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"On Tuesday, the ACLU of Southern California informed the defense team that this is the first successful defense in a gang injunction case — not only in California, but anywhere in the country."

In a ground breaking decision, The Honorable Judge Colleen Sterne denied the request for a gang injunction here in Santa Barbara. Judge Sterne declared that too much of the evidence provided by the District Attorney and Santa Barbara Police Department was hearsay/speculation and that the city's failure to provide unbiased expert witnesses lead her to deny the injunction.

We at PODER applaud the Judge's decision to uphold the constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties of Latinos despite the best efforts of a few city officials to abrogate them. Judge Sterne is to be commended for her fair and principled ruling against the gang injunction that was based on facts not hearsay or speculation. This critical decision impacts the lives of not only the defendants on the list but all of our communities. We the people of Santa Barbara, sent the message that protected liberties and all manner of participation in civic life is worth fighting for.

This victory was possible by the committed work of 12 pro-bono attorneys including Steve Dunkle, Tara Halland-Ford, Michael Hanley, Bill Makler, Neil Levinson, James Crowder, Juan Huerta, Olivia Rodriguez, Gary Wayne, Luis Esparza, Alan Karow, and Joe Allen who worked tirelessly on the case for over 3 years. The Defense were not just representing their clients but arguing against policies and practices that would have harmed the community. A special thank-you to Dr. Edwina Barvosa who served as a key expert witness during the trial. We express our sincere gratitude to Santa Barbara City Councilwoman Cathy Murillo and Councilman Gregg Hart for their willingness to listen, learn, and stand with the community. Although it was not safe nor popular, they chose to stand up for what was right. We thank Tom Parker and all the experts who shared their knowledge with the public. We acknowledge the investigative reporters at Mission and State who brought the truth and eventually lost their jobs for shedding light on the injustices.

We honor Babatunde Folayemi and Alberto Cazares for lighting the original spark that galvanized people against the injunction, both of these individuals passed away during our journey for truth and justice. Another special thank-you to Osiris Castaneda, Juan Pablo Herrera, Keith Terry, and Jacqueline Inda for getting the work started and securing the attorneys.

We would also like to thank the Fund for Santa Barbara for their generous grant of \$3,000 issued through their emergency fund to help us pay for the material costs of organizing.

And of course, our greatest thanks goes to our own community - all those who attended our forums and conferences, who organized, collaborated, and worked hard with us to defeat the injunction.

In the coming months ahead, we look forward to forming partnerships with like-minded organizations, departments, and city officials who will advocate for the resources and programs to provide pro-youth alternatives, increase public awareness on social justice issues, and create a space for community empowerment for our teen-agers.

A celebration is planned and everyone is invited – more details to come.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has”
~ Margaret Mead

PODER (People Organizing for the Defense and Equal Rights of Santa Barbara Youth) seeks to develop alliances within the community that can advocate for the provision of resources and programs to generate pro-youth alternatives, increase public awareness and action on social justice issues, and create a space for community empowerment