

# BACKSTORY

YOUR GUIDE TO TIMELINE PRODUCTIONS



WORLD PREMIERE | BY JOHN CONROY

## My Kind of Town



YESTERDAY'S STORIES.  
TODAY'S TOPICS.

**Timeline**  
Theatre Company

# a message



Dear Friends,

Welcome to TimeLine's 51st production and the world premiere of John Conroy's *My Kind of Town*.

In July 2009 I got an email from John, introducing himself and inviting TimeLine's Company Members to a reading of a play he was working on that he thought was a good fit with our mission. I regret to note that I was not familiar with John or his writing, despite the fact that he had been a leading voice in covering many facets of the Commander Jon Burge police-torture scandal in the *Chicago Reader*, in his book *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture* and, more recently, on Chicago Public Radio.

He had been all over this story for 20 years—pretty much the entire time I had called Chicago home.

Like many, I had followed the scandal in a limited way—meaning, I would see a headline, skim an article, shake my head and flip the page—and never felt an urgent or personal

connection to it. But here in my inbox was a thoughtful, impassioned note from an unsung hero who had devoted a massive chunk of his career to a story that had mostly elicited widespread indifference, even from a Chicago-loving liberal like me.

John's first groundbreaking and exhaustive article about this, "House of Screams," appeared on the cover of the *Chicago Reader* in 1990, blowing the doors open on a scandal that already was well into its second decade.

And a city shook its head and flipped the page.

In the three months after that 19,000+ word article was published, only four short letters were written to the *Reader* in response. Two were in support of the accused officers, and two were outraged at the allegations.

Virtually no other news outlets investigated further.

Indifference reigned for six more years before John brought more evidence to the public eye through a furious stream of further allegations in more than 20 articles over the next 11 years. Belatedly, other news outlets began to join in.

But, to this day, it's hard to argue that the scandal gripped the city, influenced elections, or even elicited much attention. I can't tell you how many people sheepishly have asked, "What exactly was the scandal?" when I mention John's play. And it is that culture of complicity that I find most fascinating about *My Kind of Town* and most admirable about what John has sought to do.

After receiving John's intriguing email nearly three years ago and finally doing our homework, our first assumption about his play (prior to actually reading it) was that it would be an exposé, a rant, an indictment of those who wrongfully broke a code of honor. And it would be laid out in very black-and-white journalistic terms, where the audience left the theater feeling bad about government but great about themselves for piously nodding in agreement that "torture is bad."

To our surprise, John has no interest in easy answers and wants to avoid moral certainties. Stylistically, he isn't trying to merely stage what he's already reported, docudrama-style, or even focus thematically

## We hope *My Kind of Town* avoids easy answers, bumper-sticker responses, knee-jerk labeling and finger pointing in every direction other than inward.

on specific people, events or allegations. He is after something more complicated, more human, more dramatic and more insightful about our city as a whole: How the culture of complicity has ruled the day for far too long.

Corruption has become almost a badge of honor that we Chicagoans joke about—a punch line. It has become too easy to say things like, "Sure, we know there's shady stuff that goes on—the city is overrun by corruption!—but doesn't Millennium Park look great? And don't you love the flowers in the middle of Michigan Avenue?"

We focus on what we like and turn a blind eye to the rest. Because we're "The City That Works." The city that knows how to get stuff done. No matter the cost.

And while the majority would agree (in public) that torture should have no place in law enforcement, that must be counter-balanced with crime rates we find despicable, weekly headlines about the staggering

number of people gunned down on our streets and outcries for the police to keep neighborhoods safe.

But at what cost? Where do we draw a moral line? Do we care how to keep the streets safe, how the work gets done, or just that it gets done?

It has been an indescribable honor working with John at TimeLine. John, director Nick Bowling, our Company Members and a team of actors and designers have collaborated during two in-depth workshops and countless conversations, developing his play into a powerful, emotional drama that will get you talking.

John is a man of impeccable integrity, insight, intellect and grace. And he is to be commended and heralded for, quite literally, saving men's lives—those who already have been released from death row, and the countless others who, hopefully, in the future may receive a better shot at justice and due process.

Yet, while John is a crusader, he is also a pragmatist,

a citizen, a parent. His admiration for law enforcement is without question, and honoring the selfless heroism of those who serve and protect us is of critical importance to him.

He also is committed to honoring the dignity of those whom society is all too willing to suspect of wrongdoing—a class of people deemed torturable for the public good.

TimeLine's aim in bringing John's dynamic play to our stage is to push a conversation that has been avoided for too long—one that, we hope, avoids easy answers, bumper-sticker responses, knee-jerk labeling and finger pointing in every direction other than inward.

