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CITY OF NEW YORK

2012-2013

REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

SECOND ROUND PUBLIC MEETING

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

515 Malcolm X Boulevard

New York, New York 10037

October 4, 2012 5:30 P.M.

IN ATTENDANCE:

BENITO ROMANO, Chairperson

THADDEUS HACKWORTH, General Counsel

FRANK PATAVAN (R-QUEENS)

MADELINE PROVENZANO (D-BRONX)

JUSTIN YU (D-NEW YORK)

OSCAR ODOM, III (R-KINGS)

LINDA LIN (D-QUEENS)

ROBERT W. HART (D-RICHMOND)

GLORIA CARVAJAL WOLFE (R-NEW YORK)

ROXANE PERSAUD (D-KINGS)

THOMAS OGNIBENE (R-QUEENS)

KAMILLAH HANKS (I-RICHMOND)

SCOTT CERULLO (R-RICHMOND)

1 S P E A K E R S:

2 James Hong, Daniel M. Cohen, William Stanford, Elisa M.
3 Cose, Maya Nichlaus, Sofia Krulivitch, Isaac Gluck, Henry
4 Calderon, Rebecca Mayfield, Melissa Mark-Viverito, Julius
5 Tajiddin, Herman Francis, Margaret Fung, Gloria A.
6 Kerstein, (P. Eggers by Mei Gellert) Branca Vasquez, Peggy
7 Morales, Rachel Fauss, Viveca Diaz, Yma Rodriguz, Raul
8 Reyes (via translator), Ydanis Rodriguez, Agnes Rivera,
9 Inez Dickens, Belina Anderson, Melissa Mark-Viverito,
10 Robert Jackson, Debbie Quinones, Ruben Dario Vargas, Harry
11 Rodriguez, Keith Wright, M. Ndigo Washington, Esmeralda
12 Simmons, Rosie Mendez, Margaret Chin, Edwin Marcial, David
13 Nocenti, Gustavo Rosado, Joan Levine, Madelyn Innocent,
14 Roberto Anazaghati, Curtis Arluck, Henrietta Lyle, Sarah
15 Martin, Laura Friedman, Brian Paul, Mark Levine, Elizabeth
16 Kellner, Tiena Traversa, Maritta Dunn, Judy Iason,
17 Elizabeth L. Ritter, Adian Mack, Alex Castex-Porter.

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DISTRICTING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

1 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Good evening everyone.
2 Good evening.

3 And thank you for coming tonight and welcome
4 to the second round of the New York City
5 Districting Commission public hearings, this one
6 in Manhattan.

7 My name is Benito Romano and I am the Chair
8 of the New York City Districting Commission, and
9 on behalf of the Commission I want to thank the
10 Director of the Schomberg Center for hosting us
11 here tonight.

12 We have the facility only a few hours, and I
13 want to make sure that we hear from everyone who
14 has signed up and pre-registered.

15 For those of you who did not sign up, and
16 wish to speak, please see the staff at the
17 registration table outside of this room to
18 register.

19 If you require a translation for your
20 testimony, please let the staff at registration
21 desk know. They will ensure that a translator
22 will be provided to you when it is your turn to
23 testify.

24 Before we take testimony I would like to
25 make a few observations. At the beginning of

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1 this month the Commission advertised in community
2 and ethnic newspapers announcing the Commission's
3 public hearing schedule.

4 An e-mail blast was sent to over 5,500
5 individuals and organizations, various advocacy
6 groups helped spread the word throughout their
7 individual networks, and the hearing schedule was
8 publicized on our Face Book page and Twitter
9 feed.

10 We will continue to find other ways to
11 maximize community participation and interest,
12 and it looks from today's audience like we are
13 succeeding.

14 Tonight represents the second round of
15 public hearings that the Commission will conduct
16 throughout the City.

17 Over 450 people attended our first round of
18 hearings in late August and the Commission heard
19 from more than 131 individuals. Since then the
20 Commission has released a preliminary draft
21 Council district plan on September 4th that
22 adjusted the current Council lines for population
23 proportionality because in the last ten years
24 many Council districts have either increased or
25 decreased in population creating a significant

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1 deviation from the ideal Council district
2 population of 160,710.

