



The qualia of pain: How police torture shapes historical consciousness

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Abstract

This article considers the relationship between the qualitative experience or the ‘qualia of pain’, enactments of violence, and the aggressive silences that obscure its recognition. I argue that by coming to terms with the qualia of pain, black urbanites transform experiences of injury into communal narratives. Nancy Munn’s ethnography, *The Fame of Gawa*, helps frame my analysis. On the island of Gawa, the circulation of objects and names creates the possibility of engaging in a relationship that extends and develops communal ties that go beyond ‘the self’: this process of extension turns out to be the precondition for social recognition, or ‘fame’. Like fame, a significant aspect of pain is its uncanny ability to travel through space and time, constituting a mode of historical consciousness – or a kind of politically-charged remembering. In Chicago, Jon Burge, a police commander infamous for his techniques of torture, allows us to understand how the qualia of pain are converted into narratives that shape community, and become the seedbed for historical consciousness. Not allowing your neighbor to forget what Burge has done – or how it is connected to the present forms of police abuse – is a way to remind the public of the government’s complicity with abuse, a way to let them know that urban Chicagoans will not forget this longer picture.

Keywords

Fame, historical consciousness, pain, space, time, torture

The Grind

Speaking to a jury in February 1989, Andrew Wilson described the instrument used to elicit his confession: ‘He put it on my fingers... on one finger and one on the other finger. And then he kept cranking it and cranking it, and I was hollering

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and screaming. I was calling for help . . . My teeth was grinding. Flickering in my head. Pain.’ Andrew Wilson’s words sputtered as he spoke from the witness stand. As he testified, his accused torturers – four Chicago police officers – sat in the back of the room. These men, said Wilson, tortured him with a field telephone, known as ‘the black box’. The device consisted of a handle, a generator, electrical wires, and alligator clips. Police Commander Jon Burge had been identified by Wilson as the man who cranked the generator, thereby sending 9200 volts of electricity through the wires and alligator clips into Andrew Wilson’s body.

‘It hurts’, Wilson continued. ‘But it stays in your head, okay? It stays in your head and it grinds your teeth . . . it grinds, constantly grinds, constantly. The pain just stays in your head . . . And your teeth constantly grinds, and grinds, and grinds, and grinds, and grinds, and grinds’ (Conroy 2000: 69).

Andrew Wilson’s testimony evidences the qualitative experience or ‘the qualia of pain’.¹ The qualia of pain surface in many different contexts, throughout this paper. It is entailed within court hearings when criminal suspects describe the forms of torture they have endured; the qualia of pain are described by police officers who audaciously brag about the injuries they have inflicted on criminal suspects; the qualia of pain are suppressed in the police bureaucracy when officers are encouraged to keep torture secret; and the qualia of pain are conjured in community meetings on police violence. But while (or rather, precisely because) members of the city government have a history of silencing the pain black urban Chicagoans have experienced, these urbanites seek recognition for this trauma. By coming to terms with pain, in other words, black urban residents transform experiences of injury into narratives, which then operate to produce their social world and fashion themselves as participants within it. In this paper, descriptions of pain are crucial centers for creating forms of historical consciousness – or communal ‘remembering’² – a concept I use to explain how and why Jon Burge’s legacy is frequently invoked in a neighborhood called ‘Eastwood’ when a young person is injured or murdered by the police.³ As demonstrated by the 30-year legacy of police torture, attention to qualia allows us to see the ways in which space, time, and the contours of communities are configured, whether on the scale of a police precinct, a poor urban neighborhood, or an archipelago in the Southwest Pacific Ocean.

Shell games and open secrets

Building on Marcel Mauss’s insights about the ways that objects constitute social relationships, Nancy Munn demonstrates how people in a Papa New Guinea society achieve success, and how, by cultivating relationships with the inhabitants of neighboring islands, they produce ‘fame’. The kind of value creation associated with fame is, as Munn describes it, ‘a complex symbolic process’ through which the

members of the society are engaged in sustained efforts to construct themselves and their social world through circulating objects. The point of departure for Munn's study, in other words, is the notion of the 'lived world' as 'an arena of action'. This world is constructed both through action (i.e. giving a kula shell to a visitor) and the cultural meaning attached to it (i.e. the process through which the act of giving shells helps the giver accrue fame; Munn 1985: 3).