I encourage you to read the archives of John's reporting at [chicagoreader.com/policetorture](http://chicagoreader.com/policetorture), and I thank you for joining us for *My Kind of Town* and a conversation about each of our roles in this great city of Chicago.

Best,

# the play

## The play

**M**y *Kind of Town* is John Conroy's first play. The script was developed beginning in 2007 with assistance from Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Northwestern University's School of Law, 16th Street Theatre, Writer's Bloc, and film and theater director John Hancock, before work began at TimeLine Theatre in 2010. Early readings and development were reported on by the *Chicago Reader*, *Time Out Chicago* and *The New York Times*, which wrote: "In the tradition of history and morality plays ... Mr. Conroy turned to theater

as a means of provocation and catharsis."

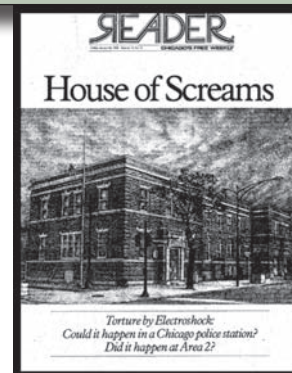
## The playwright

**J**ohn Conroy was born in Chicago and graduated from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. He was instrumental in exposing the Chicago police torture scandal involving allegations against Commander Jon Burge and others. Over the course of the last three decades, he has repeatedly reminded an indifferent public that justice had not been done.

Much of his coverage of the issue is in his widely

praised book, *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture* (Knopf, 2000) and the *Chicago Reader's* John Conroy Archive at [chicagoreader.com/poliketorture](http://chicagoreader.com/poliketorture).

Conroy is the author of *Belfast Diary: War as a Way of Life* (Beacon Press, 1987, 1995). He has written for the *Chicago Tribune*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *GQ*, *Mother Jones*, *Granta* and many other publications, and has won numerous awards for his journalism.



John Conroy's first cover story in the *Chicago Reader*, January 26, 1990.

not leave marks. Often the torture was used to extract a confession.

The OPS investigation resulted in the suspension of Burge and some of his officers. It found that there was a preponderance of evidence to support that physical abuse did occur, that it was systematic, and that members of CPD either participated in or ignored it.

The People's Law Office, which has represented many of the torture victims in civil suits, so far has found more than 100 African Americans who allege torture. The total number of victims is unknown and could be considerably higher.

Edward J. Egan and Robert D. Boyle were appointed as special prosecutors to investigate the torture allegations. After four years and \$7 million, they found there had been torture, but sought no indictments.

Only Burge, who was fired on Feb. 11, 1993, has been charged with a crime in relation to the torture allegations. In 2010, he was convicted of perjury and obstruction of justice in federal court related to statements he made about the alleged torture. U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald could not charge him for any acts of torture because the statute of limitations had passed on those offenses. He is serving 4 ½ years. He still receives his police pension.

Recently, former Mayor Richard M. Daley, the Cook County state's attorney during the time frame in which many of the prisoners allegedly were tortured, has agreed to be deposed in the Michael Tillman case, one of the torture cases still in ongoing civil litigation.

**"As journalists, we failed to ignite the appropriate public and governmental outrage, and we failed to really achieve any significant reform in the system that enabled the torture." — John Conroy**

## Police Torture in Chicago

# the scandal

**O**n Jan. 26, 1990, John Conroy's article "House of Screams" was published, his first cover story for the *Chicago Reader* on alleged police torture at the Chicago Police Department (CPD). Conroy worked for more than a year on the article, which was nearly 20,000 words. The article brought up torture allegations relating to Andrew Wilson, who, with his brother Jackie, was

arrested and charged with the murder of two Chicago police officers, William Fahey and Richard O'Brien.

Although there was little public response to the article, it did prompt CPD's Office of Professional Standards (OPS) to investigate allegations of torture in Area 2. And over the next 17 years, Conroy would report on what was emerging as a major scandal.