3 The preliminary draft plan was also posted
4 on the Commission's Website
5 WWW.NYC.gov/districting, it was also displayed in
6 public areas in Brooklyn, like such as Brooklyn's
7 Borough Hall, the Queens Library and the District
8 Commission offices here in Manhattan and linked
9 to other Web sites such as the New York City
10 Public Library.

11 On the same day the Commission also launched
12 an online mapping tool to allow the public to
13 draw Council district maps for the Commission's
14 consideration.

15 The Commission's map also opened the
16 resource room at the Commission's offices in
17 lower Manhattan.

18 The resource room is available for those
19 without access to computer terminals, who wish to
20 draw and submit a map to the Commission or for
21 those wishing to receive one-on-one assistance
22 with map drawing as the resource room is staffed
23 by Justin Bassett, our mapping associate.

24 The room is also, is by appointment only but
25 it does operate past normal business hours. The

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1 Commission has received a few maps so far and we
2 encourage you to explore the mapping tool
3 available on our Website. You will also be able
4 to see some of the maps submitted by some of the
5 members of the public.

6 Finally, the Commission has launched a
7 speakers bureau where an organization or group
8 can request a staff member to talk about the
9 decennial districting process.

10 So far the speakers bureau has addressed a
11 number of civic organizations, community boards
12 and even a grade school class.

13 If there is any one wishing to have a
14 speakers bureau attend to address their group, or
15 organization, please see Jonathan Ettricks or
16 Carlos Carino to set up an appointment.

17 The Commission is eager to hear tonight the
18 testimony and comments on the preliminary draft
19 plan.

20 After tonight's hearing, and the others in
21 the second round of hearings the Commission will
22 consider the comments during its next scheduled
23 public meeting on October 18th. At that meeting
24 the Commission will direct the staff to revise
25 the preliminary district plan in response to

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1 comments we receive during the second round.

2 Then at the Commission's public meeting on
3 October 30, a revised plan reflecting the
4 comments received will be presented to the
5 Commission and the Commission will decide whether
6 to adopt the plan. If the Commission adopts the
7 plan, it will then be delivered to the City
8 Council for its inspection and approval, which
9 has to occur by November 5th.

10 According to the City Charter by November
11 26, the City Council must, we must submit it by
12 -- (Inaudible) -- but according to the City
13 Council, the City Council has until November 26th
14 to either adopt the revised district plan at
15 which point the plan will then be filed with the
16 City Clerk or the Council can object and revise
17 the district plan, at which point the plan will
18 be returned to the Commission with the Council's
19 comments and concerns.

20 If the Commission takes neither action it
21 will be deemed adopted.

22 If the Council objects to the revised
23 district plan, the Commission will then have
24 until January 5, 2013, to create a revised plan.
25 This will then trigger a new set of public

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1 hearings to receive comment and feedback on that
2 revised plan.

3 The Commission will then have until March
4 5th to create, adopt and submit a final plan to
5 the City Clerk and the U.S. Department of Justice
6 for pre-clearance under the voting rights act.

7 This process is described in a flow chart
8 that is available for you tonight, as it was
9 during the first round of hearings. Other
10 handouts include a copy of the preliminary draft
11 plan, and a large map of Manhattan about the
12 preliminary draft map lines and a listing of
13 public participation tools that are available.

14 It is worth reviewing again that there are
15 certain factors the law obligates the Commission
16 to consider during the districting process:
17 These include the difference in population
18 between the least populous and the most populous
19 districts shall not exceed 10 percent of the
20 average population for all districts.

21 The plan must maintain fair and effective
22 representation of racial and language minority
23 groups in New York City.

24 The plan must keep neighborhoods and
25 communities with established ties of common

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1 interest and association intact.

2 The plan must provide districts that are
3 compact and contiguous. They must, if at all
4 possible, keep districts within the borough, and
5 they must avoid diminishing the effective
6 representation of voters.

7 I want to also bring to your attention our
8 Website, WWW.NYC.gov districting.

9 The site is the central repository of all
10 documents and videos relating to the Districting
11 Commission.

12 It also contains a schedule of our public
13 hearings, all documents and maps submitted to the
14 Commission, our online mapping tool, and a portal
15 where you can pre-register for all of the
16 hearings and be added to our mailing list.

