

THE ECHO PARK GANG INJUNCTION

What is a gang injunction?

A gang injunction is a civil court order against an alleged gang and/or its members. It builds on the legal precedent of a “nuisance abatement” that courts use to close businesses or condemn buildings, claiming that the activities of alleged gang constitute neighborhood nuisance or blight. It also operates similar to a restraining order taken out against a group as opposed to an individual.

If subject to an injunction, alleged gang members and gang associates are not allowed to engage in behavior that is otherwise legal, including congregating in groups of two or more and standing in public for more than five minutes.

Any violation of the gang injunction constitutes a violation of a court order punishable by up to six months in jail (or in a juvenile facility if the person is under 18.)



Can a gang injunction be challenged?

In Los Angeles City, gang injunctions are written by the City Attorney’s Office with information gathered from police officers, and approved by a Civil Court judge. The judge first grants a *temporary or preliminary* injunction. If there is no successful challenge of the injunction in court, a permanent order goes into effect – usually about a month later. Because it is a civil court order, people have no right to free legal defense, so most injunctions are not challenged, because people don’t have money for an attorney, or don’t even understand that they have a right to challenge the injunction in court.

The hearing for the Echo Park Preliminary Injunction is on August 21, at 8:30am - 111 N. Hill Street between Temple and First Streets in downtown Los Angeles. The community and the people targeted by the injunction have an opportunity to fight it if they either feel the injunction is not needed, or is a violation of individuals’ civil and human rights.

Youth Justice Coalition @ Chuco’s Justice Center: 1137 E. Redondo Blvd., on the border between South Central L.A. and Inglewood, 90302

☎ PO Box 73688, L.A., CA 90003. ☎ 323-235-4243 / 📧 freelanow@yahoo.com / <http://www.youth4justice.org>

How do you know if you are subject to the injunction?

The first injunctions *listed by name* the people who were subject to the injunction – what is referred to in legal language as being “enjoined.” Later, injunctions added spots for “John Does” so additional people could be added easily limiting their opportunities to challenge. Now, some injunctions are being written as “gang only” injunctions, claiming that the whole group is served just by naming the alleged gang. The YJC believes this to be a violation of both the state and U.S. Constitution, and we fought for everyone to be served in Inglewood where they tried to put a gang-only injunction. Unless each injunction is similarly challenged, a person does not have to be individually served to be subject to most injunctions.

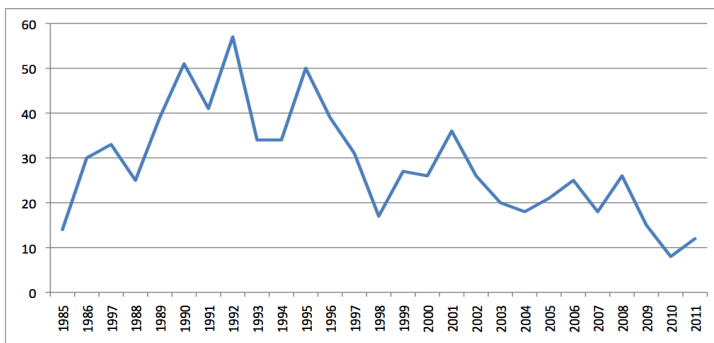
Does Echo Park need an injunction?

Law enforcement and elected officials claim that injunctions are put in place to address violence. Given that, gang injunctions should prioritize those communities with the highest rates of violent crime, including homicide. So, let's look at the facts:

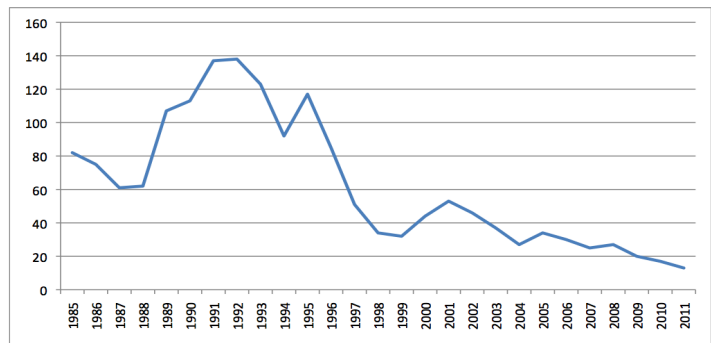
1. Echo Park is experiencing the lowest homicide rates in thirty years.

Echo Park is served by the Northeast and Rampart divisions. The homicide rates for these two divisions are reporting record lows:

LAPD Northeast Division Homicides by Year



LAPD Rampart Division Homicides by Year



2. Evidence suggests that injunctions destabilize communities and displace people, actually expanding the economic stress and isolation that increase violence.

The Youth Justice Coalition’s primary goal is to stop violence and save lives. But, for several reasons, we have found that gang injunctions do not reduce violence. In fact, by further criminalizing and isolating people, injunctions make the conditions that fuel violence worse, not better.