Allegations of torture came from a variety of individuals, including minors, who had been processed through Areas 2 and 3, where Jon Burge served as commander. The incidents described, alleged to have taken place over the course of 20 years, were eerily similar and often involved electroshock on the genitals or suffocation with a plastic bag or typewriter cover, forms of torture that would

## TIMELINE:

### A selected history of torture and anti-torture legislation

**"The difference between us and the enemy is how we treat the enemy."**

— Rear Admiral John Hutson, former U.S. Navy lawyer

- **4th Century B.C.** Aristotle, in chapter 15 of *Rhetoric*, lists torture among the five extrinsic proofs, or evidence, that may be used in the legal process: laws, witnesses, custom, torture and oaths.
- **1252** Pope Innocent IV announces that heretics deserve torture.
- **1692** In Salem, Mass., 19 men and women are sentenced to death for witchcraft, and one man is pressed to death with stones for refusing to admit he is a witch.
- **1754** Prussia abandons all torture. Over the next 100 years, many European nations will follow suit and ban torture.
- **1789** The Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives defendants the right to remain silent and not testify against themselves. The Eighth Amendment prohibits cruel and unusual punishment.
- **1903** President Theodore Roosevelt defends the use of water torture on Filipino detainees, saying, "Nobody was seriously damaged."
- **1931** The Wickersham Commission, also known as the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, determines that the extreme interrogation measure known as the "third degree" amounts to torture.



# the definition

Greek and Roman law first permitted the torture of slaves, then an increasingly large group of individuals. It was assumed a slave would not tell the truth and evidence would need to be gained by torture.

Between the 13th and 18th centuries, torture was used as a central component of extracting confessions from heretics. But the Enlightenment (mid-17th century through the 18th) led many European countries to outlaw torture.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, though, it is clear torture continues to be used around the world, including by the Nazis and the Japanese army during World War II, by fascist regimes in Italy and Spain, during the Vietnam War, by repressive governments throughout South America and Africa, in the Balkans, and by government-sanctioned forces in Northern Ireland and police in the United States.

Today, it is much easier to relegate torture to the past, or to assign it to other nations—being done by people unlike ourselves.

In recent years it also has become increasingly difficult to prove torture. Without first-hand testimony or documented evidence, it is notoriously difficult to prove. In many cases it is deliberately not documented, and allegations often revolve into competing stories about what happened behind closed doors. Because those who inflict torture often use methods that do not leave marks—such as waterboarding (causing individuals to experience the sensation of drowning), sleep deprivation, subjection to noise or forcing individuals into stressful positions for a protracted period of time—physical evidence is more difficult to produce.

The legal and international definitions and standards of torture are fraught and have

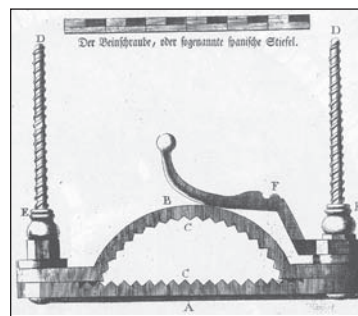


Diagram of a "legscrew." With this device, a suspect's leg is inserted in the metal vice, whose inner surfaces are scored with sharp edges.

been interpreted differently from country to country, depending on their interests. Countries are more likely to define a behavior as torture if it is being used on their citizens than if they are using it on citizens of another country. Even international definitions are open to interpretation: What constitutes "ill treatment"? What is a "significant level of humiliation or degradation"?

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) doesn't use the word torture. Rather, the broad term "ill-treatment" is used to cover a wide variety

**"The notion that somehow the United States was wildly torturing anybody is not true. ... Three people were waterboarded. Not dozens, not hundreds. Three. ... [And] it produced phenomenal results for us. ... It was out of the enhanced interrogation techniques that some of the leads came that ultimately produced the result when President Obama was able to send in Seal Team 6 to kill Bin Laden." — Former Vice President Dick Cheney**

of abuse prohibited by international law, including "inhuman, cruel, humiliating, and degrading treatment, outrages upon personal dignity and physical or moral coercion." ICRC goes on to explain:

"The legal difference between torture and other forms of ill treatment lies in the level of severity of pain or suffering imposed. In addition, torture requires the existence of a specific purpose behind the act—to obtain information, for example.

"The various terms used to refer to different forms of ill treatment or infliction of pain can be explained as follows:

- Torture: Existence of a specific purpose plus intentional infliction of severe suffering or pain;
- Cruel or inhuman treatment: No specific

purpose, significant level of suffering or pain inflicted;

- Outrages upon personal dignity: No specific purpose, significant level of humiliation or degradation.

"Methods of ill treatment may be both physical and/or psychological in nature and both methods may have physical and psychological effects."

