

July 27, 2009

Congressman Rush and other members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today regarding the ongoing crisis at Burr Oak cemetery. My name is Dwight Robinson, I like thousands of others who have love ones buried at Burr Oak, were in shock to hear that hundreds and possibly thousands of graves had been desecrated.

Both of my parents are buried at Burr Oak, my father Leonard Robinson, in 1983 and my mother Vivian Robinson, in 1989. At the time of their burials, it was my belief and that of my sisters that my parents would rest in peace. Unfortunately this tragedy has caused both of us to have to relive the death experience all over again. This incident has resurrected what should have been comforting memories, have now turned into disbelief, confusion, uncertainty and unnecessary anxiety. Although I was able to go to Burr Oak prior to the Cook County Sherriff and the FBI temporarily closing it, and although things look fine on the surface, there is still that element of doubt as to whether what looked fine on the outside is still okay on the inside of my parents graves. We may never know if the grave sites were disturbed. Even if you knew for certain that my parents graves were never touched and remain intact, there is one unsettling emotion; that there are other families that are re-grieving the past; that there are persons that show a callous disregard for the sanctity of the sacred ground where many are laid to rest.

There are so many questions that remain unanswered, not withstanding why anyone would do something like this to the families and loved ones of others. If nothing else, one would believe that something inside of those four (4) individuals would have been triggered. I have to believe that each of them has at least one family member buried somewhere, and that they would have never wanted something like this to happen to their loved ones. One question that remains with me is what will happens to my parents remains as well as those of others should Burr Oak be permanently closed.

Will we have to transfer our parents to another cemetery, if so how will that be handled, who would be responsible for payment. Until these and other questions are answered, none of us who remain will have full peace.

We all know that there needs to be better regulation of cemeteries. In fact most of us have known this for years. However, those that we have put in place to provide such regulations are too entrenched in allowing lobbyists to dictate policies for the public. This should be a painful lesson for everyone to acknowledge that the acts of violence and indifference to the deceased at Burr Oak were also an act of violence and indifference to those families that are still alive.

Thank you,