

CHER

Dear Councilmembers:

I write to urge you to approve the proposed ban on the use of bullhooks in Los Angeles in item 26 on your agenda Wednesday, October 23rd.

The arguments for implementing a ban are powerful. There is considerable evidence that elephants cannot be trained to perform without being abused in a number of ways from a very young age. And bullhooks are used (and have been used for centuries) to instill fear in the elephants through striking and gouging. The disingenuous denials of circus officials and trainers notwithstanding, we have seen the photos and videos, and read the reports of reliable veterinarians. We know the story and it shouldn't be re-run in Los Angeles any longer. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums agrees, the San Diego Zoo agrees and, importantly, your own Los Angeles Zoo agrees that bullhooks should be, and are, a thing of the dark past.

Circus officials are wrong when they tell you that they can't function without bullhooks. Many circuses do so by excluding elephants from their shows. What they can't do without bullhooks is abuse elephants, whose performances make up only about 5% of a typical Ringling Brothers show.

And when they say that L.A. audiences will be deprived if this ban is enacted, we know that's not true. For the short-term, we know that a circus such as Ringling Brothers can go to the Forum in Inglewood, at least until we convince that city to follow your good example. Thus, this action will not deprive local circus-goers, cost the City any significant revenue (or should we say "blood money"?) or cost any local worker who depends on the circus a job.

What your "yes" vote will do is put Los Angeles on the right side of history and firmly in the forefront of the great cities of the world who have made the moral and ethical choice to protect elephants from abuse. Please vote "yes" today to ban bullhooks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Cher', written over a large, faint circular outline. The signature is stylized and cursive.