

THE RODERICK MACARTHUR JUSTICE CENTER

Advocating for Human Rights and Social Justice through Litigation

Based at Northwestern University School of Law's Bluhm Legal Clinic, the Roderick MacArthur Justice Center is one of the premier civil rights law firms in the United States. The MacArthur Justice Center has led battles against myriad civil rights injustices, including police misconduct (leading the charge to appoint a special prosecutor in the Jon Burge torture cases in Chicago), executions (helping to abolish the Illinois death penalty), fighting for the rights of the indigent in the criminal justice system, and winning multi-million dollar verdicts and settlements for the wrongfully convicted. The Justice Center has also been a leader in the challenges to the detention of terrorism suspects without trial or access to the courts, and Justice Center counsel have appeared before the U.S. Supreme Court to argue for the rights of detainees. Led by Legal Director Locke Bowman, the public interest law firm was founded in 1985 by J. Roderick MacArthur. Following are sample areas of our work.

ADDRESSING POLICE MISCONDUCT THROUGH SYSTEMIC LITIGATION

The Roderick MacArthur Justice Center has been at the forefront of the nationally publicized cases of torture by former Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge and his men. Under the leadership of Center Director Locke Bowman, the Justice Center has tirelessly represented men who confessed to crimes after being tortured by Burge and other officers at the infamous Area 2 Chicago Police headquarters, led the charge to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate the cases, and continues to fight for justice for the still-imprisoned Burge victims. Years of vigorous work by Justice Center attorneys and others resulted in federal charges that culminated in Burge's conviction for perjury and obstruction of justice.

Chicago Tribune

FEBRUARY 2012

**State High Court Reaffirms
Bans on Confessions Obtained
Through Torture**

Chicago Tribune

JUNE 2004

**Justices Rule That Detainees
Get Day In Court**

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS OF GUANTANAMO BAY DETAINEES AND U.S. CITIZENS DETAINED ABROAD

The Justice Center is a critical player in one of the most significant civil liberties struggles in our nation's history—the right of non-enemy combatants not to be detained without access to the courts and due process of law. Justice Center attorney Joe Margulies has made repeated trips to the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing for this principle on behalf of persons detained at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and abroad as part of the federal government's "War on Terror."



MARCH 2011

Illinois Abolishes the Death Penalty

HELPING TO ABOLISH ILLINOIS' DEATH PENALTY

In March 2011, Illinois abolished the death penalty. This monumental advance occurred only after years of hard work, inside and outside of the courtroom, by a coalition of community leaders, grass roots advocates and lawyers, including the lawyers at the Roderick MacArthur Justice Center. Justice Center lawyers were among the first to lay out the case for declaring the Illinois death penalty system broken and played a key role in one of the most extraordinary collaborations in the Illinois civil rights community—the effort to impose a moratorium on the execution of capital sentences and, following Governor George Ryan’s January 2000 moratorium, achieving mass clemency for all Illinois death row inmates.

COMPENSATING THE WRONGFULLY CONVICTED

Justice Center attorneys have achieved an eight figure verdict and multiple seven figure settlements and verdicts in multiple civil rights cases brought on behalf of those wrongfully convicted and incarcerated for crimes they did not commit. In one of these cases, the client, a mentally disabled man, was coerced into confessing to the murder of his mother and served 17 months in Cook County Jail. The settlements help to restore dignity to these victims of police brutality or official corruption, and the Center continues to aggressively prosecute these cases throughout the Midwest.



MARCH 2012

City of Chicago to Pay Man \$3.6 Million for Wrongful Conviction

FIGHTING FOR THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF THE INDIGENT

Indigent, criminally accused persons typically are represented by public defenders burdened with crushing caseloads and lack essential resources for investigation and expert assistance. The Roderick MacArthur Justice Center is committed to pursuing litigation to address this injustice. In December 2008, in the face of a Justice Center class-action lawsuit, the Chief Judge of the Cook County Circuit Court ended the county’s controversial decade-long system of televised bond hearings, an arbitrary, assembly-line process that resulted in 30-second hearings and a 65 percent increase in average bail amount. The lawsuit asserted that the old practice violated arrestees’ constitutional due process rights.



DECEMBER 2008

Video Bond Court to End

MENTORING STUDENTS

Northwestern School law students who participate in the MacArthur Justice Center gain real practice experience working on high-profile cases that seek to improve the criminal justice system. For many, working with prominent civil rights advocates is an unparalleled experience. “When lawyers like Joe Margulies and Locke Bowman take time out of their day to teach you the fundamentals of what they do, it is a wonderful experience,” says former student David Maas.