17 I hope that you will all visit the site and
18 let us know how it can be made more informative
19 and interactive.

20 One final note. We have an extraordinary
21 number of speakers registered tonight. Each of
22 you unfortunately has to be limited to two
23 minutes, so that we can hear from everyone. Keep
24 in mind that we have assembled a substantial
25 amount of data from the U.S. census, we also have

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1 taken written submissions, and if you wish to
2 offer one, the data we have will be important to
3 our decision, but these hearings provide critical
4 input as well.

5 Tell us about your neighborhoods, where are
6 its natural boundaries as you see them, where
7 should we draw the Council lines and why.

8 That concludes my remarks, and I would like
9 now to have the Commissioners as is customary to
10 introduce themselves, and we start from the far
11 left.

12 MR. PATAVAN: Frank Patavan from Queens.

13 MS. PROVENZANO: Madeline Provenzano from
14 the Bronx.

15 MR. YU: Justin Yu from Manhattan.

16 MR. ODOM: Oscar Odom, III, Brooklyn.

17 MS. LINN: Linda Lin, Queens.

18 MR. HART: Rob Hart from Staten Island.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Benito Romano from
20 Manhattan.

21 MS. WOLFE: Gloria Carvajal Wolfe from
22 Manhattan.

23 MS. PERSAUD: Roxane Persaud, Brooklyn.

24 MR. OGNIBENE: Thomas Ognibene, Queens
25 County.

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1 MS. HANKS: Kamillah Hanks, Staten Island.

2 MR. CERULLO: Scott Cerullo, Staten Island.

3 GENERAL COUNSEL: Thaddeus Hackworth, staff
4 to the Commission.

5 We are ready for our first speaker. Because
6 of the number of speakers tonight, I will be
7 calling the name of the speaker and then the name
8 of the following speaker, so that the second name
9 called can approach the microphone that is not
10 being used, that way we will be able to get
11 through more testimony in a timely fashion.

12 Our first speaker tonight will be James Hong
13 to be followed by Daniel Marks Cohen.

14 A SPEAKER: Good afternoon, members and
15 staff of the Districting Commission, chairman
16 Romano, citizens and residents of Manhattan.

17 My name is James Hong and I am the civic
18 participation coordinator at the (Inaudible)
19 Center for Community Action.

20 And today I speak on behalf of AACCRD, the
21 Asian-American community coalition on
22 re-districting and democracy.

23 The commission of the non partisan Pan-Asian
24 coalition is to advance the opportunities for all
25 Asian-Americans to have meaningful participation

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1 in their elections.

2 Now before we get started, I want to first
3 applaud the Commission on the construction and
4 maintenance of the NYC web site, including
5 mapping software and terminals made available to
6 the public.

7 And we have been well served by the advanced
8 notice of the hearings and materials posted
9 online and the accessible locations and times of
10 these public hearings.

11 Now, but, in the end, what this whole
12 process comes down to is the maps. And the maps
13 that were released in early September have been
14 in a word disappointing for us.
15 We are nearly in the exact same place as a
16 community that we were in August. The Commission
17 seemed to do little to address the vast
18 demographic changes in our City in the last ten
19 years, and not to mention the robust public input
20 provided to the Commission in August.

21 So, looking at the map, particularly the
22 Asian-American neighborhoods, it is as if the
23 first round of hearings never happened, and those
24 comments were not heard.

25 We know that the first draft was meant to

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1 begin the conversation, but the conversation had
2 already been halfway finished by the time those
3 maps came out.

4 So, again, in Chinatown and Lower East Side,
5 in Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park and South
6 Ozone Park, and Sunset Park and Bensonhurst in
7 Elmhurst, Bayside our communities continue to be
8 divided.

9 And this continues to be one of the biggest
10 problems and challenges for the Asian-American
11 community.

12 We want to recommend to the Commission again
13 the unity map, which is the unparalleled
14 commission, it brings together the Voting Rights
15 Act, stipulations of the City Charter, the
16 one-person-one-vote principle and simultaneously
17 maintains communities of interest just like the
18 Charter asks for.

19 We again recommend that to you.

20 And thank you this is really not a lot of
21 time, but thank you.

22 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will
23 be Daniel Marks Cohen to be followed by William
24 Stanford.

