

# OPINION

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## Oakland council right on gang injunctions

**F**OR MONTHS, those who oppose gang injunctions have been waging a shameful misinformation campaign.

They have claimed falsely that the proposed Oakland injunctions give police sweeping new powers to arrest black and Latino youth. The fact is the injunctions cover only adults. They have insisted that the Fruitvale injunction unfairly targets Latino and African-American men. Yet the reality is it only covers those persons whom a judge determines — based on evidence first presented in court by the police — to have gang ties.

In perhaps the most ludicrous charge of all, some injunction opponents accused City Council President Larry Reid, East Oakland, who is African-American, and Councilman Ignacio De la Fuente, Fruitvale, who is Mexican-American, of being racist because of their support for the injunctions.

### OUR OPINION

Most troubling, some of the more rabid opponents have sought to intimidate those who hold an opposing view. These tactics were unfortunately on display once again Tuesday when the City Council met to vote on whether to continue funding the injunctions.

Opponents hissed and booed when those in favor tried to speak. They disrupted remarks by Councilwoman Patricia Kernighan, Grand Lake-Chinatown, who attempted, then gave up, to read a letter from an injunction supporter who was afraid to speak because of this very mob-like behavior.

After heated public testimony that lasted past midnight, the council voted 4-3 to continue the injunctions. However, it required the city attorney to get council approval before pursuing any future injunctions and it further limited their scope.

Reid, De La Fuente, Libby Schaaf, Montclair-Laurel, and Kernighan voted yes. Rebecca Kaplan, at-large, Nancy Nadel, West Oakland, and Desley Brooks, Eastmont-Seminary, voted no. Jane Brunner, North Oakland, recused herself because she works for the law firm that launched the defense of alleged Fruitvale gang members.

We commend the courage of the four council members who did what they believed, and we believe, to be the right thing under intense pressure from an often-hostile crowd.

Lest we forget, the gang injunctions were first requested by Police Chief Anthony Batts. City Attorney John Russo, who has been unfairly demonized by injunction opponents, merely filed the lawsuit on the city's behalf.

Batts had found the injunctions to be effective in fighting gang crime when he was chief of police in Long

Beach, as have law enforcement officials in other cities.

Injunctions operate somewhat like a restraining order. Their aim is to curb actions of gang members — activities in areas where they are known to commit crimes.

There are legitimate concerns that police could abuse injunctions. It is imperative that they be monitored and their effectiveness evaluated.

Yet people should be reminded that there been 36 homicides in Oakland thus far this year — a frightening escalation compared to last year. Many of these killings have been gang related.

No one is suggesting that injunctions are going to solve the problem of gang violence. But they are a tool worth trying.

The injunctions have cleared one major hurdle. Now the ultimate fate of the Fruitvale injunction lies in the hands of an Alameda County Superior Court judge who will soon rule on its legality.