

# WE WILL CHICAGO HISTORICAL RECKONING

The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) has been a long-time advocate for good planning practices in the Chicago region. In 2019, MPC and partners began advocating for the City of Chicago to undertake a citywide planning process. When the Mayor's Office and the Department of Planning and Development committed to initiating We Will Chicago, MPC moved into an advisory position, and has been providing technical and advisory support on many aspects of the planning process. One aspect of that assistance was co-creating and hosting Peer City Workshops in 2020, in which representatives from Chicago learned from and exchanged ideas with City staff and community organizations from other US cities that engage in citywide planning regularly. Workshop participants developed themes and recommendations for how Chicago's citywide planning process should be executed<sup>1</sup>. One of those themes was "**historical reckoning and trust building**." The City of Chicago incorporated this theme into the official We Will Chicago language.

As part of our ongoing assistance and advocacy around We Will Chicago, MPC convened a working group to explore the theme of historical reckoning within and beyond the context of the citywide plan. The working group has been working toward two goals:

- a. **Propose language and recommendations related to historical reckoning to be included in the We Will Chicago Draft Framework Plan.**
- b. **Explore and propose a scope for a community-driven historical reckoning process in Chicago.**

*The themes include:*

HISTORIC RECKONING AND TRUST-BUILDING

SYSTEMIC EVALUATION OF EQUITY IMPACTS

SUSTAINED INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

ACCESSIBLE AND MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH SHARED METRICS AND TRANSPARENCY

<sup>1</sup> Co-creating an inclusive process: [https://www.metroplanning.org/uploads/cms/documents/peer\\_workshops\\_executivesummary\\_new.pdf](https://www.metroplanning.org/uploads/cms/documents/peer_workshops_executivesummary_new.pdf)

## GROUP FORMATION AND MEMBERSHIP

MPC began by researching historical acknowledgement and reconciliation initiatives in Chicago and other cities, and developing questions that a working group would need to address. MPC held a meeting with a small set of partners in Nov. 2021 for an initial round of feedback and to ask who else we should speak with. Staff interviewed potential advisors and working group members from January - March 2022. The goal of these conversations was to learn about ongoing work across the City, introduce the idea of the working group and get feedback on how the group should be facilitated, and to garner participant interest.

These interviews helped discern additional issues to consider and identify existing resources to build upon in the areas of racial equity, reconciliation, reparations, and healing. Formal invitations to join the working group were then extended, with **11 organizations** participating throughout the process.

Ryan Vioria, **Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment**

Sam Corona & Chris White, **Alliance of the Southeast**

Libia Bianibi, **Arts Alliance Illinois**

S. Dilla Thomas, **Chicago Mahogany Tours**

Anthena Gore, **Elevate NP**

Chirag Shah, **Indo-American Center**

Tiffanie Beatty, **National Public Housing Museum**

Andrew Johnson, **Native American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois**

Chantay Moore, **Native American Financial Literacy Services**

Thuong Phan, **Vietnamese Association of Illinois**

Shelly Tucciarelli, **Visionary Ventures**

Chloe Gurin-Sands & Nolan Eyre, **Metropolitan Planning Council (facilitator)**

# MEETING SUMMARIES

The Historical Reckoning Working Group met five times between March and May 2022. All meetings were conducted using an online meeting platform. Group members actively participated in activities during each meeting (e.g. discussion, contributing ideas to shared documents), and dedicated time to work between meetings (e.g. reviewing and editing materials).

## Meeting 1 March 25, 2022

Working group members were introduced to each other and began to get to know each other. Background information about We Will Chicago and the historical reckoning working group's purpose was shared. Working group members co-created group norms for interacting with each other, and a decision-making process. Participants took part in an activity and discussion to begin sharing personal and group identities, and to begin uncovering the race-based narratives and stories we witness as Chicagoans. Between meetings #1 and #2, participants were asked to contribute events and policies to a shared Timeline document.

## Meeting 2 April 8, 2022

Staff from the City of Chicago's Office of Equity and Racial Justice attended the meeting and presented about the Year of Healing. The presentation included information on the background, goals, and priority areas of the initiative, as well as information about its initial roll out. MPC staff gave an update on We Will Chicago and the activities related to historical acknowledgement that the Pillar Research Teams and consultants had already completed, such as a past plan review. Working group members participated in an activity drawing upon the Social Ecological Model of Health as a framework to analyze the immediate and long-term effects of specific harms. Participants each chose one harm from the timeline developed in meeting #1, to which they practiced applying this framework. Working group members then engaged in an activity to share their own ideas about what the terms "historical acknowledgement," "historical reckoning," and "people's history" mean to them. Between meetings #2 and #3, MPC staff synthesized working group members' contributions into definitions.

## Special Session April 12, 2022

Andrew Johnson from the Native American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois presented a timeline of Native American history in the United States and Illinois. The presentation focused on different eras of federal policy regarding Indigenous people and nations, from the establishment of the United States (1776) to the present (2022), and their effects on Indigenous communities in Illinois.

# MEETING SUMMARIES

## Meeting 3 April 22, 2022

Working group members reviewed and commented on the draft definitions of 4 key terms (harm, historical acknowledgment, historical reckoning, and people's history) as well as a draft narrative discussing the context of harms in Chicago. MPC staff presented examples of historical acknowledgement initiatives that are taking place in Chicago and other cities. Participants silently brainstormed possible actions that the City of Chicago could take with regard to historical acknowledgement and reckoning, and recommendations that could be included in We Will Chicago. After individual brainstorming, participants shared and discussed their ideas, then had the opportunity to indicate support or interest in policy/action ideas via a dot-voting exercise (adding check marks on a shared document in real-time).

Following meeting #3, the revised language for the key term definitions and historical acknowledgement narrative was shared with City of Chicago staff and consultants, with the intention of informing the We Will Chicago Draft Framework Plan.

