

EDITORIAL

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More at Stake Than a Name

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Today's vote on renaming Los Angeles' Crenshaw Boulevard for Tom Bradley is not a test of loyalty to the late mayor, as City Council members Nate Holden and Bernard C. Parks have tried to portray it. But it is a test of allegiance. Will the other council members base their decisions on what the people who live and work along the boulevard want or on the payback and favors they owe each other?

Holden's attempt to ram this through during his last week in office is in keeping with his well-known contrarian streak in more ways than one, as anyone who recalls his testy history with Bradley knows. But Holden, as of today, is City Council history. Council members typically follow the lead of the colleague who represents the district most affected, in this case Parks. And Parks supports Holden, who was one of three council members to fight against his dismissal as Los Angeles police chief last year.

In a brief and belated public hearing Wednesday, Parks chided opponents for worrying about the costs of the street name change and told them to go "read a book" to become informed about Bradley's legacy. In other words, his own constituents who are fighting the change — the people who voted overwhelmingly to put him in office in March — are now too clueless to recognize that he knows best. As the former chief should know by now, that's no way to win friends and influence people. Popular ideas can't always rule; sometimes politicians have to make tough and unpopular decisions for the greater good. But the reason shouldn't be to meet the agenda of one council member who is out the door today and another who owes him payback.

One opponent asked in frustration why — given the scourge of drugs and gangs in the district — was the council wasting time debating the wisdom of renaming a street? That's an excellent question. Here's another: What message does the City Council want to send to neighborhood councils throughout the city?

People who live and work along the boulevard complained Wednesday that the proposed change came not from neighborhood councils or town hall meetings but from Holden. The Crenshaw neighborhood councils opposed cutting the process short, saying it violated the spirit of the charter reforms that supposedly gave neighborhoods more of a voice at City Hall.

That makes this issue bigger than Crenshaw. A vote to support this last-minute name change wouldn't elevate the memory of Tom Bradley; it would only demonstrate an utter disregard for the Crenshaw neighborhood councils — and by extension, every neighborhood council in Los Angeles.