25 A SPEAKER: Good evening and thank you.

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1 My name is Daniel Marks Cohen, and I am a
2 New York City Democratic Committeeman
3 representing the 69th Assembly District of
4 Manhattan's upper west side and the New York
5 State democratic committee.

6 The Assemblyman for the 69th is Daniel
7 O'Donnell.

8 I am a lifelong resident of the upper west
9 side, my parents live in the district, my wife
10 and I live in the district and we are raising our
11 newborn son, a third generation upper west-sider,
12 as well.

13 The part of the upper west side that I live
14 in, between 96th Street and 125th Street is the
15 poorest portion of the 69th assembly district, it
16 is the least served in terms of services and
17 transportation, and has more crime.

18 I believe that at least one reason for its
19 consistent and uneven status is the fact that the
20 69th is cut up into multiple pieces of nine
21 different districts.

22 This was so -- was improved recently by the
23 passage of federal redistricting legislation,
24 which re-drew the two congressional districts,
25 the 8th by representative Jerry Nadler and the

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1 15th by representative Charley Rangel, but it was
2 made worse by the three state Senate districts,
3 Tom Duane, of the 29, Bill Perkins of the 30th
4 and of the 31st.

5 The latter of the 31st is particularly
6 egregious, stretching from 204th Street to 24th
7 Street along the West Coast of Manhattan island.

8 It looks more like a Latin American country
9 of Chile than a proper state senate district.

10 Sadly that is not your purview today, we are
11 stuck with this absurd district for the next ten
12 years.

13 The recent proposed draft of the Council
14 lines is a modest improvement, the northern part
15 of the area that I live in, I represent is no
16 longer in the 8th district, it is currently
17 represented by Council Member Melissa
18 Mark-Viverito of East Harlem, which is a district
19 stretching over such a large geographic area with
20 limited resources.

21 The area is now split between the 7th and
22 the 9th, Council Members Robert Jackson and Inez
23 Dickens respectfully. The line that divides the
24 districts and deliberately the fractures the
25 community in a way that I can only assume as to

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1 limit of voting power of the residents in the
2 district, so as to not have too much sway in
3 either the 7th, seen as Washington Heights, and
4 the 9th, which is viewed as the West Harlem seat.

5 Plainly put, the northern-most district
6 lines proposed are non-sense.

7 Members of my community who live in the 8th
8 district have to go to 116th Street and Lexington
9 Avenue for help from their Council Member is
10 absurd and is blatantly disrespectful to divide
11 the area between the 7th and 9th districts along
12 such a random line.

13 In closing, the easiest solution is to move
14 everything west of Central Park and Morningside
15 Park in the south district. If this causes the
16 7th to exceed its capacity, move the line of the
17 6th district north to pick up some more
18 additional voters.

19 The proposal is to keep the line more
20 natural to keep Manhattan Valley representation
21 on the west side where it belongs, rather than an
22 appendage to another district, or for demographic
23 reasons.

24 Thank you.

25 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will

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1 be William Stanford, to be followed by Elisa
2 Cose.

3 A SPEAKER: What you did to me on Tuesday
4 was a blatant attack.

5 What you did during round two was a blatant
6 attack.

7 What you did to all of us, including myself,
8 was a blatant attack.

9 What you did to me here today was a blatant
10 attack.

11 You owe me a damn apology, you owe it to me
12 now. Okay.

13 You specifically told us the -- were between
14 5:30 and 9. I couldn't make it to, ah, I
15 couldn't make it on Tuesday, due to a prior
16 commitment.

17 I am not blaming you for that.

18 But what I am blaming you for is blunt
19 stupidity.

20 You knew that I pre-registered to speak at
21 that public hearing, okay, and I did it early,
22 and just forgot about me.

23 So you did not, couldn't care less about me.
24 I do not find that amusing.

25 During round one and now we are had in round

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1 two, and I am still blasting you about your
2 behavior.

3 It sounds like Gorilla Monsoon.

4 History has been made here and history
5 repeats itself. That's what it sounds like. You
6 definitely know me apology --

7 No reason why you couldn't keep the public
8 hearing open until 9 and accommodate me. But you
9 chose to neglect me instead. I hope you are
10 satisfied with the damage you caused.