## Meeting 4 May 12, 2022

MPC staff provided an update on the draft Goals and Objectives related to historical acknowledgement to be included in the draft framework plan. MPC staff presented different models of formal truth and reconciliation processes<sup>2</sup> (tribunals, truth and reconciliation commissions, commissions of inquiry), and racial healing initiatives. The working group reviewed information on three case studies (one national, one statewide, and one municipal), to get an understanding of the level of detail and specificity typically included in the establishing documents for reckoning and healing processes (e.g. resolution, ordinance, charter). Participants then revisited the group's ideas developed during meeting #4, adding more detail and specificity to the ideas. Between meetings #4 and #5, participants continued to add ideas and comments, which MPC staff synthesized.

## Meeting 5 May 24, 2022

Working group members officially agreed on referring to the group as the "Historical Reckoning Working Group." MPC staff shared the draft historical acknowledgement narrative language provided by the City of Chicago, as well as the feedback provided by MPC on behalf of the group. Working group members reviewed and commented on the draft Summary Report (this document), and suggested including the shared Timeline document as a public companion resource. Participants then worked on refining the group's recommendations for We Will Chicago Goals, Objectives, and Policies, as well as building out specific for the scope and implementation of a historical reckoning process. To close the series of meetings, working group members were invited to share reflections about their experience as a participant and the group's collective work.

# WORKING GROUP PRODUCTS


## KEY TERM DEFINITIONS

The Historical Reckoning working group developed its own definitions for four key terms. These definitions are meant to help clarify and focus the Working Group's aspirations, and develop a shared understanding with the City around the potential goals of historical acknowledgement or reckoning actions.

### Harm

A **harm** is a formal or informal policy, action, event, or movement that results in economic, social, cultural, or physical losses for specific communities. Harms also result in inequitably distributed negative outcomes and burdens on specific communities. Harms may have been enacted or perpetrated by public or private entities.


### Historical Acknowledgement



**Historical acknowledgement** means identifying and naming the harms that have been experienced in Chicago. An acknowledgement is an understanding of the harm that has occurred, who has perpetuated the harm, who has benefitted from it and for which groups or individuals it caused negative consequences. Acknowledgements should be made in writing by policy- or decision-makers who are in a position to move towards historical reckoning.

### Historical Reckoning

A **historical reckoning** is a settlement on the terms for moving forward collectively, and the actions taken to rectify harms and their effects. It is the structure for accountability that ensures that the harm will not be perpetrated again. It includes policies and measures that prevent the harm occurring again. It puts power back into the hands of the people who were harmed.



### People's History

A **people's history** is an accounting of stories and events in the voice of those who experienced the harms. It begins to restore knowledge that has been lost through colonization or other forms of erasure. It often challenges myths and commonly accepted stories, and does not allow the story to be influenced by money or politics. A shared people's history (across identities) acknowledges the interconnectedness of harms and resistance movements, highlighting solidarity, resilience, and opportunities to work together.

## HISTORICAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT NARRATIVE

The working group developed a short narrative to provide context for historical reckoning within the City of Chicago, and its connection to the citywide planning process.

Racialized groups<sup>3</sup> in Chicago have experienced a multitude of harms: policies, events, or actions that resulted in negative consequences or burdens. Some harms have been perpetuated by the City government, such as the Plan for Transformation<sup>4</sup>. Others, such as predatory lending<sup>5</sup>, were implemented by private actors but allowed by the City, either by law (de jure) or by norm (de facto). Some harms were carried out by the state of Illinois or the US governments, but influenced what was happening in Chicago such as the Treaty of Chicago<sup>6</sup>.

Some of these harms have been intentional, such as redlining<sup>7</sup>. In other cases, harms may have been unintentional, such as selective enrollment and school choice<sup>8</sup> (supposedly “race-neutral” policies), but still result in similar outcomes. Some harms are perpetuated through practices that erase diversity and strip racialized groups of political power. This is reflected in the City’s aldermanic ward map, which has historically prevented Asian-Americans in Chicago from achieving greater political power, despite the community’s large size<sup>9</sup>. Some stories we tell about Chicago hide uncomfortable truths, such as how working class immigrant families were displaced from the Loop following the Chicago Fire<sup>10</sup>, even as the City celebrates its resiliency.

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- 3 Racialized group: People who are categorized into broad racial groups, typically defined as being non-White. For example: Black, Asian. This may also include ethnicities or nationalities that are often interpreted with a racial component, such as Latinx and Native American.
  - 4 The [Plan for Transformation](#) was an aggressive overhaul of Chicago’s public housing, spearheaded by the Richard M. Daley administration. It resulted in 17,000 units of public housing being demolished, forcing residents to relocate often without adequate support from the city.
  - 5 [Predatory Lending](#) includes any lending practice that imposes unfair and abusive loan terms on borrowers, including high-interest rates, high fees, and terms that strip the borrower of equity. Predatory Lending disproportionately affects women, Black, and Latinx communities.
  - 6 The second [Treaty of Chicago \(1833\)](#) forced the Pottawatomie, Chippewa, Ottawa, and other Native American nations to transfer 15 million acres to the U.S. government in exchange for equal acreage west of the Mississippi and north of the Missouri.
  - 7 The term [Redlining](#) derives from the color-coded maps developed by the federal government and the Home Owners Loan Corp to indicate where it was “safe” and “unsafe” to insure mortgages. The maps considered neighborhoods where Black people lived (as well as adjacent neighborhoods) to be too risky to insure mortgages, creating a state-sponsored system of segregation.
  - 8 White students at Payton, Whitney Young, Northside, Jones and Lane made up [35%](#) of the total student population at those schools in 2019, while white students only constituted [9.4%](#) of the total high school population in Chicago that year. Although the selective enrollment schools accept students based on merit, the process often benefits families with greater resources.
  - 9 Asian Americans constitute approximately 7% of Chicago’s population, but until this year [they represented 0% of seats in the city council](#).
  - 10 Often the telling of reconstruction after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 emphasizes the city’s ability to rebuild, [“itself bigger and better from the ashes”](#), while ignoring the fact that many immigrants and people of color were forced to relocate outside the city center afterwards.

## HISTORICAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT NARRATIVE (...)

Regardless of the nature of the specific events, actions, or policies that have been in place and who perpetrated them, the City of Chicago must acknowledge: these harms have created and continued a pattern in which White, high-income individuals in Chicago have benefitted, while other racialized groups have been deeply damaged.

The long-lasting ripple effects of these harms can be seen across the different spheres of our lives<sup>11</sup>:

- **Public policy:** our laws and policies and funding priorities.
- **Community:** our cultural values and norms, as well as our physical environment (land, water, air), built environment (buildings, streets, etc.), and economic environment.
- **Organizations and Institutions:** our workplaces, schools, businesses, etc.
- **Interpersonal:** our families, friends, communities, and broader social networks, and how we relate to each other.
- **Individual:** our personal knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors.

Encompassed within these categories are the ways these harms have affected marginalized communities' sovereignty over and relationship with land, disconnection with cultural knowledge such as language and art, and economic losses across generations.

Many harms have been institutionalized and reinforced via land use, economic development, transportation, parks, and housing plans across the city. Indeed, even the landmark Burnham Plan set the stage for displacement of working class families from downtown and a separation of those same people from the new lakefront parks. Thus, it is only appropriate for the City of Chicago to acknowledge<sup>12</sup> historical and ongoing harms, and move toward reckoning<sup>13</sup> through the citywide plan, We Will Chicago.

**“These harms have created and continued a pattern in which White, high-income individuals in Chicago have benefitted, while other racialized groups have been deeply damaged.”**

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<sup>11</sup> The included categories are adapted from the Social-Ecological Model of health, a conceptual framework that outlines various spheres of influence related to individual and community health. For example: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Socio-ecological-model-framework-for-prevention-centers-for-disease-control-Available\\_fig1\\_318840832](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Socio-ecological-model-framework-for-prevention-centers-for-disease-control-Available_fig1_318840832)

<sup>12</sup> Acknowledgement definition

<sup>13</sup> Reckoning definition

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WE WILL CHICAGO

The Historical Reckoning Working Group reviewed and proposed changes to the draft Goal, Objective, and Policies related to historical acknowledgement within Civic & Community Engagement section of We Will Chicago. The text below shows the working group suggestion and the final language in the draft plan (July 2022).

GOAL / OBJECTIVE / POLICY #	WORKING GROUP SUGGESTION	DRAFT FRAMEWORK LANGUAGE
Civic & Community Engagement - Goal #5	No suggested edits	Ensure equity, community engagement, and historical reckoning drive public policy making.
Objective 5.4	The City of Chicago will support and participate in truth, reconciliation, and healing efforts.	Support ongoing truth, reconciliation, and healing efforts.
Policy 5.4a	The Office of Equity & Racial Justice will develop and expand public forums for Chicagoans to learn about and discuss historical and contemporary issues of racial inequality.	Develop and expand public forums for Chicagoans to learn about and discuss historical and contemporary issues of racial inequality.
Policy 5.4b	Establish and fund a Truth and Reconciliation Task Force via ordinance. The Task Force should define and lead a historical reckoning process, and recommend avenues for recompense to specific communities.	Explore establishment of a public truth, reconciliation, and reparations process that seeks to reckon with and repair racial historical injustice.
Policy 5.4c	The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, the Department of Planning and Development, and other relevant departments will invest in community-driven healing efforts leveraging arts and culture, community planning and development, and other opportunities. Investments should be consistent with the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Task Force.	Invest in community-driven healing efforts leveraging arts and culture, community planning and development, and other opportunities.
Policy 5.4d	OERJ will create an external accountability body to evaluate and track the implementation of the City's progress on the equity measures and historical acknowledgement and reckoning recommendations that emerge from We Will Chicago.	(Not included in draft plan.)

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A HISTORICAL RECKONING PROCESS

The Historical Reckoning Working Group compiled additional information on each of the policies, designed to be a starting point for the future implementation of the recommendations. Per the working group's charge, the members focused primarily on developing specific ideas for a potential historical reckoning process (Policy 5.4b).

## **POLICY 5.4.A** The Office of Equity & Racial Justice will develop and expand public forums for Chicagoans to learn about and discuss historical and contemporary issues of racial inequality.

It is important to continue educating the public on social inequities, both past and ongoing. This recommendation is consistent with the Office of Equity and Racial Justice's ongoing Year of Healing work and partnership with TRHT, which should be expanded. The Working Group recommends utilizing or building on the Year of Healing advisory group (made up of community members, leaders, and experts) to guide the topics and formats of these educational forums. In addition to cross-racial dialogue, the forums should provide opportunities for people of various racial and ethnic groups (including White people) to be able to process their different experiences separately.

## **POLICY 5.4.B** Establish and fund a Truth and Reconciliation Task Force via ordinance. The Task Force should define and lead a historical reckoning process, and recommend avenues for recompense to specific communities

In other cities and states, truth and reconciliation processes have been established via City Council, Mayoral, or Gubernatorial action (e.g., resolution, ordinance, or executive order). We recommend establishing a multi-year process via resolution or ordinance, by the end of 2023. In some cases, the resolution or ordinance itself serves as a formal acknowledgement.

The truth and reconciliation resolutions or ordinances the Historical Reckoning Working Group reviewed are specific in naming the purpose and activities a process, who shall administer and participate in it, and the timing for when it will report publicly on findings and recommendations. The Working Group strongly recommends including these specifics in any establishing framework for a truth and reconciliation task force.

The task force should be responsible for designing and carrying out a historical reckoning process, as well as recommendations for City actions to repair harm. The truth and reconciliation process should focus on the effects of land dispossession, redlining, ward re-mapping, and other marginalizing practices that have affected the wellbeing, livelihood, and socio-economic status of specific African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA)<sup>14</sup> communities in Chicago. Activities should be tailored to specific groups, instead of "people of color" in general.

