

CRACKS AT

# HOTEL CALIFORNIA

EXPOSING THE REALITIES OF COOK COUNTY JAIL

## Issue #1

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**A modified interview with Vicki Willis (Alteriq Pleasant Foundation) mother of Alteriq Pleasant, who died in Chicago Police custody at Cook County Jail.**

The last time I spoke with my son was July 19, 2022, and he called to tell me he got arrested. Somebody was trying to hurt him and he called the police. He was on State & Van Buren where he would normally hang out at. The last time I saw him was July 18th and it has been a living nightmare ever since.

I didn't even know he was dead until Mount Sinai hospital declared him dead, they didn't even reach out to me. They, being the investigator (I found out later that that was one of the same officers who was actually on the scene of the Laquan McDonald murder), called Alteriq's father who's been residing in Florida since I was 5 months pregnant. And of course he didn't have my phone number so he reached out on Facebook.

I drove to Mt. Sinai Hospital in the early hours of August 3rd. At 3AM he was declared dead. I didn't even know he was in the hospital at Mt. Sinai.

My mother and I had been calling up to Cook County Jail and they never bothered to tell us that Alteriq could have had some kind of medical emergency on July 21st. Cook County Jail lied and said that they did not have my contact information. I have Al's personal possessions and my phone number, and the number of the lady whose apartment he was staying in was in his personal possessions. Anyone who knew Alteriq knew that I was his mother, what my social media was, what my phone number was, that he was asthmatic, that he was a father, and that he was special needs. He would tell you that. So for them to tell me that they didn't have my contact information I knew was false.

Something happened to my son while he was with the Chicago Police officers from July 19 at about 1pm is when they arrested him, that's what they say, because he was not brought to Cook County until the next day with burns on parts of his body. The coroner never addressed or explained to me why he had burns. I reached out to congress people right? Robin Kelly: "I can't do anything because I work at the federal level, this is state and city level." I reached out to Danny Davis: "I can't do anything Ms. Willis because I work at the federal level, and this is at the state level."

I filed my complaint against the police officers with COPA (Civilian Office of police Accountability) who never responded to me until I went down there. One white guy said, "What do you want". I said, "I want to know what happened to my son while he was with the Chicago Police?". He said to me, "Well he died in the jail so we sent Illinois State Police to investigate." So we got police investigating police. Yeah, that makes sense. I have been calling and complaining on Toni Preckwinckle, she doesn't do anything.

I found out that there's been close to 370 plus individuals who have lost their lives under mysterious situations or circumstances in Cook County Jail in the time my son was born and went home to God, or in the last 27 years, from 1995 to 2022. After Al crossed over, there are several more deaths inside Cook County Jail. Around that time I was calling every office and telling them, "My son's blood is on your hands," because people get paid. I pay taxes right? And in the city of Chicago, we pay some of the highest taxes in the country. But yet, you can't get any information from anybody from anybody. The only reason I have anything that I have for Al is because there were some investigative reporters who decided to listen to me.

**Continued on the back**

I called lots of organizations, grassroots organizations, for help with assistance. People really don't want to mess with the jail because they don't get the video footage. It took the Illinois State Police 16 months to even look at the footage and they said, "Well, we have 170 some hours to look at." I said, "I'm not asking you for 170 some hours. I'm asking you for the 36 hours of what happened to Alteriq."

See, people think if you get arrested, you're scum and your family is scum. My son was there for a failure to appear in court and he didn't make it into day two. He came there (Cook County Jail) with blood on his clothes and nobody there stopped to ask what happened or give him medical treatment. My son had burns on him when I saw him. They were already two weeks old. Nobody stopped to look at that.

My thing is people inside of jails and prisons, they don't receive any kind of real, true medical treatment or care. And while my son was there, Cook County Jail, the people who work inside that building, and Thomas Dart, because he's the sheriff, he's the head person in charge, they don't take care of their inmates, the detainees, however they want to frame it to make it sound nice. There are rats and roaches in there. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) needs to go through there.

I really have been outside protesting, trying to bring attention to things that happen to people inside of the jail. The only reason Cook County jail even responded to me is because I was saying you all murdered my son and burned him while he was in there. They told me initially that Al had a heart attack. He's 27 years old. How do you have a heart attack? Then they said, "Oh we're sorry. He died of a drug overdose." But no drugs were ever tested in his system. For four hours, he's laying still. Come to find out there is a guard 5 to 10 feet away from him. My son was in the \$100 million mental health division. It was not overpopulated. He walked up to a guard and said something, and me knowing Al all my life, he would have said "I don't feel well". So my son needed medical treatment while he was there. Thomas Dart runs that jail, and Toni Preckwinkle helps him run that jail.

You can go to jail for parking tickets. That doesn't mean you're a terrible person. My son never murdered anybody, he struggled. But he knew that I loved him in his life. I'm not ashamed of my boy.

This is a human rights violation. What happened to my son? We have a right to life. We have a right to be treated fairly and equitably. My son didn't get that. It's not just about my kid, it's about everybody that my son represents. I want justice for Al. I want justice for everyone like Al, because we all could be Al.

I believe all families should speak up for their loved ones. Do not be discouraged. Do not be frightened. Do not be bullied into silence, because we all could be a victim, every single last one of us, regardless of your social class, your ethnicity, or your religious background. That's why I'm apart of this movement because I represent not just Alteriq Pleasant but 370 other souls who no longer have a voice. And if we don't speak up and save each other, who's going to save us?

**Find the full interview at**  
**[daretostruggle.org](http://daretostruggle.org)**

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Cracks At Hotel California is a newsletter that exposes the daily reality of torture, murder, and mistreatment inside of the Cook County jail. We believe that the people who can best tell the truth about what's happening are the people on the inside and their loved ones on the outside. This newsletter is produced by Dare to Struggle, an organization committed to standing with the people subjected to the horrors of the American nightmare. Send us your story...

