

Mayor condemns Korean store arson

By **Richard Reyes Fruto**
Korea Times

Mayor Tom Bradley last week condemned the arson fire that heavily damaged a Korean liquor store in South Central Los Angeles, calling it "criminal conduct that we simply will not tolerate in this city."

Bradley spoke at the scene of the Aug. 7 fire at 66th and Figueroa streets in South Central Los Angeles. Korean and black community leaders joined him after a meeting where they pledged to help resolve ethnic tensions.

But the mayor refused to denounce

the two-month boycott of another Korean liquor store. A Koreatown group has been pressing city officials through a letter-writing campaign to call an end to the boycott.

"I am not one who says that people's rights to demonstrate should be abrogated. I think they have a right to do that if that's the way they want to conduct themselves," Bradley said.

"I believe there are better ways for us to achieve their goals and ours. I'm going to appeal to them to join us in that effort," the mayor said.

Bradley called black and Korean

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community leaders for a summit a week after authorities said an alleged gang member set fire to Champion Liquor Deli in a simmering quarrel with its owner.

The fire caused \$35,000 in damage, and the store remained closed and boarded up during the mayor's news conference on Aug. 13.

Bradley said he convened the summit because events involving blacks and Koreans since the shooting of a teen-ager in a market in March have created an environment that could lead to more violence.

Individuals and organizations must work together to defuse conflicts, said Bradley, adding that he will lead the effort.

Bradley's statement on the boycott fell short of appeals made in letters to city officials that they intervene in the boycott. But Korean community leaders publicly expressed no disappointment.

"We do really applaud the mayor for taking this step. We think this went a long way," said Marcia Choo of the Koreatown Task Force on Community Relations, the group behind the letter-writing campaign.

Bradley's stance on the boycott so far stands in sharp contrast with the position that New York Mayor David Dinkins took in the 18-month boycott of two Korean produce markets in Brooklyn in 1989.

Under intense pressure Dinkins spoke out against the boycott because he said it was based on race and later made a symbolic purchase at one of the stores.

The boycott of John's Liquor Store began June 17 after police and the district attorney's office said its owner shot a man who tried to rob the store.

Black activists launched the boycott because they believe no attempted robbery took place and the store owner shot the man in cold blood.

Koreatown community leaders have collected \$27,210 in donations to help the store owners of John's Liquor Store. The Korean American Race Relations Emergency Fund is raising \$6,000 a month for them.