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African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American. This is a term often used by Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA), because the organization believes that the term, "people of color," conflates together entire groups of people and as a contrast to white. <https://www.giarts.org/why-gia-uses-acronym-alaana>



## POLICY 5.4.B(...)

Activities the Task Force may engage in could include:

- **Documenting the harms that have been perpetrated, and the ways they are woven into the fabric of Chicago.**
  - » Collect data and stories documenting the harm. Ask and receive information directly from affected communities.
  - » Invite and compensate cultural and community-based organizations that are already collecting stories and history to participate in this process.
- **Establishing a series of truth and reconciliation engagements in which City of Chicago staff and elected officials listen to experiences from communities throughout the city.**
  - » Ensure the series is well-publicized, open to the public, and publicly broadcast. Engagements and listening sessions should take place in each ward or community area.
- **Requiring experiential education for City staff on how the consequences of genocide and exploitation continue to ripple through public policy and practices.**
- **Issuing recommendations for course-correcting equitable policies in mind of historical institutional harms, and proposing specific actions for the City to take for further historical acknowledgement, recompense, and reckoning.**

The Working Group recommends that the Task Force is staffed by OERJ, with support from an independent third-party organization. “Staffing,” refers to the day-to-day administrative work of housing, organizing, and structuring the Task Force. Task Force members should include a selection of Mayor’s Office and City Department staff, and at minimum, the following departments should participate:

**Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events**  
**Department of Transportation**  
**Department of Planning and Development**  
**Department of Public Health**  
**Police Department**  
**Department of Housing**  
**Chicago Park District**  
**Mayor’s Office (including Sustainability and Economic Development team)**

The Task Force should also include community organizations and individuals, and must include significant representation from Chicago’s **Indigenous, Black, Latino/a, and Asian communities**. City Council representatives and additional departments should participate in activities as appropriate.

The Truth & Reconciliation Task Force should be funded via dedicated staff roles for supporting We Will Chicago implementation efforts at **OERJ, DPD, DCASE, CPD, and CDOT**, and other departments that have contributed to historical and ongoing harms. The City should seek funding opportunities from Federal, State, and County resources, as well as support from corporate and philanthropic organizations.

The Working Group recommends reviewing the language used in the following establishing documents for guidance and inspiration:

**Minneapolis, Minnesota Truth & Reconciliation Resolution (2020)**  
**California Executive Order & Truth & Healing Council (2019)**  
**Canadian Truth & Reconciliation Commission**

For support, OERJ may consider working with organizations and individuals who have assisted with peer city processes (e.g., **Evanston reparations efforts**), as well as State departments such as the State Department of Human Rights and IL Office of Equity.

**POLICY 5.4.C** The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, the Department of Planning and Development, and other relevant departments will invest in community-driven healing efforts leveraging arts and culture, community planning and development, and other opportunities. Investments should be consistent with the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Task Force.

The Working Group identified distinct activities that could be undertaken in the short-term, as well as longer-term strategies to move toward racial healing<sup>15</sup>. Long-term strategies could include investing in community-driven history, archiving, and storytelling initiatives. Community-based organizations that are already collecting these histories should be supported and showcased.

Short-term activities could include:

- **Working with Indigenous leaders to design a Native American Land Acknowledgement plaque to be prominently displayed outside of a prominent City building (e.g. City Hall, Daley Plaza). A ceremony to unveil the acknowledgement and plaque.**
- **Hosting a large healing festival that showcases and celebrates the diversity of Chicago's communities, and centers on acknowledgement and healing. Invite cultural centers from across the city to participate.**
- **Posting celebratory and educational signage featuring contributions and acts of resistance of various racial and ethnic communities to the City of Chicago.**
- **Working with Indigenous leaders to create an official "Indigenous Tour of Chicago."**

**POLICY 5.4.D** OERJ will create an external accountability body to evaluate and track the implementation of the City's progress on the equity measures and historical acknowledgement and reckoning recommendations that emerge from We Will Chicago.

An **accountability body** should be comprised of **community** and **nonprofit partners**, as well as **technical experts** who can track and hold City departments accountable to the equitable implementation of the equity and historical reckoning-related We Will Chicago goals, objectives, and policies. Once the Truth and Reconciliation Task Force issues its recommendations, this accountability body should also be responsible for tracking the implementation of those recommendations (and membership may need to change to reflect that role).

This body should **regularly report publicly** (beyond City Council meetings) on the progress City departments are making toward implementation. Reporting should include positive headway as well as challenges and delays. Reporting mechanisms could include the We Will Chicago dashboard, reports, public meetings or events, a yearly "State of the Plan" symposium, etc. The Climate Action Plan accountability body (Mayor's Sustainability Team) and Healthy Chicago Symposium (CDPH) may be useful models to learn from.

# CASE STUDIES: ONGOING HISTORICAL RECKONING AND RACIAL HEALING WORK

MPC and the Historical Reckoning Working Group members explored a number of recent and ongoing acknowledgement and reckoning efforts to inform our recommendations.

## California Executive Order & Truth & Healing Council<sup>16</sup>

The Governor of California issued an executive order in 2019 to establish a Truth and Healing Council, which “bears witness to, records, examines existing documentation of, and receives California Native American narratives regarding the historical relationship between the State of California and California Native Americans.”

## Canadian Truth & Reconciliation Commission<sup>17</sup>

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created to address the legacy of the residential schools that targeted Indigenous communities in Canada. The Commission has been “collecting information about what was done to survivors in the residential schools and has worked to make this information public.”

## Chicago Monuments Project<sup>18</sup>

Established in 2020 by the Mayor of Chicago, this working group is tasked with assessing monuments and public art on City property to understand how history has been memorialized (or not), and developing “a framework for marking public space that elevates new ways to memorialize Chicago’s history more equitably and accurately.”

## Just Action Racial Equity Collaborative<sup>19</sup>

The collaborative is a collective of over 300 Chicago-area organizations and individuals committed to “[reimagining] how civic power flows through three primary channels: money, narrative, and policy.” Just Action’s Racial Equity Toolkit was designed to “build new standards of practice for racial equity,” through acknowledging history, shifting power, and embracing accountability.