The 1984 United Nations Convention Against Torture defines torture in Article I as follows:

"For the purposes of this Convention, the term 'torture' means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing

**"The third degree is a secret and illegal practice. Those who employ it either will not talk or else will make formal denial of its existence. The victims are likely to exaggerate or fabricate accounts to further their ends or decline to talk because of fear of police retaliation." — The Wickersham Commission**

- **1938** Author Tennessee Williams reads an article about prisoner torture and rioting at the Philadelphia County prison and writes his play *Not About Nightingales*, about starvation, hot boxes and beatings at a prison. A hot box, also called a sweat box, is a form of solitary confinement that subjects prisoners to high temperatures in a closed room.
- **1939-1945** During World War II, torture is pervasive in Nazi concentration camps and by the Japanese military, which starves and tortures some 20,000 American POWs in labor camps. Torture is also used by the Allies to interrogate Nazi agents.
- **1941** Delaware's legislature bans the use of the whipping post as punishment for those who have stolen less than \$25.
- **1949** On August 12, the Geneva Conventions are adopted, prohibiting the mistreatment of prisoners of war and civilian populations during times of war.
- **1954-1962** The French Army engages in torture during the Algerian War.
- **1964-1974** American prisoners of war during the Vietnam War are subjected to torture. The so-called "Hanoi Hilton" POW camp becomes synonymous with torture.

**"The truth is that there has not been a war in history in which torture has not been employed in some form or another, and sometimes to excellent effect."**

— British historian Andrew Roberts, "How Torture Helped Win WWII," *The Daily Beast*, May 13, 2009

him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions."



This photograph of a U.S. soldier supervising the waterboarding of a captured Vietnamese soldier was published in The Washington Post in 1968.

## "Torture: Existence of a specific purpose plus intentional infliction of severe suffering or pain"

— The International Committee of the Red Cross

## Special Events and Resources

# the conversation

TimeLine looks forward to engaging our audience in conversations inspired by our productions. We hope you will participate in the array of additional resources and online communities available:

### SUNDAY SCHOLARS

After the show on **Sunday, June 10** is Sunday Scholars, a one-hour panel discussion featuring experts talking about the play's themes and issues. **Admission is free.** Visit [timelinetheatre.com](http://timelinetheatre.com) for panelists and more.

### COMPANY MEMBER DISCUSSION

Our Company Members shape the artistic vision and choose programming for TimeLine. On **Sunday, July 1**, join them for a free post-show discussion.

### POST-SHOW DISCUSSIONS

On **Wednesdays, May 16, June 6 and 20; Sundays, May 20 and 27, June 17 and July 8; and Thursdays May 24, June 14 and 28**, moderated by a TimeLine Company member and featuring cast and production staff.

### STUDY GUIDE

A **study guide** is available at [timelinetheatre.com](http://timelinetheatre.com).

### BLOG AND MORE!

Find behind-the-scenes insight and conversation on our blog, **Behind the 'Line**, via [timelinetheatre.com](http://timelinetheatre.com).



For the latest, "like" us on Facebook (**TimeLine Theatre Company**) and follow us on Twitter (**@timelinetheatre**)!

The process of homicide investigation and prosecution is often presented on television and in films in a simplified and streamlined way. Here are explanations of some of the terms used in the play.

### State's attorney's office

The Cook County State's Attorney's Office has nearly 860 Assistant State's Attorneys who prosecute felony and misdemeanor crimes in the county. The office is divided into seven bureaus: Criminal Prosecutions, Juvenile Justice, Narcotics, Special Prosecutions, Civil Actions, Investigations and Administrative Services.

### Public defenders

Public defenders can be elected or appointed. They are assigned by the courts to defend individuals who cannot afford an attorney. Attorneys at larger firms are often asked to do a certain amount of free, or pro bono, work that may include public-defense cases.

### Homicide detectives

Homicide detectives are assigned to investigate murders. The evidence they and their teams collect in the form of evidence, witness statements and even confessions, can be used by prosecutors to try individuals for murder.

### Clearance rate

In homicide units, the clearance rate refers to the number of cases that get completed—where there is sufficient evidence or, in rare cases, a confession, to prosecute a suspect—in a year. It is a point of pride to solve cases. If a unit has a low clearance rate, it might mean the officer in charge will be replaced.

### Office of Professional Standards

The Office of Professional Standards (now the Bureau of Professional Standards) is the office within the Chicago Police Department charged with investigating alleged violations of statutes or laws by members of the department.

**"As for those sign-waving protesters who are seeking the hides of the three cops, one two-part question: Have you ever had any firsthand experience with them, and did they ever torture you? If not, get a life."**

—Mike Royko, "Facts Don't Add Up To Police Brutality," *Chicago Tribune*, February 27, 1992

- **1965** Prison officials at Tucker State Farm, part of the Arkansas State Penitentiary, are prohibited from using corporal punishment by the decision in *Talley v. Stephens*. The prison is infamous for its use of torture, including the "Tucker Telephone," a hand-cranked telephone that is used to administer electric shocks to prisoners' genitals.
- **1968** On January 21, *The Washington Post* runs a photograph of a U. S. soldier supervising the waterboarding of a captured Vietnamese soldier. The photo leads to an investigation and court martial of the supervising soldier.

