

September 23, 2005

The Honourable Irwin Cotler
Minister of Justice and
Attorney General of Canada
House of Commons
284 Wellington Street
OTTAWA, Ontario
K1A 0H8

Dear Minister Cotler:

Re: Mr. Gary Freeman – Extradition

On behalf of CUPE's 535,000 members across this country, I am writing to you with great concern regarding Mr. Gary Freeman, a member of our Union and a Toronto Public Library employee for the last fifteen years. Currently, he is in a jail fighting an extradition request by the United States based on an incident that took place in Chicago in 1969.

I am requesting that you review his case as we believe that there are compelling humanitarian and social justice grounds for you to deny his extradition to the United States.

Just over a year ago, Mr. Freeman was arrested outside the Toronto Reference Library while leaving work. Newspaper headlines claimed he was Joseph Pannell, a former member of the Black Panther Party in Chicago, who had fled to Canada to avoid standing trial for what police described as an unprovoked shooting incident with a white police officer, Mr. Terrance Knox, which occurred in Chicago in 1969. Mr. Knox was shot in the arm and is the only living police witness for the prosecution and is pushing hard for Mr. Freeman to be sent south to face a trial.

It has since been revealed that the shooting incident was sparked by a routine police procedure (now called racial profiling) where mainly white police officers were stopping all school-age black males to ask why they were not in school. This incident occurred at the height of a period of intense racial unrest in Chicago and other American cities, that culminated in the police shootings of many African-Americans involved in the fight for equal rights and an end to racial discrimination. Many young black males feared for their lives in encounters with police at that time, including young men like Joseph Pannell who were not members of the Black Panther Party.

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Gary Freeman is the former Joseph Pannell. Although he was not a member of the Black Panther Party, he has always sympathized with the struggle for social justice and for an end to racial discrimination. He came to Canada to start a new life because he did not believe he could ever have had a fair trial in 1969 Chicago.

Mr. Freeman has now been in jail for over a year waiting for a court ruling on a request for extradition to the United States. During that time, many questions have arisen regarding the motives for the re-opening of this case, and the lack of evidence and witnesses necessary to enact a fair trial over 35 years later.

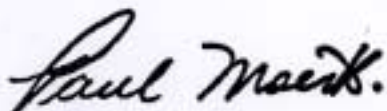
Mr. Freeman has lived in Canada for over thirty years as a model citizen, is married to a Canadian with whom he has raised four successful children. He has, since his arrest, received overwhelming support from his family and his co-workers and from fellow union members who have packed the courtroom every time Gary has appeared in court in Toronto. Several articles in the *Toronto Star* have shown Gary to be a person with a strong attachment to work and family, and a strong sense of community involvement through his role in mentoring young people.

CUPE has been a strong advocate for social justice for all and putting an end to all forms of discrimination as well as taking a stand against racial profiling.

We believe that Mr. Freeman has earned the right to remain in Canada rather than return to Chicago to stand trial for an incident that occurred during a very volatile and ugly period of racial violence in that city. This view was shared by the former Attorney General of the United States, Ramsay Clark, "In the interest of peace and justice, Canada should deny this request for extradition and look to the future to pursue truth and justice" said Mr. Clark (*Toronto Star*, Aug 3, 2005).

We thank you for your attention to this matter and sincerely hope that you will act with conscience in reviewing this case and deny the request for his extradition to the United States.

Yours sincerely,



PAUL MOIST
National President

:cmi/cope 491

c.c.: B. Cochrane, President, CUPE Local 416