## Minneapolis, Minnesota Truth & Reconciliation Resolution<sup>20</sup>

In 2020, the City of Minneapolis passed a resolution establishing a truth and reconciliation process to “begin implementing specific solutions to specific harms that created and perpetuate racial disparities with a ... focus on... Black American descendants of slavery and American Indian/Indigenous communities.”

## Reparations for Burge Torture Victims Ordinance and Resolution<sup>21</sup>

In 2015, after years of advocacy from survivors and their families and allies, Chicago passed a resolution and ordinance issuing redress to survivors of torture at the hands of the Chicago Police Department, under the command of John Burge. The ordinance called for financial compensation, the creation of a Chicago Public Schools curriculum on Burge torture, free enrollment in Chicago City colleges, the creation of a public memorial, and the establishment of a Chicago Torture Justice Center to provide trauma-informed resources and services to survivors and their families.

## Solidarity Heals / Truth Racial Healing & Transformation Greater Chicago<sup>22</sup>

TRHT Chicago was a national and community-based process designed to build “healing and equity within individuals, neighborhoods, and communities to change the race narrative to fuel transformation, erase the belief in racial hierarchy, and drive toward racial equity.”

## Together We Heal Chicago<sup>23</sup>

An initiative being led by the Chicago Office of Equity & Racial Justice (OERJ), to guide institutional change in government, through policy and culture change. The three pillars of the initiative, which are echoed in We Will Chicago, are: reflect on our past, reclaim our present, and reimagine our future.

16 California Truth & Healing Council: <http://tribalaffairs.ca.gov/cthc/>

17 Truth and Reconciliation: <https://www.facinghistory.org/stolen-lives-indigenous-peoples-canada-and-indian-residential-schools/historical-background/truth-and-reconciliation>

18 Chicago Monuments Project: <https://chicagomonuments.org/>

19 Just Action Racial Equity Collaborative: <https://www.justaction.co/>

20 Truth & Reconciliation – City of Minneapolis: <https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/government/departments/coordinator/race-equity/what-we-do/ongoing-work/truth-reconciliation/#:~:text=The%20resolution%20calls%20for%20the.have%20on%20the%20City%20of>

21 Chicago Torture Justice Memorials: <https://chicagotorture.org/>

Chicago Torture Justice Center: <https://www.chicagotorturejustice.org/>

22 TRHT Chicago: <https://www.woodsfund.org/news/truth-racial-healing-and-transformation-trht>

23 Together We Heal Chicago: <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/together-we-heal/home/about.html>



## HARMS, RESISTANCE, AND SOLIDARITY IN CHICAGO

# TIMELINE

In 2022, the Metropolitan Planning Council facilitated a working group to explore historical reckoning in the context of We Will Chicago, Chicago's first citywide plan in more than 50 years. The Historical Reckoning Working Group members compiled a **shared timeline of harms, resistance, and solidarity in Chicago**. This activity was intended to help the working group identify and name specific harms, learn about the experiences of other identity groups, and create a sense of solidarity within the working group. This timeline represents a snapshot of the collective knowledge and generational experiences of members in the Historical Reckoning Working Group, and is not meant to be exhaustive or all-inclusive.

The timeline was inspired by an activity led by Chicago Regional Organizing for Anti-Racism (CROAR), and draws upon knowledge compiled previously by other individuals, organizations, and groups. These resources are listed in the **"Additional Reading"** section, after the timeline.



# HARMS, RESISTANCE, AND SOLIDARITY IN CHICAGO

# TIMELINE



An estimated 65,000 Indigenous people live in and around what is now Chicago. The Pottawatomie tribe, which means, “Keepers of the Fire,” live along the Calumet, Chicago, and Des Plaines Rivers. The Potawatomi belong to the Council of Three Fires, in an alliance with the Ottawa, and Chippewa (Ojibwa) tribes. Chicago is one of the best places to portage between two major water systems: the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes.

In the 1650s they abandon the region, moving first west of the Mississippi and then to Wisconsin. During the 1670s, French travelers encounter winter camps of Illinois hunting in the region. The Miami reoccupy the region in the 1690s, forming two villages on the Chicago River, one with 2,500 inhabitants near the river’s mouth and another about three miles upstream. Other Miami villages are located on the Calumet River, the modern Indiana border, and at the junction of the Des Plaines and Kankakee rivers.

By the mid-seventeenth century the Miami have established some villages along the Chicago and Des Plaines Rivers, but during

## >1700s

**1770s – Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable,** son of a French sailor and enslaved African woman, is considered the first non-Indigenous person to settle in Chicago. DuSable marries a Potawatomi woman and builds a cabin just north of the Chicago River near Lake Michigan — approximately where the Tribune Tower is today — where he establishes a trading post. That same cabin is later acquired by John Kinzie in 1804.

**1786 – The Northwestern Alliance** is formed by Native American nations and they fight against the U.S. Military and are key in staving off White colonizers in Chicago until the mid-1810s.

## >1800s

**1803 – Fort Dearborn** is built as a strategic site to “guard” Chicago and continue advancing western land grabs.

**1830 – The Indian Removal Act** is signed by President Andrew Jackson and proposes to relocate indigenous tribes west of the Mississippi River. This results in the relocation of Indigenous people still living east of the Mississippi River. The tribes in what is now Chicago and the Great Lakes area feel the brunt of many land cessations and several relocation efforts in the years after this.

**1833 – The Treaty of Chicago** forces the Pottawatomie, Chippewa, Ottawa, and other Native American nations to transfer 15 million acres to the U.S. government in exchange for equal acreage west of the Mississippi River and north of the Missouri River. This is followed by the Trail of Tears. As time goes on, Native Americans are driven farther and farther away into confinements termed “reservations.” This treaty is entered into and broken by the Federal government, not the City of Chicago, but the City profits from it.