■ ■ ■

**"Torture is the calculated infliction of pain, but it is also an emblem of state power. To talk about torture is not just to talk about pain but to enter into a complex discourse of morality, legality and politics."** — Stanley Cohen, *Talking About Torture in Israel*. Tikkun 6:23-30 (1991)

■ ■ ■

- **1971** In Northern Ireland, The Royal Ulster Constabulary, under the supervision of the British Army, uses "interrogation in depth" or the five techniques— hooding, wall standing, subjection to noise, deprivation of food or water, and sleep deprivation—on counterterrorism suspects.
- **1970s-1980s** Allegations of torture and coerced confessions in Area 2 of the Chicago Police Department begin emerging.
- **1976-1983** The military junta's war in Argentina becomes notorious for the disappearance and torture of citizens who are held at 400 separate torture camps.



# the interview

**During rehearsals for *My Kind of Town*, TimeLine Artistic Director PJ Powers (PJP) talked with acclaimed investigative journalist and first-time playwright John Conroy (JC) about bringing this story to the stage.**

**(PJP)** How did you learn about allegations of torture in the Chicago Police Department, and when and how did you investigating?

**(JC)** In 1989, at the suggestion of an editor in New York, I was investigating the possibility of doing a book on torture. I wanted to work with the editor (Ann Close) and with her publishing house (Alfred A. Knopf), though I was afraid I might end up writing a “noble” book that no one would read. I did a lot of reading on the subject, and the more I read, the more interested I got in torturers—whom, I learned, are people like you and me. I started to think of the book as a way of putting the reader into the torturer’s shoes, and so I began looking for cases that would not seem so foreign to Americans.

I’d mentioned this to a friend and fellow journalist, and she called me one day and said, “There’s a trial coming up next week in federal court, a civil suit. Andrew Wilson, the guy who killed those two policemen in 1982, claims he was tortured by detectives at

Area 2. Maybe you might want to go.” I didn’t expect much, but thought it would do no harm to get a sense of what it was about.

After hearing Wilson testify and seeing the photos of his injuries—particularly those of his ears, laden with puncture marks left by alligator clips—I was hooked. Twenty-three years later, with men still in prison on the basis of suspect confessions taken at Area 2, I’m still writing about it.

The noble book was published by Knopf in 2000. I can’t say no one has read it, but sometimes I think I’ve probably met everyone who has.

**(PJP)** Your first article about this, “House of Screams,” was in 1990 in the *Chicago Reader*. You had no articles on it again until 1996, then wrote 22 pieces over the next 11 years, finally prompting other news outlets to join in. So, what happened in that initial six years after “House of Screams”? Why didn’t that article launch the citywide fury it should have?

**(JC)** Keep in mind it was a different age of journalism



John Conroy. (Photo by David Kindler)

then. Although the *Reader* was a weekly, we saw the dailies as our competitors. Both were well staffed, and the thinking was they could throw three reporters on any story you’d broken and in a couple of days it would be theirs, not yours. So after “House of Screams,” my editor told me to move on, and I understood completely. The dailies surely were going to take up the story, and we’d never know it until we picked up a paper one day and there it would be.

What we didn’t anticipate was that the papers and the rest of the media would cover it as periodic incidents, coverage hinged to events, not as something deep and broad and ongoing.

The Police Board hearings on Commander Jon Burge’s

employment in 1992 were covered, but only on a surface level, as if he were largely acting alone—without the participation of a good number of other officers, without a wink and a nod from his superiors and the state’s attorney’s office—and as if the handful of victims who testified were just witnesses, not just a few of the scores of men tortured, some of whom were scheduled to be executed for crimes they had confessed to but had not done.

When the Police Board released its decision to fire Burge in 1993, both papers had his photo on the front page. Although that decision never used the word “torture” and never spelled out in precise detail what the board thought Burge had done, it was clear that he’d been fired as a result of the allegations of electric shock, suffocation and pressing Wilson against a hot radiator. So, at that point, millions of people in Chicago were aware of the torture scandal, and I was sure the media coverage would increase.

It didn’t. The whole city’s indifference is what prompted our second story, “Town Without Pity,” which examined the passive-

bystander phenomenon: why people don’t act when they become aware of an emergency. After that, we just kept going, though not without our doubts as the years passed. Not much seemed to change and the outrage we thought should appear failed to materialize.

