



April 21, 2021
Public Comment Regarding Agenda Item 17

South Pasadena is poised to prohibit signs posted, without permit, in or above public right of ways, ostensibly because “[s]ome confusion regarding political campaign and protest signs posted in the public right of way arose during the previous election cycle.” This is a transparent capitulation to a minority of residents and businesses who complained about Black Lives Matter South Pasadena’s peaceful demonstrations at Fair Oaks and Mission from June through November 2020, as well as those who complained about similar signs placed by people close to their homes. We oppose the ordinance proposed by the City Manager.

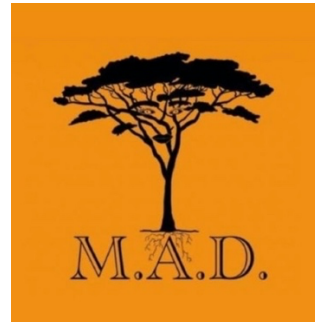
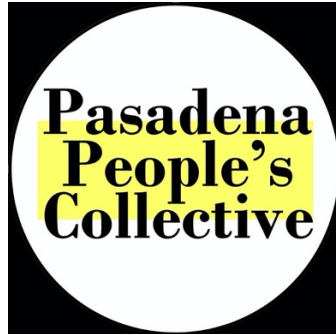
The Black Lives Matter demonstration in South Pasadena prominently displayed signs on and above sidewalks to rally support behind the movement for Black lives. The demonstration was conscientious about leaving space for accessible passage by pedestrians, families pushing strollers, and people using wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Black Lives Matter South Pasadena took great care to make sure the signs were securely in place, and did not pose a hazard for passersby. The signs were a visible reminder, to commuters passing through and community members alike, that there is much work to be done to advance racial justice.

The ordinance the City Manager now casually and quietly proposes would prevent such future peaceful demonstrations—without any explanation about why the prohibition is necessary. The scope is vague, and consequently, vulnerable to selective, unconstitutional enforcement. What “mediums of communication” are prohibited? Are real estate sidewalk signs permitted? What about students’ Independence Day art projects, and signs about missing persons, garage sales, and lost pets posted to utility poles? What does the city make of private holiday lights strung on public trees? Which spaces qualify as public right-of-ways? Are parking strips, parkways, and medians public right-of-ways?

South Pasadena may be subject to legal challenge if the ordinance is only enforced against “political” signs that happen to offend a handful of noisy community members. We are troubled by what appears to an effort to suppress speech with no rational or compelling basis. We urge you to reject the proposed ordinance prohibiting signs posted to public right-of-ways.

Signed,





Katherine Washington, Hope Collective

My Ancestors Dream

Kelly Valenzuela, Voices of Long Beach
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