-sponsors the Wrongful Convictions and the Death Penalty Conference in Chicago, which gathers over 1,000 activists from around the country.

The National Black Police Association invites CA to a Washington D.C. meeting with the U.S. Department of Justice to seek federal intervention in cities where the association's members are suffering retaliation for breaking the police "code of silence." Two CA representatives and a victimized Chicago officer attend the meeting.

1999

CA convenes a group of 40 social and political leaders, who send a letter to the leaders of the CPD and the CPB to request an independent investigation into the obvious violations of regulations and procedures and legal process by some OPS and police officials during the torture investigations conducted by the OPS.

The Presbyterian Church USA contracts with CA to develop a comprehensive resolution on police issues, which passes unanimously at the Church's General Assembly for promulgation throughout the denomination.

CA provides a program on whistle-blowing at the Illinois Academy of Criminology at which white officers describe retaliation for their exposing racial practices of suburban police departments.

2000

CA hosts a delegation of four Nigerian women brought to the U.S. by the League of Women Voters to research police issues and arranges for African American police officers to share their experiences with the African guests.

CA initiates broad public support for five white Highland Park police officers who are suing their North Shore department for its policy of racial profiling. CA publicizes their cause and honors their whistle blowing with an award for "exceptional professional integrity."



Mary Powers, the Rev. Michael Yosuke (past Citizens Alert Advisory Board member) and Mary L. Johnson (past Citizens Alert President). Powers and Johnson were two of the three petitioners for the appointment of a special prosecutor for the investigation of the Chicago police torture scandal in April 2001.

2001

Two CA board members and a longtime supporter of the organization, supported by 15 organizations and law agencies, file a legal petition for the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate the police torture scandal in Chicago from 1972 to 1993.

2002

Judge Paul Biebel rules in favor of CA's petition and appoints two special prosecutors to investigate the Chicago police torture. This development marks twenty years of CA's fight for justice about the police torture issue.

CA hosts the Director of Human Rights Program in five Serbian cities, whose mission is to observe CA's police accountability efforts in hope of developing similar programs in Serbia.

2003

After the death of a pregnant woman due to an unauthorized police chase of a purse snatcher, CA calls for new restrictions permitting high-speed chases only in incidents where a felony suspect is being pursued.

CA continues its push for legislation on videotaping interrogations. Its executive director attends sessions of the Illinois General Assembly in Springfield, lobbying for the videotaping of interrogations.

For the seventh time in its history, CA presents to the CPB criteria recommended by community groups regarding procedures for determining nominees for the position of Superintendent of Police.

2004

CA convenes the last N-COPA national conference in Portland, Oregon, drawing attendees from eight states.

2005

Following CA's objection to the CPD's adoption of the use of Tasers, the police department arranges a private demonstration for CA by Taser executives at the police headquarters.

CA leaders participate in a weeklong crisis intervention training (CIT) at the Chicago Police Academy and urge that it be required for all officers assigned Taser guns. The organization calls upon Superintendent Phil Cline to supplement technical training in Taser use with CIT.

After complaints of racial profiling from longtime African American residents of Broadview, Illinois, CA calls on the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice and participates in several months of mediation efforts with the Broadview Police Department.

2006

The special prosecutors investigating former Commander Jon Burge's police torture release their long-awaited report. The report fails to recommend any sanctions against the torturers because of a five-year statute of limitations.

2007

CA supports the release of the "Shadow Report on Police Brutality and Abuse" addressing the United States' second periodic Report to the U.N. Committee Against Torture. The Shadow Report helps convince the U.N. to condemn the flawed investigation and lack of prosecution in the Burge torture case.

CA convenes a Symposium on Civilian Oversight of Chicago Police at the Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). The symposium results in the formation of the CCPA.

2008

The IPRA is established to replace the OPS. This is a direct result of the CA's 2007 Symposium on Civilian Oversight of Chicago Police and an effective public campaign by the CCPA.



A group of leaders presenting the Shadow Report critical of Burge torture Prosecution, April 24, 2007.

Citizens Alert convenes a second Symposium on Civilian Oversight of Chicago Police with focus on the CPB and the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), and their impact on the IPRA.

At a CPB meeting, CA's representatives state their opposition to the decision of Superintendent Jody Weis to equip Chicago police with M4 assault rifles.

U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald brings charges of perjury and obstruction of justice against Jon Burge for denying his history of torture during a 2003 civil law suit.

2009

CA addresses questions to Ilana Rosenzweig, the Chief Administrator of the IPPRA, regarding issues of accountability and transparency of this new agency. Consequently, starting January 2009, the CPD includes on its website information on disciplinary cases in which the superintendent of police files charges.

CA joins the organization Black People Against Police Torture in promoting legislation that establishes the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission to investigate claims of incarcerated survivors of torture by Jon Burge and his officers.

2010

CA moves its office to the Jane Addams of College Work, UIC and donates records of its first 40 years of work to the UIC Daley Library's Special Collections.

Jon Burge is found guilty of perjury and obstruction of justice after decades of dedicated efforts by lawyers, activists, torture survivors and their families.

2011

Jon Burge is sentenced to 54 months in federal prison.

The Guardians Police Organization, which gave its first Award to a Civilian for Outstanding Public Service to Ruth Wells, CA's first Executive Director in 1971, presents the same award to Gerald Frazier, then CA President.

An amended reform to the CPB ordinance sponsored by the CCPA is adopted in the City Council. This reform provides vital transparency of key aspects of board decision making and rationale for votes on discipline of officers. This was a direct result of CA's 2008 Symposium on Civilian Oversight of Chicago Police.

CA resumes work with the Office of the Medical Examiner to receive the notification of police killings and other deaths in custody.



Jon Burge walking back to his attorney's office after he testified in his own defense on June 17, 2010.

2012

CA participates in historic negotiations with the City of Chicago in attempts to safeguard the protection of First Amendment Rights by groups planning demonstrations at the NATO Conference.

Mary Powers receives the Elizabeth I. Benson Award from Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ. "Betty" Benson is a longtime volunteer whose years of service at CA are invaluable. The Award marks the 45th anniversary of CA.

Peace Productions, Inc. produces a documentary film entitled "To Turn A Blind Eye" to commemorate CA's 45-year history of advocacy for police accountability.

The Jane Addams Center for Social Policy and Research, Jane Addams College of Social Work, UIC, honors Mary Powers and Gladys Lewis, with its first Jane Addams Justice Advocates Award for their decades of contributions to police accountability and leadership for Citizens Alert.



Mary Powers receives the Elizabeth I. Benson Award.

UIC Jane Addams Center for
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS Social Policy and Research
AT CHICAGO
JANE ADDAMS COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

1040 West Harrison Street
Chicago, Illinois 60607

Phone: (312) 996-3219

E-mail: policycenter@uic.edu

Website: www.uic.edu/jaddams/college/research_public_service/policy_center.html