

14 may join police-custody suit

Ex-suspects claim cop mistreatment

By Michael Higgins

Tribune staff reporter

Fourteen people have filed sworn statements in federal court alleging that Chicago police mistreated them in interrogation sessions lasting two or more days, deprived them of adequate sleep and food and, in

some cases, turned down their requests to speak to a lawyer.

The former suspects hope to join a federal lawsuit filed in 2001 by Joseph Lopez, who alleges police held him for four days in an interview room and repeatedly questioned him about the fatal shooting of a 12-year-old boy on July 19, 2000. Lopez, then 18, was charged with first-degree murder July 24. But police released him a few days later, saying a different suspect had given a videotaped confes-

sion.

Lopez's lawyers filed the 14 sworn statements as part of their attempt to expand his suit into a class action, which could open up Chicago police interrogation practices to a rare level of public scrutiny. If a class action was approved, the plaintiffs' lawyers would attempt to prove to a judge or jury that improper police tactics went far beyond Lopez's case and would seek

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