

CITY OF CHICAGO AGREES TO PAY \$6.2 MILLION IN CLASS ACTION FOR PROTESTORS ARRESTED AT 2003 ANTI-WAR PROTEST

A settlement has been reached in the class action law suit *Vodak v. City of Chicago*, brought against the Chicago Police Department on behalf of over 700 protestors who were falsely arrested during a demonstration against the Iraq war on March 20, 2003. On that date, over 10,000 protestors demonstrated in Chicago against the U.S. invasion of Iraq, marching through downtown streets and up Lake Shore Drive before Chicago Police surrounded, detained and arrested over 700 people.

Last year an important victory was achieved in the case when the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals issued an opinion which strongly criticized the City of Chicago for its treatment of the demonstrators and reinstated the case after it had been dismissed by the District Court. This opinion, which holds that the City cannot arrest peaceful demonstrators without warning, merely because they do not have a permit, will apply to all future demonstrations.

Now, on the eve of trial, the City has finally agreed to settle this case, agreeing to provide a total of \$6.2 Million to compensate the more than 700 class members. The class is made up of three different sub-classes and the potential compensation each class member receives will depend on which sub-class they are in.

- A-3 sub-class: those who were arrested, charged and had to go to court, will receive up to \$15,000
- A-2 sub-class: those arrested and released without being charged, will receive up to \$8,750
- A-1 sub-class: those who were held on the street for over 90 minutes, will receive up to \$500

In addition, there will be additional payments to persons who are named in the lawsuit as the class representatives and class members who were required to give depositions in the case.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs will also be negotiating with the City and petitioning the court to separately pay their legal fees and the costs of the case. This payment will be in addition to the \$6.2 million paid to their clients.

There were also instances of police brutality that night and lawyers working on the case have previously settled a number of excessive force cases totaling over \$300,000 in compensation for those who had handcuff injuries, broken bones and wounds requiring stitches.

This case is important not only to the class members and their attorneys, but also for civil liberties, as it scores a significant victory for the right to demonstrate in Chicago.

This substantial settlement will send an unequivocal message to the City of Chicago and its police department that they must respect the right to free speech and assembly. The class action lawsuit has been litigated by a legal team of attorneys and legal workers who are all members of the National Lawyers Guild. People's Law Office attorneys Janine Hoft, Joey Mogul, Sarah Gelsomino and John Stainthorp, along with attorneys Melinda Power and Jim Fennerty, as well as paralegal Brad Thomson of People's Law Office, have litigated the case for almost nine years.

For more information or updates on the settlement, visit peopleslawoffice.com or follow People's Law Office on [facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).