Our research on gang injunctions has uncovered the following:

- Gang injunctions do not address the root causes or long-term effects of street violence.
- Gang injunctions keep people from accessing the very resources, like jobs, housing and schools, that will better their lives, reduce recidivism, and decrease gang involvement. Thus, injunctions further marginalize people and may push them further into the underground economy to survive.
- Restricted movement makes it difficult for people to carry out necessary, daily tasks such as going to the grocery store or to a childcare center. People often report that injunctions feel like a form of house arrest.
- The label of “gang member” is often applied with little to no court oversight, based solely on the observations of law enforcement. People are often added to local or the statewide CalGang database with no opportunity to appeal, and databases are often used to build a case for who should be placed on an injunction. The gang label sticks for a lifetime, making it difficult to pass background checks for jobs, housing and other opportunities, and increasing the discrimination and challenges that a person faces .
- Gang injunctions tear families, friends, and communities apart. They ruin social networks that are financially and emotionally important. If someone lives with, hangs out with, talks to, or is in the same area with another person who is on an injunction, they are likely to be added to the injunction by association. If two or more people on an injunction are outside together, they can be arrested and jailed for violating the association order of the injunction – even if those people are family members who live in the same home.
- Gang injunctions make people afraid of the police and less likely to report crimes and look to officers for help.
- YJC’s preliminary research on police violence indicates that law enforcement’s shooting and killing of civilians – the majority of who are unarmed – is *higher* in injunction areas than in neighboring communities with the same racial demographics and levels of crime.
- There have been no studies that indicate that a neighborhood changed for the better after a gang injunction was implemented. And in our preliminary research, the Youth Justice Coalition has determined that injunctions displace drug trafficking and other crime from the injunction safety zone to areas outside the safety zone – thus expanding crime and violence.

3. Injunctions are very effective tools for gentrification and displacement of entire communities of poor and working class people – particularly people of color.

For over 30 years, since they were first implemented by law enforcement on the eastern edge of L.A. County in the communities of Pomona and West Covina (that were at the time majority white communities that included extreme contrasts of poverty and wealth), gang injunctions have been used *not* when communities were suffering the highest levels of violence, but when communities were either being gentrified, experiencing increasing property values, and/or were bordered by majority white and economically wealthier communities. The development of entertainment centers, business districts, and luxury housing have often corresponded to the use of gang injunctions. Urban renewal, redevelopment, revitalization, rejuvenation, and rehabilitation are often used to push poor and working class people –

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overwhelmingly people of color – out. (Research independent from the Youth Justice Coalition has also determined this analysis to be accurate - Barajas 2007; Alonzo 1999.)

The first L.A. City gang injunction implemented in 1987 targeted the Playboy Gangster Crips – the small neighborhood next to white and wealthy Culver City and Beverly Hills – while South Central and East L.A. were both experiencing the nation’s highest homicide rates. Northwest Pasadena implemented injunctions against Denver Lanes (Bloods) and Villa Boys when that community began to experience gentrification by white professionals into long-time communities of color. When the Staples Center was built (the new home for the L.A. Lakers, Clippers and Kings) along with the new L.A. Convention Center, the 18th Street injunction was suddenly put in place in the Pico Union community despite decades of much higher rates of violence and crime that preceded it. When public housing was dismantled in Wilmington through federal so-called Hope VI’s redevelopment program, Wilmington also got its first gang injunction. When the University of Southern California began to rapidly expand student and staff housing around their campus in the mid 2000s, (as part of their 100 year redevelopment, expansion and gentrification plan for South Central L.A.), the Exposition Metro line was built and the Rollin’ 40’s Crips got their gang injunction – again despite the fact that the Rollin’ 40s neighborhoods suffered extremely high rates of homicide and other violence in the 1980s and 90s.

In the past twenty years, Echo Park has undergone significant racial change as young, predominantly white and more affluent people have displaced large numbers of working-class Latino families from the area (see chart below). Echo Park’s white population has increase by as much as 17% since 1990. In comparison, Los Angeles County’s white non-Latino population has dropped from 40.83% in 1990 to 27.79% in 2010. And, not surprisingly, along with the increase in the white population has come hundreds of millions of dollars in redevelopment including a multi-million dollar refurbishing of the Echo Park (the park for which the community is known).

Echo Park Census Tracts in 90026 Area Code

Census Tract	% White (Non-Latino) 1990 ⁱ	% White (Non-Latino) 2007-2011 ⁱⁱ	% Change in White Population
CT # 1955	31.9	49.2	+17.3
CT # 1956	13.6	22.7	+9.1
CT # 1975	12.1	22.4	+10.3
CT # 1973	16.1	27.4	+11.3

Injunctions as a tool for increasing public safety? Not proven. Injunctions as a leading cause of family destabilization, and the displacement of poor and working class people of color from their homes and communities? Undeniable.

ⁱ 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Public Law 94-171 Data (official), Age by Race and Hispanic Origin, Los Angeles County California

ⁱⁱ ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, Los Angeles County, California