In the quest to find fame, Munn writes, the people of Gawa travel to neighboring islands to see and admire shells, to learn their names and histories. The goal is to learn as much as possible about the types and locations of the many different shells found on the island, and to understand their ancestry, as it were, who owned these shells first, and how they were passed down to their current owners. Offering shells to others, trading shells with your kin, using shells to pay homage to your ancestors, and sharing the knowledge necessary to obtain them are important practices involved in building one's reputation (Munn 1985: 51).

This discussion of reputation provides a productive framework for the construction of spacetime within the city of Chicago, where the crucial question becomes: what are the ways in which notoriety is built and maintained when the identities, locations, and histories of inmates are traded like shells? If one can argue – as did an internal police investigation of 1990 – that there was 'an ongoing and systematic practice of abuse by Chicago police officers', and if criminal suspects were indeed the generative basis for Jon Burge's infamy, then it is not merely a matter of semantics that a former Chicago beat cop, Barry Mastin, characterized Burge's tactics with detainees as a kind of 'shell game' (Goldston 1990).

Barry Mastin worked for years under Jon Burge's command, but was never allowed upstairs when interrogations were taking place. He was a black cop. As such, Jon Burge did not assign him any homicides. Mastin was aware that other detectives would bring suspects into the station through the rear entrance; and that, when the prisoners' family members called the front desk, the personnel would deny ever having seen them. This was not merely a lie, Mastin explained: 'The front desk personnel seldom saw who was brought in and therefore were speaking the truth when they told callers that they had not seen their loved ones.' This was the clever trick – the 'game' – of Burge's invention.

In 2004, Flint Taylor, then representing another one of Burge's alleged torture victims, tried to convince Mastin to give a sworn statement concerning the 'open secret' that had taken place for so many years on the second floor; Mastin promptly denied Taylor's request: 'It's been thirty years', he wrote to Taylor, 'I'm retired and trying to put all that stuff behind me. Nothing is going to happen to Burge and those guys, anyway.'

Mastin's words resonate with a torture victim that I spoke with in 2008 named Aaron Patterson. Even though, four years earlier, Aaron had been awarded a healthy sum in a lawsuit against Burge, in his estimation the former police commander got the better end of the bargain. John Burge was in Florida, collecting pension, and 'living a comfy life', according to Aaron, while *he* was still in Chicago, still traumatized by the pain he experienced at Area 2.

The silences of synchronous spacetime

Mastin's refusal to come forward even after 30 years shows how silence – and the act of silencing people – works to produce forms of loyalty and obligation. Munn demonstrates how coordinated actions create a 'synchronous spacetime' that transcends the otherwise fragmented relationships between actors. When Gawans sail, all of the canoes travel at the same speed. For Gawans, this synchronization (or 'spatiotemporal coordination') of canoe groups into a single fleet implies agreement within the community and among the sailors. Similarly, at the Area 2 police headquarters, the (in) action associated with silence is a crucial subjective dimension of the relationship between police officers (cf Butalia 2000). As such, they are all complicit in the abuse of criminal suspects, and thus accountable to each other in order to protect the collective self (Munn 1985: 12).

Walter Young was another African American police officer at Area 2 who worked under Jon Burge's command. Although Taylor was unable to get Mastin to testify against Burge in 2004, he did secure the testimony of Young, and two other police officers. Like Mastin, Walter Young was not personally involved with interrogating criminal suspects, but he often overheard Burge, and the officers that worked closely with him (a group that Burge referred to as his 'Mission Team'). Young witnessed members of the Mission Team on numerous occasions speak about giving suspects a 'Vietnam Special' or 'The Vietnamese Treatment'.⁴ Yet, because he was aware that police misconduct was prevalent in his precinct, he stayed out of the station as much as possible, sometimes even taking his work home rather than face the prospect of witnessing torture (Patterson vs Burge, 2 November 2004: 10–11).

'And when you thought some stuff was going on', Flint Taylor asked him during the 2004 trial, 'what would you do?'

'Vanish.'

'Vanish? . . . You kind of had what you . . . described to be earlier as an "Ostrich type of approach" to what was going on at Area 2?'

'Right', Walter Young responded. 'Bury my head in the sand, see and not see' (2 November: 27).

Part of the reason that officers who were suspicious of police torture didn't blow the whistle on Burge was because, as some of the few black cops within the Chicago Police Department, they did not want to become more marginalized than they already were and subject to any more undue discrimination than they had already encountered. Retired officer Sammy Lacey explained: 'Well, the only thing I can say – and this is why I consider that it was totally racist – is that every time [Burge] would give us our detective division evaluations, we would always be rated low.'