## >1800s

**1860s – Union Stockyards** meatpacking houses are open in Union Stockyards, leading eventually to what we now know as Bubbly Creek, where animal carcasses and other district waste was dumped. The Yards close in 1971. The stockyards created a notable environmental issues that affected Black, Indigenous, and Eastern European immigrants who worked or lived nearby to the yards.

**1886 – Haymarket Riot** is part of a massive national May Day rally and strike led, by and large, by American immigrant workers demanding fair labor laws.

**1871 – Great Chicago Fire** destroys a third of the City and displaces 80,000-100,000 people. The fire is blamed on an Irish woman, a racist myth (the Irish were not yet considered White) that persists to this day in Chicago folklore.

The rebuilding efforts after the Chicago

Fire of 1871 are seen as an opportunity to reshape the city. The displacement of so many sets a pathway for segregation by income and race, and creates an opportunity for industrial capitalists to transform Chicago from a walking city to a commercial and industrial giant over a short time. Tenement housing and “rear-houses” starts to take off particularly spearheaded by the Settlement Movement around the 1880s. Efforts to reshape Chicago eventually lead to the hiring of master planner, Daniel Burnham.

**1871 – Cook County Jail:** The new Chicago House of Corrections is built at its current location on 26th & California. In the 1920s, Cook County would begin developing on the site, and eventually the sites will merge and become the Cook County Jail.

**1880s – Chinatown in the Loop:** Chinatown has been established in the Chicago Loop, but begins to change as anti-Asian

sentiments grow in the US. The federal Chinese Exclusion Act is signed in 1882, banning the immigration of Chinese workers into the U.S.

**1883 – The Chicago Real Estate Board** is formed, and goes on to create a code of conduct for realtors, including securing commitments from realtors that they will not sell houses that disrupt the racial composition of neighborhoods.

**1889 – The Jane Adams Hull House** opens as a settlement house for European immigrants, and later Black and Mexican residents. The center provided services such as childcare, employment services, arts and culture, and literacy classes.

**1893 – Columbian Exposition World’s Fair** Chicago recovers from the 1871 fire and hosts the World’s Fair in 1893, which

commemorates the 400th anniversary of the colonization by Columbus. Daniel Burnham, Louis Sullivan and others build a city within a city in what we know as Jackson Park, South Shore, Hyde Park and Woodlawn. This is when Chicago begins to be seen as a world class city. Taking place 30 years after the abolishment of slavery, Blacks are allowed to participate as low-level workers and performers, while White organizers keep them from more meaningful positions of influence or authority.

**The Panic of 1893,** where a depression obliterates the American workforce and unemployment remains over 10% for at least five years. The World’s Fair has guards to keep impoverished, unemployed and protestors/dissenters off the grounds. Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass were among those who openly wrote and spoke in protest of the event.

## >1900-1910s

**1905 – Chicago Defender:** Robert S. Abbott founds the Chicago Defender newspaper, a publication that takes a hard stances on racism, discrimination, Black life and the protection of Black dignity.

**1906 – The Jungle:** Upton Sinclair’s 1906 book *The Jungle* exposes life in The Stockyards and sheds light on the abysmal worker conditions.

**1909 – Burnham Plan of Chicago:** Daniel Burnham devotes much attention to the importance of parks and open spaces—particularly the lakefront—as well as boulevards, squares, and a grand, monumental civic center. However, the Plan studiously avoids any significant discussion of housing, crowding, poverty, or other social inequities. This plan was oriented to the city’s

center.

**1911 – The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People** establishes its Chicago chapter.

**1912 – Chinatown Relocation:** The Asian-American population in Chicago is forced out of the Loop area to make way for continued development, and is re-established in its current location, centralized around Wentworth/Cermak.

**1913 – Women’s Suffrage Movement:** Illinois women win the right to vote in presidential and local races. The work is largely led by the Chicago Political Equality League.

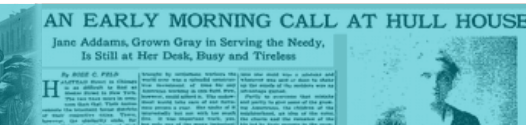
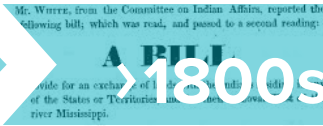
**1916 – The Great Migration:** Between 1916 and the 1970s, Chicago becomes the home of over half a million southern Black

people escaping from the Jim Crow system. Black people are primarily limited to an area of Chicago known as the “Black Belt,” or Bronzeville. Bronzeville becomes the Black Metropolis of the Midwest. Restrictive housing policies to keep newly arriving Black folks away from White neighborhoods cause overcrowding and increasingly poor housing conditions.

**1918 – Mexican Migration:** Due to the economic and political instability caused by the Mexican Revolution, Mexicans begin migrating up to the Calumet region and the Back of the Yards neighborhoods. White landowners benefit from the migration of Mexican workers by paying them lower wages than White European workers. Tensions grow between working-class

white and Mexican workers, hindering the opportunity for solidarity between working-class folks in the stockyards.

**1919 – Chicago Race Riots:** On July 27, 1919, a Black teenager, Eugene Williams, accidentally drifts over the invisible line that separated the Black and White sections of the 29th St. Beach. A group of White youth begins to stone Williams, who drowns. His death, and the refusal of the police to arrest the White man whom eyewitnesses identify as the main culprit, spark a week of rioting between Black and White Chicagoans on the South Side. Around the US, the events in Chicago incite a series of race riots known as the Red Summer.





## 1920s

**1921 – The Chicago Real Estate Board** votes to expel members who have sold property in White neighborhoods to Black families, underscoring their intention to uphold racial segregation in Chicago. The Board begins organizing White homeowners to sign restrictive covenants preventing their homes from legally being sold to Black families.

**1929 – The Great Depression:** The U.S. economy crashes and the Great Depression begins.

**1929 – The Mexican Repatriation:** A mass deportation of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans from the United States occurs between 1929 and 1936. Estimates of how many were repatriated range from 400,000 to 2,000,000. An estimated sixty percent of those deported are birthright citizens of the United States.



