

Boycott: Mayor Bradley urged to intervene

■ Major organizations unite to resist scapegoating

By Richard Reyes Fruto
Korea Times

Korean community leaders have appealed for Mayor Tom Bradley to intervene in the boycott of a Korean store that started after police said its owner fatally shot a man robbing him.

"We will no longer remain silently idle while the Korean American community is being publicly and unjustly scapegoated for the social and economic injus-



Koreatown Task Force on Community Relations Spokeswoman **Marcia Choo**

ties of the African-American community," Korean leaders wrote Bradley.

The letter was signed by representatives of the Korean American Coalition, Korean chambers of commerce in Los Angeles and Long Beach, Koreatown Rotary Club, Council of Korean Churches, Koreatown Crime Task Force, Korean American Grocers Association and other trade groups.

A Bradley spokeswoman said the mayor understands the seriousness of the situation and has been meeting with black and Korean leaders ever since a black teen-ager was shot to death in a dispute with a Korean grocer in March.

"Regardless of what you don't see in the media, the mayor has been actively

concerned and working behind the scenes," spokeswoman Yoon Hee Kim said. "The mayor has been doing his utmost from the beginning."

According to her, Bradley has met with organizers of the boycott in an effort to end it.

The boycott of John's Liquor Store in south Los Angeles began June 17. According to police, Lee Arthur Mitchell, 42, was killed June 4 when he held up the store by saying he had a gun in his jacket.

Boycott organizers don't believe there was an attempted robbery, but the district attorney's office, upon reviewing the case,

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Tom Bradley, mayor of Los Angeles

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determined the shooting was justifiable and exonerated store owner Tae Sam Park.

The Koreatown Task Force on Community Relations, a new group created in response to the boycott, wrote the letter sent to Bradley and gathered the signatures for it.

Organizers are worried about rising tensions stemming from four shootings involving blacks and Koreans that have claimed five lives (two Koreans and three blacks) since March. Three shootings occurred during robberies, police said.

Task force spokeswoman Marcia Choo said she is even hearing reports of racial incidents between African Americans and other Asian Americans.

"Everyday that the boycott goes on, there's a great impact. We want this to end, the sooner the better," Choo said.

The letter marks the first time that Korean American leaders have applied any kind of pressure on city officials, Kim said.

"They haven't done the letter-writing campaign in vain. As a result of these letters, they have really moved City Hall," Choo said.

The letter asked Bradley to come out in public and call off the boycott by July 15. Bradley did not comply.

"He believes in taking a methodical process rather than putting it in public," Kim said.

Task force organizers acknowledge that Bradley needs some breathing space, and for now they are satisfied that he is trying mediation to end the boycott, Choo said.

According to Choo, City Council members Michael Woo, Mark Ridley-Thomas, Nate Holden and Rita Walters also have pledged to help.

"Their response has been that they are willing to work on this issue with us. They didn't say what, but overall they are willing to help," Choo said.

The districts of the one Asian American and three African American elected officials include portions of Koreatown and south Los Angeles. Some also have ties with the Korean community.

The letter also recommends hiring Korean-speaking and African-American personnel to "assist further development of current dialogues between the two communities" and sponsoring "a joint economic development project which can serve as a model for interethnic cooperation and support."