'I don't care what we did', he continued. 'How many arrests we made, for example, he always would throw this in our faces: "You didn't do any homicides".'

'But you [don't] assign homicides to blacks', Lacey would reply. To which Burge would respond, 'Well . . . that's your problem.'

'...And for some reason, it was always us four black detectives (well, then it became three because he dumped Walter Young) who was always on the chopping block' (12 October: 28).

Since they knew they were being discriminated against, some of the black officers tried to file a formal complaint against Burge:

I believe it was 1983. Me, Doris Byrd, Jack Hines, we kind of got upset that we were not being assigned to homicides, and we went to then Commander Leroy Martin, who is also African American, and explained that Jon Burge would not assign us to homicides. (12 October: 13–14)

And initially he was sympathetic with us and he said he would investigate it. The next day we were called into Commander Burge's office and he gave us the hoopla about going out of the chain of command and don't we ever do it. And at that time I said I would never evade the command structure again. (12 October: 19–20)

Sammy Lacey's testimony demonstrates that even though black police officers in Area 2 were the furthest away from Burge's inner-circle (and thus, we might think, felt less of an obligation to him) they had a heightened sense that he was responsible for their careers. And so it was, even when they did not choose to 'put their head in the sand', as Walter Young described it, even when they filed formal complaints, Burge made sure they walked around 'blind'. Walter young explained:

I was one among the other detectives that got the blind cases. There was a case management sergeant. When cases came in, you had what was called 'blind cases', where the possibility was that – in all probability, it would not be solved.

Then, there were other cases that came in that were 'heater cases' or 'hot cases' – cases where the offender was known... [Say if] Joe Willie Stupid went out and rob somebody and then... knocked his girlfriend in the eye. His girlfriend would get pissed off. She would get on the horn and call the station and say, 'Remember that guy who committed the robbery? That was Joe Willie Stupid. He is here.'

And the sergeant would contact the Mission Team or someone on the team, send them out to go lock up Joe Willie Stupid... He would hold these calls and the case management sergeant would [only] give those type of calls to the Mission Team.

'In terms of who got the "heater cases",' Taylor asked, 'was there a distinction that was being made between certain detectives and the black detectives in terms of who got what?' (12 October: 16–17).

Basically... no black detectives were on the Mission Team. The people that were not on the Mission Team did not get the cases with the names on them. We got the blind cases. (12 October: 16)

Walter Young went on to explain that the Mission Team was set up by Commander Burge to settle heater cases. It was common knowledge that these officers were among the most privileged, since when Burge chose to go out in the field he would typically accompany them (12 October: 16). But the Mission Team's reputation for solving cases was not only based on the fact that the ones they handled were the easiest to solve. Additionally, they were known for using brute force to elicit a confession.

Doris Byrd, one of the aforementioned black officers, testified that the telephone books suspects had talked about being beaten with – the black box they described being shocked with, and the plastic bags with which they said they were suffocated – were wielded almost exclusively by Burge's Mission Team (9 November: 10).

'Okay', Taylor asked. 'And was the – when this black box and the phone book and the bags that you were told about, was this – would it be fair to say that it was somewhat of an "open secret" up at Area 2 that this kind of stuff was going on?'

'Yes,' Byrd said, '... It sure was' (9 November: 19)

Despite the fact that racial stratifications created a hierarchy for Area 2 police officers across more than three decades, the qualia of pain were propelled through silence. This silence entails both temporal and spatial dimensions that helps shape everyday life within a community of police officers. Among the spatial aspects of silence were forms of ostracizing, symbolized through Walter Young's claim that he 'kept his head in the sand'. The construction of social life through silence was also evidenced through another police officer, Frank Laverty's, banishment after he spoke out against Burge.

Frank Laverty was a detective at Area 2 who, when the son of a black officer was accused of a crime he did not commit, came forward about members of the Mission Team keeping 'street files' (12 October: 22). These files contained information that other officers were not privy to; and on the basis of this intelligence the Mission Team enacted vigilante justice. They did so, in this case, by framing the officer's son who, in their opinion, had crossed the line by speaking to them in a tone that they viewed as 'disrespectful'.

It was from watching what happened to Laverty that other officers in Area 2 came to know 'what would happen to you if you stepped on Burge's toes.'