As for why that this scandal has failed to ignite public outrage, I think it has a lot to do with a willingness on the part of every society to cordon off some section of the citizenry—an “out” group that is beyond the pale of our compassion, a torturable class to whom anything can be done. In this case, that group was African-American men, most with criminal records.

**(PJP)** You have devoted a good portion of your career to a subject that most people would rather not discuss. What sparked this fascination and what drives you to continue?

**(JC)** I don’t think it’s fascination so much as horror. What initially drew me in was the realization that torture was done by ordinary people. After a while, I tried to give it up, but I started to feel responsible—an absurd and grandiose feeling, yes. I thought that if somebody who’d been tortured here

■ **1977** Spain passes an amnesty law for all crimes committed while carrying out political repression before 1976 by “authorities, civil servants and agents of public order.”

■ **1984** The United Nations Convention Against Torture defines torture and asks member countries to agree to legislation banning torture and preventing extradition of individuals to countries in which they are likely to be tortured.

■ **1991** In January, Amnesty International issues a report calling for a full investigation of the reports of systematic torture in Area 2 of the Chicago Police Department.

■ **1994** The U.N. Convention Against Torture goes into effect in the United States as law. The law bans the transfer of a prisoner to a country in which there is “substantial grounds” he may face torture.

■ **1999** Amnesty international records incidents of torture or ill-treatment in more than 100 countries.

■ **2002** On December 2, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld approves “coercive interrogation techniques” for prisoners held in the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, including threatening prisoners with dogs.

■ **2003** On January 11, Illinois Gov. George Ryan commutes the sentences of 167 death-row prisoners. Ryan cites “error determining guilt” as one of the reasons for his blanket clemency of death row inmates, granting them life in prison without parole. He apologizes to four men who had received death sentences as a result of confessions obtained through torture.

was executed, it would be partly my fault for having given up. After Gov. George Ryan emptied death row, I realized that a sentence of life, or even a sentence of decades, didn't seem much different than the death penalty. By that time, I'd also realized that the problem was more than torture, that there were multiple other causes that contribute to wrongful convictions.

However, it's virtually impossible to make a living by writing with that specialty. So although I feel like my hand is still on the hoe, I've had to do other things along the way to pay the mortgage.

**(PJP)** When and what made you decide to write a play?

**(JC)** In 2007, I got a call from theater and film director John Hancock, who was then producing and directing two plays at Theatre Building Chicago. Over coffee, he said he thought there might be a play set against the backdrop of the police-torture scandal and asked if I'd like to try writing it. I didn't want anyone else to do it, so I said yes.

The idea was, if all went well, John might produce it. However, the revenue from the plays at the Theatre Building didn't suggest that

## **"No matter what someone has done or is suspected of having done, should we torture them to get a confession? And who is responsible for that torture?"**

a third Hancock production was a wise course, so I started taking the play elsewhere. But I wouldn't have written it but for John's suggestion.

**(PJP)** One thing that has fascinated me is that you decided to move outside your journalistic world. You didn't create a docudrama or an exposé on specific people or stories. Instead, you used years of reporting as inspiration to create a more universal and, ultimately, multifaceted dramatic text. What led you to write the play in this style?

**(JC)** I thought if it was a docudrama or an exposé of a specific case, it would be more easily dismissed as a peculiar incident in American history. I saw what happened here as something that could happen anywhere. And, in fact, it has happened in places all over the country—police officers, jail and prison officials and administrators at juvenile-detention facilities all have engaged in torture. We just don't like to call it that.

**(PJP)** In what ways has the play evolved since its start?

**(JC)** It's gotten tighter, more focused and more dramatic. I've changed the personalities of some characters, jettisoned others, spread the guilt around, compressed the time period and changed the ending. It has been quite a process.

**(PJP)** This experience is your first foray in working in the theater, correct? Has this always been a goal of yours?

**(JC)** Yes, it is my first such foray, and, no, this hasn't always been a goal, except in the sense that writing fiction has been a goal. I just never imagined I'd be writing that fiction for the stage.

**(PJP)** What has the experience at TimeLine been like so far, going through a script-development process, countless meetings, workshops and now, rehearsals?

**(JC)** It has been a great ride. I've been stimulated, stretched and, occasionally, thrown by what has come my way. I've been

impressed by the hard work and dedication of everyone who has worked on the play, particularly you and Nick (Bowling, the director). It has been wonderful to work with such a large group of people who are not only very good at what they do, but also great human beings.

**(PJP)** What has surprised you along the way?

**(JC)** A few editorial suggestions initially threw me for a loop—in part, I think, because the journalist in me clung to certain conventions that weren't relevant for the stage. I've been surprised by the actors—the questions they've asked about characters, the way they've delivered certain lines and interpreted the roles they're playing. I'm amazed at the use of music (I never imagined any), the set design, the planning for the lobby display and the myriad detail that goes into a production.