## 1930s

**1933-1939 – New Deal programs** are enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, with a strong focus on public housing construction.

**1937 – Public Housing & Redlining:** The passage of the Illinois Housing Act leads to Chicago's first public housing and the creation of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). Redlining, the practice of denying home sales and loan approvals based on neighborhood and race, becomes formally legal via the U.S. Housing Act, which establishes the Federal Housing Association (FHA).



## 1940s

**1940 – The Industrial Areas Foundation** is formed in Chicago by Saul Alinsky, and is focused on organizing Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Black Americans for community power.

**1940s – South Side Planning Board:** Michael Reese and IIT begin acquiring land in Bronzeville, Grand Boulevard, and Kenwood-Oakland neighborhoods, and partners with the CHA to acquire land via auctions. The two institutions join forces and form the South Side Planning Board. They eventually catch the attention of Ferd Kramer, the President of the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council (now Metropolitan Planning Council), which leads to the eventual property management of the Lake Meadows apartment complex by the company Draper

and Kramer. The development has an 80% white occupancy rate rule, which leads to lawsuits by Black residents.

**1941 – The Ida B. Wells homes,** a Chicago Housing Authority public housing development, are completed in Bronzeville. They will be demolished between 2002-2011.

**1941 – U.S. enters World War II**

**1942-1946 – Japanese internment** becomes U.S. policy. Many Japanese Americans are resettled in Chicago when they are released from the internment camps. The US government and restrictive housing covenants prevent the creation of a centralized Japanese neighborhood.



**1942-1964 – Braceros Program:** The Braceros Program encourages Mexican workers to enter the United States, typically on short-term agricultural labor contracts. During the course of the program, 4.6 million contracts are signed.

**1940s – Early Civil Rights Movement:** Early civil rights movement sparks in Chicago with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) staging sit-ins and other protests against discriminatory Chicago restaurants and recreational centers.

**1945 – The Altgeld Gardens Homes,** a Chicago Housing Authority public housing development, are completed in Riverdale Chicago. The area, surrounded by landfills and industrial facilities, will go on to be known

as the “Toxic Donut,” and become the hub of Chicago’s environmental justice movement with Hazel Johnson leading People for Community Recovery.

**1947 – Blighted Areas Redevelopment Act and the Relocation Act** are passed in Illinois and expand the eminent domain powers of municipalities and creates state-level funding for the demolition and redevelopment of older buildings.

**1949 – The Housing Act of 1949** jumpstarts “urban renewal” via eminent domain, demolition, and subsequent private redevelopment.



## 1950s

**1950s-1960s – Indian Relocation Program:** The selective termination of tribal status, in concert with the Indian Relocation program of the 1950s, brings thousands of Native Americans from all over the country to metropolitan Chicago.

**1953 – The Urban Community Conservation Act** is passed, which allows the City to designate “conservation areas” to receive improvements. The conservation process is very similar to urban renewal.

**1955 – Emmett Till,** a 14-year-old Black boy is murdered in Mississippi. His mother, Mamie Till holds an open casket funeral in Chicago, and more than 50,000 people viewed his body. This further fuels the civil rights movement in Chicago.

**1956 – Construction of the Stevenson Expressway** displaces many lower-income Chicagoans from the Near West Side.

**1956 – Department of Planning:** Richard Daley proposes the Department of Planning to the City Council. The proposal passes, and Ira Bach is installed as first planning commissioner.

**1958 – The Metropolitan Center for Neighborhood Renewal** is created, and provides technical assistance to 50 Chicago neighborhood groups to develop plans to revitalize their communities.



## 1960s

**1960 – The Kennedy Expressway** is completed, displacing residents across the city’s northwest side.

**1961 – DuSable Museum of African American History** is established, led by Margaret Burroughs.

**1963 – The Robert Taylor Homes,** a Chicago Housing Authority public housing development, are completed in Bronzeville. They will be.

**1964 – The Civil Rights Act** is adopted and prohibits discrimination in public places on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It makes employment discrimination and discrimination in public facilities illegal.

**1963-1965 – University of Illinois at Chicago expansion** displaces residents of Little Italy.

**1965 – The Voting Rights Act** prohibits racial discrimination in voting.

**1966 – The Black Panther Party** is founded in Oakland, CA. The Black Panther Party of Chicago will emerge in 1968.

**The Community Development Corporation** model formed by Sen. Robert Kennedy begins to expand nationally.

**Martin Luther King Jr.** comes to Chicago and lives in North Lawndale. King leads the **Chicago Freedom Movement,** which focuses on tenants’ rights, unsafe and unaffordable housing conditions, and redlining. On Freedom Sunday, July 10 1966, hundreds of

Chicagoans marched to City Hall in protest, and were attacked by a violent group of White citizens. Mayor Richard Daley agrees to meet with Dr. King and the tenants and negotiate fair housing policies.

**1967 – Bickerdike Development Corporation** is established to fight for fair and affordable housing, and maintenance of proper housing conditions on the NW side.

**1968 – Martin Luther King Jr.** is assassinated in Memphis, TN. In the aftermath of King’s death, there is rioting in cities across the country, including in Chicago.

**1968 – The Fair Housing Act** becomes U.S. law, and prohibits discrimination in housing sales, rental, and financing on the basis of race, religion, national origin, sex (and later)

disability, and family status.

**The Democratic National Convention** is hosted in Chicago. Violence erupts at the convention between anti-Vietnam War protestors and Chicago police, National Guardsmen, and federal troops.

**The Young Lords,** a Puerto Rican civil rights and community organization, use the model of the Black Panther Party and are founded in Chicago.

**1969 – Fred Hampton** founds the Rainbow Coalition (includes Black Panthers, Young Patriots, Young Lords and other groups). Hampton is assassinated in December 1969.