'One day we were in... the room and Laverty was in there looking for a file', Doris Byrd said. 'And when he left out the room, Burge drew his weapon and pointed it at the back of Laverty and said, "*Bang*".'

'Was that a message?', Flint Taylor asked. 'Did you take that as a message about what would happen if police officers came forward and broke the code of silence and exposed police misconduct?'

'Yes', Byrd replied. 'Because they stuck him into a unit and squashed his career' (9 November: 18).

'Where did he go?'

'Recruit Processing', Byrd said, 'Never to make rank.'

Laverty's case demonstrates that breaking the code of silence could result in downward mobility, as evidenced by one officer's exile into the Department of Recruit Processing. If you were not in Burge's good graces, getting too close (close enough to 'step on his toes') could be physically and professionally dangerous.

But these spatial aspects of silence entail temporal dimensions as well. The temporal aspects of silence are evidenced through the fact that estranged police officers like Barry Mastin maintained a sustained faith that 30 years after the torturing, still 'nothing' will happen to Burge, as well as Doris Byrd's suggestion that she was only willing to break her silence *after* she was retired and had secured pension.

Towards the end of questioning, Taylor asked about Byrd's willingness to testify against Jon Burge's orchestration of police torture:

'And I take it', he said, 'you would have been willing to tell them what you told me if, in fact, somebody from downtown came and asked you that was doing a legitimate investigation about what was going on here?'

'... I would have to think twice about that because when Laverty spoke out, they didn't do very much for him', Byrd responded (9 November: 18).

'... And so the reason you're talking to me on the record now is that you're free of being a police officer and you've retired?'

'I retired. Yes.'

'And you have your pension?'

'Yes, I have my pension... And if they haven't taken Burge's, they sure as hell won't take mine' (9 November: 19).

Doris Byrd's testimony demonstrates that as members of Burge's fleet, the synchronized silences of Area 2 police officers helped shape the social world in which they lived and contributed to their commander's reputation. While we do not need the Gawan notion of spacetime to tell us that bad things happen when people get too close to bad people; to be sure, the mechanics by which Burge kept black officers silent are crucial to examine. They allow us to understand how reputations are built, and maintained over time, until the historical legacy of the acts one man orchestrated – and the pain he oversaw – can orient an entire community.

The journey of the name

It is through 'shell games' and silencing marginalized cops that Jon Burge was able to conduct torture by way of his trusted Mission Team, and thus build his reputation with other police officers and within the neighborhoods governed by Area 2. What distinguishes 'reputation' or 'fame' from mere 'influence', according to Munn, is its ability to transcend personal contact. Fame is mobile. Fame is historical. While on route to becoming the subject of conversation in disparate (sometimes distant) locales, the name gains a kind of dynamism through communal interactions that allows it to span spacetime.

Shortly after the Wilson trial began in 1993,⁵ his legal team received a series of anonymous letters written by someone who claimed to have inside knowledge of

Area 2 police headquarters. The self-proclaimed ‘insider’ described the awareness within Chicago’s government of Burge’s illicit activities:

You must remember that they all knew, as did all the state’s attorneys and many judges and attorneys in private practice... Mayor [Jane] Byrne and States Attorney [Richard M.] Daley were aware of the actions of the detectives.

Many people who wanted to bring allegations of police torture to light have argued that part of the reason why Burge was never prosecuted criminally was that the local authority for the initiation of criminal charges in these cases, the Cook County State’s Attorney, was Richard M. Daley, who had been Chicago’s mayor from 1989 to 2011. Had he investigated Jon Burge, they argue, it would’ve come to light that he was aware of the ‘open secret’ at Area 2 for decades and did nothing to stop it. This reasoning is supported by evidence which suggests that it was precisely because Burge felt shielded by the legal system that he was emboldened enough to use the pain he inflicted to build his reputation.

At one point, while speaking in confidence to Flint Taylor, the police insider suggested that Wilson’s legal team ‘check in the taverns at . . . 92 and Western; and you will find that Burge [used] to brag about everyone he beat’. Had Taylor ventured to the pub, he might have overheard a conversation like the one he had with Eileen Pryweller, the sister of a police officer who was part of Burge’s Mission Team.

In an affidavit for a civil case against Jon Burge in 2004, Pryweller testified that in January 1987, while sitting at a bar in her brother’s basement, her sibling Bobby and Jon Burge proceeded to tell her about the hazards of being a cop in urban Chicago.