**(PJP)** The play unquestionably is rooted in Chicago, yet its issues surely translate to any other community. How do you think other places might relate to its story? Do you have aspirations to see this play produced in other cities?

**(JC)** I do, indeed, have aspirations to see this play produced elsewhere. My hope is that audiences anywhere would come to understand the motivations of all the characters and thereby realize it could happen locally; that it already might be happening, to some extent, in their "kind of town" and they might be playing a role in allowing it to continue.

**(PJP)** What is one action you hope audience members might be inspired to do after seeing your play?

**(JC)** In Chicago, I hope they might examine their consciences, wonder what they've done, haven't done or didn't even think about doing in relation to the ongoing scandal here. I'd like *all* audiences to address the basic questions posed here: No matter what someone has done or is suspected of having done, should we torture them to get a confession? And who is responsible for that torture?

**(PJP)** Has this experience given you the urge to write more for the theater?

**(JC)** I think the experience has given me the urge to pray for good reviews, for a positive response from the audience and for what a member of the Company

■ **2004** Photos taken by American soldiers show torture and mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners being held at Abu Ghraib prison. This is the prison Saddam Hussein made infamous for torturing prisoners when he was in power.

■ **2004** Evidence emerges that under President Robert Mugabe, children in Zimbabwe are being abducted and taught forms of torture, such as electrocution, in government-run training camps.

■ **2012** On January 24, the Federal Bureau of Investigation arrests four police officers on charges of false arrest, obstruction of justice and excessive force, particularly against Hispanics, in East Haven, Conn.

■ **2012** On March 30, The Investigative Committee charges four police officers in the Siberian city of Novokuznetsk with torturing detainees and the death of one prisoner from effects of torture.

■ ■ ■  
**"It is here that the utter lunacy of the entire process becomes most apparent. Torture, to be sure, is an essential feature of the whole totalitarian police and judiciary apparatus; it is used every day to make people talk. This type of torture, since it pursues a definite, rational aims, has certain limitations: either the prisoner talks within a certain time, or he is killed."**  
—Hannah Arendt, "Total Domination"

described as "the elusive second production." If I get one of the three, I'll be better able to answer your question.



# backstage

## A night of aspiration, belief and support of what is to come

What a night! Nearly 300 guests gathered in the grand ballroom of Chicago's historic Hotel InterContinental to celebrate and raise funds to support TimeLine's mission of exploring history. It was a milestone event as we celebrated 15 years of unimaginable growth with our largest audience of the year and broke company records—raising more than \$115,000 in net proceeds.

Each year we invite guests to step into another era at our gala benefit, *Step Into Time*, to raise funds vital to our ongoing work. On March 16, 2012, we celebrated our 15th Anniversary by stepping back five decades to the year 1962. We chose 1962 not just because it had swank fashion or we love the look of a martini glass in

our hands (although it did ... and we do!), but because it was a year of wondrous aspiration, hope, and belief in what was yet to come.

It was the year that President Kennedy challenged a nation to aim for the heavens. In a speech at Rice University he said: "We meet in an hour of change and challenge. This country was not built by those who waited and rested and wished to look behind them. This country was conquered by those who moved forward." That sentiment, though 50 years old, still inspires us today. And it surely inspired six young artists in 1997 to start TimeLine.

Once again TimeLine's family and friends came out to show their support – and what a gorgeous group of

supporters they are! Guests came decked out in vintage threads, and between drinks of the era such as a Tom Collins or an Old Fashioned, shopped a silent auction offering one-of-a-kind experiences, artwork by local artists, sports memorabilia, pampering packages and more. Later, after a delicious gourmet dinner, guests bid on more fabulous prizes at the live auction, including a dinner party in your home cooked by *Top Chef* contestant Chuy Valencia, and a White Sox Skybox.

The highlight of the evening was undoubtedly the entertainment directed by Associate Artistic Director Nick Bowling, featuring live music and video highlighting memorable songs, people and events of 1962. And what gala is



complete without a flash mob? Shock and delight swept the room as spouses, co-workers, relatives and friends got up to do *The Twist*, *Mashed Potato*, *Watusi* and more!

Thank you to everyone who supported *Step Into Time: 1962*! We look forward to seeing you next year on Friday, March 15, 2013 for the next *Step Into Time*.

For photos, videos and more, visit [timelinetheatre.com/step\\_into\\_time\\_2012/recap.htm](http://timelinetheatre.com/step_into_time_2012/recap.htm).



