



Janice K. Jackson, EdD  
Chief Executive Officer

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**Chief Executive Office**

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Dear CPS Family:

President Barack Obama said at the opening of the Museum of African American History: “The best history helps us recognize the mistakes that we’ve made, and the dark corners of the human spirit that we need to guard against. And yes, a clear-eyed view of history can make us uncomfortable. It will shake us out of familiar narratives. But it is precisely because of that discomfort that we learn, and grow, and harness our collective power to make this nation more perfect.”

For the past year, CPS social studies specialists have been working with community leaders, civil rights advocates, and the Chicago Teachers Union to create a curriculum that both exposes students to an ugly period in Chicago history and gives them the tools to be agents for hope in our own time.

There is no question that one of the most painful times in Chicago’s history was during the era of Jon Burge, a Chicago police commander who was convicted of lying under oath about his role in orchestrating torture and eliciting false confessions from residents of Chicago.

For years, torture survivors, advocates and the African-American community pushed for reparations. In response, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the City Council passed legislation that provides \$5.5 million in reparations to Burge’s victims and establishes a curriculum in Chicago Public Schools to examine the history behind his actions and the consequences for many communities.

Following an initial six-school pilot last year to ensure the curriculum was engaging and appropriate, your school’s history teachers will implement this curriculum this year. Besides memorializing this time in our history, this curriculum will let students explore how we can work together to improve relationships between the police and our communities. We will treat this painful subject matter with respect and honest inquiry, but will not ask students to adopt any particular perspective.

Please don’t hesitate to speak with your principal if you have additional questions. The CPS Department of Social Science and Civic Engagement will continue to develop resources, workshops for teachers and supports for classrooms. As others have said, a great city doesn’t shy away from its history – even when it is painful – but rather seeks to understand and prevent that history in the future.

Sincerely,

Janice K. Jackson, EdD  
Chief Executive Officer  
Chicago Public Schools