‘The way they describe it’, Pryweller said, ‘I would certainly call it hell. And I think God couldn’t have found a worse hell for what they described. [They said] that they beat the shit out of them... they throw them against walls, they burn them against the radiator, they smother them, that they poke them with objects, that they did something to some guys’ testicles’ (Madison Hobley vs Jon Burge 2004).

‘It was a jumbled conversation and it – at first it was general. And then it was [more specific]. [My brother said], “Oh, and this guy, this skinny little nigger boy, I got him.” And that was my brother describing – just torturing him, just smothering him. And I think he said he used handcuffs on him so that he was helpless... And... I know I was questioning how they could do this, you know?’ (2004: 10).

‘Oh, that Burge... [he said]: “I can make anybody confess to anything.” And that’s what really just devastated me... [He said]... We have a right to do this and there are no attorneys in the room... Something made me just shut down, especially when they said they... had really close relationships. And they mentioned judges, too. They have a strong relationship between the judges and the State’s Attorney’s Office and they all work together’ (2004: 14).

Eileen Pryweller's testimony resonates with other evidence that Burge was prone to 'show off' even in the midst of torturing criminal suspects (2004: 14). After receiving an anonymous tip, Wilson's lawyers found the transcript of another suspect, Melvin Jones, who described what happened to him while in custody at Area 2. In the transcript, what Jones described at Area 2 bore an eerie resemblance to the 'grinding' and the 'flickering of pain' that Andrew Wilson discussed years later:

'Have a seat, Mr. Jones, a lawyer said. What if anything happened after [Jon Burge] placed the electrical device on you?'

'When he put it on my foot, I started hollering, Jones replied. [I said] 'You ain't supposed to be doing this to me.'

'And what happened then?'

'... He looked over to [another officer]... He said, 'Do you see anything?' And [the other officer] looked up at the ceiling... Then [Burge] said, 'You see. It's just me and you.' He says, 'No court and no state are going to take your word against a lieutenant's word.' (Conroy 2000: 159)

Later in the transcript, Jones said that, while at the precinct, Burge asked him if he knew two men with the nicknames Satan and Cochise:

'I told him I have heard of them [but that] I didn't know them personally.'

'What if anything did he say to you at that time?' the lawyer asked.

'He said, they both had the same treatment, you know. He was telling me what kind of guys they was as far as supposed to be, you know, kind of tough or something. [And Burge said] They crawled all over the floor.' (Conroy 2000: 159)

By mentioning hardened criminals who had a reputation for being 'tough guys', Burge was making the claim that his methods could make the strongest man suffer.

Like Pryweller's testimony, Jones's transcript is significant because it suggests that, at some level, Burge intended to develop a reputation in urban Chicago for torture. He wanted people to see him and fear him, just as he wanted people in basement bars to know about the pain he was capable of inflicting. Sustained through personal encounters, Burge's exploits help demonstrate that the qualia of pain, as well as fame, have dimensions that traverse spacetime. That said, the qualia of pain can also be viewed as the seedbed for historical consciousness – a kind of socially and politically charged remembering through which people transform experiences of pain into collective narratives.

For Eastwood residents, Jon Burge is routinely invoked as someone who, incredibly, managed to avoid sanction for his countless offenses.⁶ Pain entails a

crucial subjective act: remembering. Just as the reciprocal act of giving food is expected to yield mutual influence between people, here Jon Burge is the donor – the giver – who has inflicted pain on a community (Munn 1985: 9). By remembering his atrocities, residents come to terms with contemporary forms of police torture, while harnessing a communal resolve to seek recourse for their pain. In this way, the act of remembering entails a subjective conversion in which the pain experienced in the past becomes the generative basis for holding Burge accountable in the present. As Munn reminds us, remembering is all the more crucial when transactions have never been closed (Munn 1985: 61). Hence, not allowing your neighbor to forget what Burge has done – or how it is connected to the present forms of police violence⁷ – is a way to make him repay the entire community for the pain he has inflicted.