Clockwise from above: The 2012 Step Into Time Committee Rob Waters, Dyana Flanigan, Michelle Cucchiaro, Wendy Spatz, Jennifer Moeller, Jill Hurwitz, Diane Jacobson, Nicole Thomas and Robert Alpaugh; Rae Gray jumps up for the flash mob; supporters John Sirek and Colleen Loughlin with TimeLine Company Member Juliet Hart and Mark Onuscheck; entertainers Nicholas Davio and Jordan Brown; Artistic Director PJ Powers with supporter Jill Lowe; and nearly 300 guests fill the historic Grand Ballroom at the Hotel InterContinental.



## BACKSTORY: THE CREDITS

*Dramaturgy @ Historical Research by Maren Robinson*

*Written by Maren Robinson, PJ Powers, Lydia Swift and Lara Goetsch*

*Edited by Karen A. Callaway and Lara Goetsch*

*Photography by Lara Goetsch*

*Graphic Design by Lara Goetsch*

*My Kind of Town Photo Illustration by Ryan Robinson*

*Backstory is published four times each season.*

*Pictured on front cover (from left): Director Nick Bowling and actor Charles Gardner; actor Ora Jones; playwright John Conroy; actors Carolyn Hoerdemann, David Parkes and Danica Monroe; and actor Trinity P. Murdock.*

*Pictured on back cover (from left): World premiere script of My Kind of Town; actor A.C. Smith; set model by scenic designer Brian Sidney Bembridge; actor Maggie Kettering; and sound designer/composer Mikhail Fiksel.*

### Our Mission:

TimeLine Theatre presents stories **inspired by history** that connect with today's social and political issues.

Our collaborative artistic team produces provocative theatre and educational programs that engage, entertain and enlighten.





# the production



May 1 - July 29, 2012

by **JOHN CONROY**  
directed by **NICK BOWLING**

## WORLD PREMIERE

*My Kind of Town* puts a human face on the police torture scandal that has plagued Chicago for more than three decades. Veteran investigative journalist John Conroy covered the story, challenging public indifference to become one of the leading voices drawing attention to the charges. *My Kind of Town* is his passionate, groundbreaking new drama revolving around one imprisoned man's fight for justice, inspired by the stories of numerous victims, police officers, prosecutors and families whose lives have been

poisoned by the allegations. With interlocking storylines that humanize the play's issues of corruption and responsibility, *My Kind of Town* sets the stage for a new conversation about today's culture of law and order.

## Cast

Ora Jones\*\*  
A.C. Smith\*\*  
Charles Gardner  
Derek Garza  
Carolyn Hoerdemann  
Maggie Kettering  
Mildred Marie Langford  
Danica Monroe  
Trinity P. Murdock  
David Parkes

## Production Team

Ben Thiem: *Associate Director*  
Brian Sidney Bembridge, U.S.A.:  
*Scenic Designer*  
Alex Wren Meadows:  
*Costume Designer*  
Nic Jones: *Lighting Designer*  
Mikhail Fiksel, U.S.A.:  
*Sound Designer/Original Music*  
D.J. Reed: *Properties Designer*  
Mike Tutaj: *Projections Designer*  
Dina Spoerl: *Lobby Designer*  
Maren Robinson: *Dramaturg*  
Ana Espinosa\*\*: *Stage Manager*  
John Kearns: *Production Manager*

\*\*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.

Those designers and scenic artists identified by U.S.A. are members of United Scenic Artists, IATSE Local 829, AFL-CIO

## MAY 2012

SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## JUNE 2012

SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

## JULY 2012

SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29						

## LOCATION

TimeLine Theatre  
615 W. Wellington Avenue, Chicago  
Directions, parking and dining  
information at [timelinetheatre.com](http://timelinetheatre.com)

## SPONSOR

*My Kind of Town* is supported in part  
by The Pauls Foundation.

- Regular Performance
- Preview Performance
- Opening Night **Sold Out**
- Post-Show Discussion with cast  
& production crew **Free**
- Sunday Scholars a one-hour  
post-show panel discussion with  
experts on the themes and issues  
of the play **Free**
- Company Member Discussion  
a conversation with TimeLine's  
Company members **Free**

## SHOW TIMES

PREVIEWS 8 PM (Except 2 pm & 7 pm  
on 5/6 and 7:30 pm on 5/10)  
OPENING NIGHT 7:30 PM  
WEDNESDAYS & THURSDAYS 7:30 PM  
FRIDAYS 8 PM  
SATURDAYS 4 PM & 8 PM  
SUNDAYS 2 PM