



CITY OF OAKLAND
newsrelease
Office of the City Attorney

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City of Oakland sues looters and vandals for trashing downtown during July 8 protest

OAKLAND, CA – On Thursday, October 28, the Oakland City Attorney's Office filed a [lawsuit](#) against four people arrested for crimes related to looting and vandalism in downtown Oakland following the conviction of former BART police officer Johannes Mehserle on July 8, 2010.

A protest in downtown Oakland following the conviction was mostly peaceful. However, some individuals used the gathering – and the tragic death of Oscar Grant – as an excuse to commit acts of violence, loot homegrown businesses, vandalize public property and lash out in childish and destructive ways.

“Oakland has a long tradition of non-violent protest and dissent,” City Attorney John Russo said. “On July 8, some individuals disrespected that tradition and the righteous message of the protesters by treating our town like a lawless playground.”

“The individuals who set fires, assaulted journalists, robbed local business owners and incited chaos were not here for justice,” Russo said. “Sadly, it appears they were here for no other reason than to get an emotional rush from destruction of property, theft and lawlessness. Oakland will not tolerate this disrespect.”

Two of the defendants named in the lawsuit – Paul Rousseau and Raquel Sharp – were arrested July 8 after spray painting graffiti on public property. Both were filmed in the act by Oakland police officers. Rousseau also tried to punch an undercover officer and attempted to steal the officer's camera, according to OPD reports.

The City is suing Rousseau and Sharp for unspecified damages related to the graffiti and punitive damages to be determined.

The other two defendants – Gerald Dugas and Terry Williams – were arrested with stolen jewelry. In the midst of the protest, a crowd broke through the security gate at JC Jewelry on Broadway, kicked in a window, punched one of the owners in the face and made off with more than \$50,000 in property. The store owners experienced extreme distress and intimidation as they tried to fend off the crowd of more than 200 people. Police saw Williams looting the store with other suspects. Both Dugas and Williams were caught with gold jewelry stolen from the store, according to police reports.

California law allows the City to bring this action to protect the owners' rights to exclusive possession of their property. Under the law, the City is entitled to impose a penalty, and if recovered, award the penalty to the business owners. The lawsuit seeks a total of \$100,000 from Dugas and Williams.

"Oakland welcomes thousands of visitors and residents to our city – never do we invite violence or the trashing of the businesses that provide jobs, goods and services to our residents and visitors," said Joseph J. Haraburda, President & CEO of the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. "The Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce supports the action of our City Attorney and the law enforcement community to prosecute to the full extent of the law anyone who violates the rights of others."

For more from City Attorney Russo about the July 8 riot, [please see this op-ed.](#)

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