Remembering Burge

In Eastwood, as in so many poor parts of the world, the qualia of pain linger. Indeed, the embodied experience of pain has long-lasting consequences and repercussions. For many Eastwood residents, Jon Burge is now a point of orientation around which these memories, and thus their social reality, takes shape. Today, because of Burge's sustained legacy of police torture in Chicago, some residents even see the neighborhood's omnipresent police cameras as evidence of the forms of injury the police department enacts. Eastwood has the highest concentration of 'blue lights' in the city of Chicago. These lights are sometimes more prominent, and more reliable, than the streetlights themselves. They are located about every half mile, a white pole with a camera mounted on top, encased by a dome of plastic. From within the dome, a florescent blue light flashes, like a siren that you can see but not hear. The blue lights are reminiscent of Bentham's panopticon, a circular prison with cells arranged around a central well, from which inmates could at all times be observed.

'This technology is installed in neighborhoods where crime rates are the highest', a police officer told me. Below one of these lights, my neighbor, Mr Otis, paces in front of me, gripping the community newspaper, *The Eastwood Gazette*, which features a photograph of a slain teenager. Glancing at the paper, then shaking his head, Mr Otis tells me the part of the story that is not in the newspaper:

'Police say the boy ran from them', he says, still pacing, 'ducked and dodged through an alleyway when he saw them, right? When the officers cornered him, they say he pointed a gun at them, so they shot to kill. And believe me, they succeeded. But, get this, man: the kid was shot in the back. The boy's mamma says he was scared stiff of the police. A couple days ago, before he was shot and all, she said some cops told the boy, "We gonna get you". So, now she's tryin' to sue the city. She says the police planted the gun. She says the police wanna turn her son into a criminal, you know, justify the shooting – make it seem okay.'

Later that evening, I meet up with Mr Otis just before a forum on the legacy of police torture. We walk in to the House of Worship on Oliver Street and sit together

in the musty basement room. Unlike the community meetings on housing evictions – dominated by the area’s fierce cadre of older women, and always with an undercurrent of long-lived injustice – there were a number of young adults and teenagers in the pew, many of them related to the 33 people killed by the police in 2009. Today, their words resonate with what a representative from Amnesty International said in 1991 about black Chicagoans in reference to the Andrew Wilson trial:

People of color, particularly in Chicago, they understand automatically, much more easily, situations like South Africa and Guatemala because here in Chicago you walk the streets with terror. You don’t have any concept of the police as a service – to serve and protect. Instead your view of the police is a view that they are getting ready to tromp you or to whoop on you the minute that they encounter you. (Kuttner 1994; cf. Green 1999)

Eric Childs, a local political activist, would agree that the experience of police torture has become an aspect of the everyday life in Chicago, so it’s fitting that he calls the meeting underway. The audience numbers more than 100 people, a boisterous crowd. In the front row are another noticeable group, 20 city council members, most seeking election that fall.

‘He wasn’t a gang banger’, one mother says to the audience and the panel of politicians. ‘He wasn’t a thug.’ This woman, Felicia Allen, echoes a common refrain, an assurance from mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers, each testimony at sharp odds to police reports, and most media coverage.

‘Tell’em about the killer *po-lice*’, Eric Childs interjects from the audience.

‘The police . . . they threaten them’, Allen says in response. ‘They say they’re gonna kill ‘em. So yeah . . . they run when they see them. My boy was runnin’cause he was scared.’

Felicia Allen, of course, does not know what her son was thinking while sprinting from the police for the last time. But she wants to sever any presumed connection he has to local gang activity. She means to dispute the claim that he was some kid who aimed a gun at a police officer and was then subjected to legal return fire. Instead, like many other residents in attendance, she cites a longstanding tradition of police abuses of the kind that Jon Burge embodies so well. When I first moved to Eastwood I found that, even though Jon Burge hasn’t been an officer of the law since 1993, his name is still frequently invoked on the west side of Chicago. Today, 35 family members of residents who have lost loved ones at the hands of the police speak at this event.⁸ Twenty-one of them specifically mention Burge or the people he tortured. One woman says, ‘Because of Burge, Chicago police officers know they can get away with murder.’ She elaborates, ‘Crooked cops are still protected by a crooked system.’ A few other people refer to Burge like a verb, as in my son was ‘*Burge-d*’, while referring to an excessive use of police force. Others who address the

audience mention youngsters like Marcus Wiggins, the 13-year-old who testified in 1991 about how Jon Burge supervised his electric shock:

They started – my hands started burning, feeling like it was being burned. I was – I was shaking and my – and my jaws got tight and my eyes felt like they went black . . . It felt like I was spinning . . . It felt like my jaws was like – they was – I can't say the word. It felt like my jaws was sucking in . . . I felt like I was going to die. (Marcus Wiggins vs Jon Burge 1993)

At the House of Worship, everyone with a badge is seen as holding the same impunity that Jon Burge wielded for decades, that same impunity that declared him innocent of all charges in the first two civil suits against him, that same impunity that carried him to his retirement down South, a free man. Everyone without a badge is a potential Wiggins . . . or an Aaron Harrison . . . or Lester Spruill . . . or Sam Mitchell . . . or any one of the 25 others killed by Chicago cops, thus far, in 2009.