## >1970s

**1971 – The War on Drugs** is declared by President Richard Nixon, and will result in mass incarceration nationwide.

**1975 – The Vietnam War ends.**

**1977 – The Community Reinvestment Act** is passed to require federal financial institutions to encourage banks to meet the credit needs of low-income and middle-income neighborhoods, with a goal of reducing redlining.

## >1980s

**1980 – Wisconsin Steel** closes, beginning the decline of the steel industry in Chicago over 20 years, including the closures of Republic Steel (1984), South Works/U.S. Steel (1992), and Acme (2001).

**1980-1982 – Bid for 1992 World's Fair:** Chicago prepares a bid to host the 1992 World's Fair, commemorating 500 years since Columbus' arrival in the Americas. The Fair was opposed by communities that would be affected by the massive developments proposed, and by the incoming Mayor Washington, and eventually lost funding and support from top state authorities.

**1982 – P.O.W.E.R.** registers 230,000 people to vote, successfully supporting the encouragement of a second run from democratic hopeful Harold Washington to oust incumbent Mayor Byrne.

**1983 – Harold Washington** becomes first Black mayor in Chicago, which triggers the Council Wars, a racially polarizing conflict in City Council.

## >1990s

**1995 – The Chicago Heat Wave** results in over 730 heat-related deaths, and disproportionately affects low-income, Black, elderly Chicagoans.

## >2000s

**2000 – The Plan for Transformation:** Mayor M. Daley and the Chicago Housing Authority launch the Plan for Transformation, which leads to the demolition of 17,000 units of public housing across the city including the Robert Taylor Homes (2007), Ida B. Wells Homes (2002-2011), and Cabrini Green (2011). The plan proposes renovating or building 25,000 new units and to relocate residents into mixed-income neighborhoods, but these commitments still have not been met more than 20 years later.

**2001:** The September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon occur, which leads to a rise of Islamophobia across the country.

**2003 – Chicago zoning code amendment:** The City of Chicago amends its zoning ordinance for the first time since 1957.

**2007 – The Foreclosure Crisis** begins, resulting in the Great Recession. Many Southside homes are foreclosed on without proper paperwork.

**2008 – Republic Windows** factory members are forced to occupy plant and then negotiate with Bank of America who received giant federal bailout before attempting to throw workers out of job. Workers later occupy a second time and negotiate collective ownership of equipment and move to new space to open worker owned New Era Windows.

## >2010s

**2011 – Occupy Chicago:** Protestors stage ongoing demonstrations in Chicago's financial district in solidarity with the national Occupy Wall Street movement, focused on economic inequality, the influence of money in politics.

**2012-2014:** The Fisk and Crawford coal plants in Pilsen and Little Village are officially closed after decades of activism from local environmental justice organizations, such as the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) and Pilsen Environmental Rights & Reform Organization (PERRO).

**2013:** Chicago school closures on the city's South and West sides are announced by Mayor Rahm Emanuel due to a budget deficit.

**Black Lives Matter** movement begins in response to landmark acts of police brutality

against Black and Latino people.

**2014 – Laquan McDonald,** a Black 17-year-old, is killed by a Chicago police officer, and evidence of about the circumstances of the incident are obscured for over a year. The shooting, cover-up, and subsequent investigation and conviction of the officer, contribute energy to the national Black Lives Matter movement.

**2014 – Ferrara Pan Candy,** Gold Standard Bakery and temp agencies are successfully sued by a coalition of Black and Latino workers for using predatory, racist hiring models and wage theft.

**2015 – Chicago Torture Justice Ordinance:** In 2015, after years of advocacy from survivors and their families and allies, Chicago passes the Reparations for Burge Torture Victims Ordinance and Resolution,

issuing redress to survivors of torture at the hands of the Chicago Police Department, under the command of John Burge.

The first phase of the **Bloomington Trail (the 606),** a rails-to-trails investment also known as the 606, opens. While it increases green space, it harms Latino households nearby, which experience displacement due to rapid property value increases.

**2016 – Immigration Audits at Clover Hill Bakery** are a prime example of a predatory racist hiring model that sought to exploit, steal wages, and expose to dangerous conditions recent immigrant workers and exclude Black, Puerto Rican, and 2nd generation immigrant workers.

**2017 – The Cost of Segregation,** a study on the impacts of racial and economic segregation on the region in terms of

## Feds probe death of teen shot 16 times by city cop

Chicago seeks to settle case as FBI investigates 2014 killing on Southwest Side. ... shot up in his room, and officers sprayed one with tear gas. A student and a teacher were injured. ...

**The Cook County Assessor's Office** is sued by a collective of three community organizations. The suit alleges that the Illinois property tax assessment system consistently over-assesses and over-taxes property owners in a majority Latino and Black neighborhoods in comparison with homeowners in majority White neighborhoods.

**2019 – INVEST South/West** is officially kicked off in Chicago, with the goal of aligning public investments with the catalyzation of private investment for 10 target neighborhoods, including 12 target commercial corridors.

## >2020s

**2020 – The COVID-19 Pandemic** comes to the U.S. and Chicago, with severe illness and death disproportionately affecting majority Black, Indigenous, and Latino communities. The pandemic exposes long-standing inequities in the City and country. Anti-Asian hate crimes increase across the country as China is blamed for the emergence of COVID-19.

The murder of **George Floyd** by a police officer in Minneapolis, MN catalyzes large-scale protests in Chicago and across the country.

**2021 – Welcoming City Ordinance:** Chicago passes a revised "Welcoming City" ordinance, which eliminates exceptions that previously allowed Chicago Police Department officers to assist federal immigration investigations.

**2022 – Stop General Iron Campaign:** Following years of advocacy by Southeast side residents and allies, the City of Chicago denies a key operations permit to Reserve Management Group, halting the relocation of a steel recycling plant from Lincoln Park to Southeast Chicago. An investigation by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development finds that the City of Chicago

violated the Fair Housing Act by pursuing similar industrial relocations.

**We Will Chicago** draft plan is released, and includes a section on historical acknowledgement, including recognizing many of the harms that have occurred in Chicago, related to city planning.

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