11 Okay. And again, let's see what happened
12 here earlier today.

13 This public hearing was supposed to start at
14 5:30, you did not tell us where exactly you would
15 hold the public hearing, which is inconsiderate.

16 When I discovered where you were holding it,
17 I told, I was told that you couldn't answer, I
18 couldn't -- you were still organizing, after 5,
19 under 30 minutes before bell time, which is the
20 same careless mistake that you made during round
21 one.

22 Apparently, having learned anything from
23 round one, so you are making the same careless
24 mistake during round two.

25 Isn't that wonderful?

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1 You like to make careless mistakes?

2 Nasty attacks. I will orchestrate nasty
3 attacks, too.

4 Treat that as a learning experience.

5 That's what you need is a learning
6 experience, and a reality check.

7 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

8 Our next speaker will be Elisa Cose, to be
9 followed by Maya Nicklaus.

10 A SPEAKER: My name is Elisa Cose, and I am
11 almost ten years old and a fifth grade student at
12 PS 163 on West 97th Street. I am here to testify
13 in support of Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito.

14 I want the Commission to think about how it
15 will affect our school if our district is moved
16 from our community.

17 Council Melissa fights for New York City
18 public schools.

19 She does a lot with our after school program
20 called LEAP. LEAP helps many parents who work
21 late. It is funded by other grants, the PTA and
22 --

23 (Inaudible)

24 Last year LEAP lost a \$10,000 grant, and
25 because of that LEAP had to cut back the programs

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1 starting much later in the year. That was very
2 hard for everyone that depends on LEAP,
3 particularly working parents that need an
4 affordable and safe after school program.

5 The Council Member for our school, know that
6 puts students first.

7 We have no idea whether the next City
8 Council Member will be as dedicated or even care
9 about me and the other students at my school.

10 Melissa also helps fund us -- she
11 understands that we need things like computers if
12 we are to do our best. Nobody can guarantee that
13 school budgets won't be cut. But Council Member
14 Melissa has helped to reduce the harm that has
15 come to us with the budget cuts. She is a great
16 leader that wants children to strive, she cares
17 about our future. She also cares about public
18 safety.

19 She is the one that got us our crossing
20 guard who greets us every day as we go to school.
21 97th Street and Columbus Avenue is a very
22 dangerous intersection, and when it was asked for
23 a cross guard, they were repeatedly told no.

24 Melissa fought hard and finally got a Yes,
25 and because of the program it is a much safer

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1 community.

2 Neighborhoods are supposed to be kept
3 together. The Commission proposed plan breaks up
4 the district in a way that is harmful to our
5 community.

6 I hope that you will consider what I have
7 said, and keep Melissa as our City Council
8 representative.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause).

11 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will
12 be Maya Nicklaus to be followed by Sofia
13 Krulivitch.

14 A SPEAKER: Hello, my name is Maya Nicklaus.
15 I am in the fifth grade at PS 163. I am
16 testifying in support of Council Member Melissa
17 Mark-Viverito. I don't want the districts to be
18 changed so that she is not our Councilwoman
19 because she has done so many good things for our
20 district, like crossing guards, after school
21 programs and public housing.

22 If our district is changed we may lose a lot
23 of important things for our district.

24 Our new Council Member may not be as
25 understanding and helpful to our community.

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1 One of the things that Melissa Mark-Viverito
2 has done for our community is get us a crossing
3 guard. A few years ago they were building
4 buildings around the corner from my school.

5 There was a lot of traffic and big delivery
6 trucks delivering supplies to the stores.

7 The Columbus Avenue intersection on the east
8 side of West 97th Street was very dangerous, a
9 lot of kids and parents were crossing there to
10 get to school.

11 It was putting them in danger, the parents
12 asked for a crossing guard, but the Police
13 Department refused. The Police Department said
14 it was a safe intersection but they were looking
15 at records that were ten years old, from before
16 the intersection was busy.

17 The parents told Ms. Melissa Mark-Viverito,
18 so she asked for a crossing guard. At first they
19 still said no, but she fought hard and finally
20 got us a crossing guard.