'They act like the judge, jury, and executioner', Lester Spruill's baby sister says.⁹ 'How many families have to be destroyed? How many more people gotta die? They treat us black folk like criminals . . . Make laws to criminalize us, like we ain't tax payers. I tell you what: we payin' them to kick our ass, is what we doin'. We payin' them to kill our children.'

'Go'head and tell 'em bout the killer *po-lice*', Eric repeats.

The Burge torture cases demonstrate how pain helps to constitute a mode of historical consciousness since, three decades after the Andrew Wilson trials brought a legacy of police torture to light, Burge remains a salient figure. On the west side of Chicago, recalling the violent acts that Jon Burge perpetrated offers a way for black urban residents to conjure the past while seeking to understand the present. Crucially, in order for the experience of injury to become collective, urban residents must transform the qualia of pain into narratives, which then produce forms of communal remembering.

Since Wilson described the pain of his teeth grinding in a 1989 trial, over 200 of Burge's torture victims have stepped forward. The state of Illinois has paid tens of millions to them in civil suits. On 6 May 2010, Jon Burge returned to Chicago, though not to be tried for any act of torture. The statute of limitations had long expired. He stood accused of perjury and obstruction of justice stemming from testimony in 2003, when he denied under oath that he beat and electrocuted another black Chicago resident, Madison Hobley, and that he knew of or participated in abusing other criminal suspects. Under the charges (two counts of obstruction and one count of perjury), Burge could now receive 40 years in prison.

Jon Burge's new trial began a little more than a year after Eastwood's town hall meeting, on 6 May 2010. The former police commander testified in his own defense

for several days. On 28 June Burge was convicted of everything he was charged with: two counts of obstruction of justice and one count of perjury. Burge was sentenced to four and a half years in federal prison. Ironically enough, his release date is 14 February 2015 – 33 years to the day that he tortured Andrew Wilson.

Notes

1. The analysis of pain in this article draws upon anthropological theories of emotion. The following texts are especially informative to my analysis of the ways in which the qualia of pain become embodied: Das and Das (2007), Desjarlais (1992), Kirmayer (1966), Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990), Scarry (1985), Shephard (2002), Tapias (2006), Zarowsky (2004).
2. This paper's concept of 'communal remembering', or rather, its engagement with 'collective memory', is informed by the copious literature within anthropology. The following texts on memory and trauma are especially informative in helping me to develop an analysis of the ways that various communities draw upon the atrocities of the past to seek redress for the violence they have experienced: Abercrombie (1998), Bickford (1992), Biggar (2003), Borneman (2011), Bracken and Petty (1998), Connerton (1989), Fassin et al. (2009), Foucault (1977), Hermann (1992), James (2004), Malkki (1995), Zur (1998).
3. In this article, the neighborhood that I call 'Eastwood' is a pseudonym for the place where I conducted research between 2006 and 2010.
4. During the trial Burge would admit that he was familiar with electrical devices operated by a crank because he used field telephones in the army, but stopped short of saying that he had actually witnessed any acts of torture in Vietnam (Conroy 2000: 76).
5. This 1993 case was the second civil suit that Andrew Wilson filed against Jon Burge. The first was in 1989 and resulted in a mistrial.
6. On police torture and accountability see Foster (2000) and Huggins et al. (2002).
7. The community forum on police torture should make clear that the notion of violence explored in this paper is informed by scholarly engagements with state terror, social suffering and torture. See, for example: Apter (1997), Aretxaga (2000), Biehl (2005), Comaroff and Comaroff (1999), Connell (1997), Feldman (1991), Ferme (2001), Hayner (2001), Scheper-Hughes (1993), Taussig (1984), Warren (1993).
8. On communal forms of witnessing see Das (2000) and Jackson (2002).
9. See Benjamin (1978) for the government's monopoly on violence.

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