21 Now it is safe for us to walk to school.

22 Ms. Melissa Mark-Viverito also helped us to
23 fund the school's after school program, LEAP.
24 LEAP is a safe place for kids to go if their
25 parents can't pick them up right after school.

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1 It is very important for a lot of the kids at our
2 school.

3 If LEAP was taken away, they wouldn't have
4 any where to go after school. These are just two
5 examples of the great things that Ms. Melissa
6 Mark-Viverito does for us.

7 If she stays as our Councilwoman she can
8 continue doing good things for us. Thank you.

9 (Applause).

10 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will
11 be Sophia Krulivitch, to be followed by Isaac
12 Gluck.

13 A SPEAKER: Dear members of the New York
14 City Districting Commission, I am Sofia
15 Krulivitch, a fifth grader at PS 163 and I am
16 here today to tell you why it is important for
17 Melissa Mark-Viverito to continue to be our City
18 Council woman.

19 It is important for her to keep representing
20 PS 163 because she has proven that she cares
21 about our school and the students.

22 Several years ago, parents from PS 163 told
23 her about the intersection, and there was a huge
24 construction site putting kids and parents in
25 danger.

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1 Our parents were told by the community board
2 and the Police Department that the intersection
3 was not qualified for a crossing guard.

4 Ms. Melissa Mark-Viverito listened to our
5 worried parents and came to the intersection to
6 see for herself. She saw that many of our
7 classmates were in danger when they went to
8 school every morning.

9 Melissa went to go see the intersection for
10 herself, and she agreed that it needed a crossing
11 guard and it was dangerous for kids to cross the
12 street. Ms. Melissa Mark-Viverito fought very
13 hard for a crossing guard. Thanks to her, many
14 PS 163 students can get to school safely.

15 I ask you to please keep our school and
16 Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito in the
17 district.

18 We need her to keep fighting for our
19 students and school safety.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause).

22 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will
23 be Isaac Gluck, to be followed by Henry Calderon.

24 A SPEAKER: Good evening.

25 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to

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1 speak in this public hearing.

2 I am here to testify on behalf of Melissa
3 Mark-Viverito, and why we shouldn't replace her.

4 My name is Isaac Gluck and I am 9 years old,
5 and I am a fifth grade student of PS 163, the
6 Alfred E. Smith school. I play soccer and
7 baseball as well as violin. I am interested in
8 playing professional sports and possibly being a
9 doctor like my dad.

10 I have 3 reasons why Melissa Mark-Viverito
11 should stay as our District Councilwoman.

12 In 2010, construction workers were building
13 stores and markets in the area we call Columbus
14 Square from 97th Street to 99th Street, on
15 Columbus and Amsterdam. PS 163 is right next
16 door.

17 This is a busy intersection with cars jammed
18 up, and with an even bigger problem with
19 construction.

20 School parents spoke up and asked the NYPD for a
21 crossing guard. They said no. We spoke about it
22 with Melissa Mark-Viverito and she asked.

23 And she then asked the NYPD for a crossing
24 guard, like we did. The first time they said No,
25 and said it was because no one had been hit by a

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1 car or truck.

2 Melissa fought hard and one day they put a
3 crossing guard at the intersection. That day was
4 a big change for the school, it made us all much
5 safer.

6 Ms. Viverito helped fund LEAP.

7 LEAP is an after school program that allows
8 kids, whose parents cannot pick them up, stay in
9 the safe environment where they have activities
10 which keep them happy and excited. They also
11 have time and space to do their homework.

12 Melissa Viverito worked hard to get this
13 program. This helps kids in different ways,
14 including the cost of baby-sitters. When she
15 raised money for this LEAP program, Melissa took
16 a giant LEAP forward for our community and the
17 kids.

18 Melissa Mark-Viverito helped fund money so
19 that we could get new computers. Or computers
20 are old, and new ones cost a lot of money. Our
21 school did not have as much money as we needed,
22 so Melissa Mark-Viverito, she got the funding
23 that we needed and now we have our new computers.

24 We use our computers so that kids can learn
25 how to type and search interesting facts.

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1 We also will be using them to teach computer
2 programming to kids. Thanks to Melissa
3 Mark-Viverito we have helpful items and helpful
4 people for these reasons.

5 I think we need to keep her as our District
6 Councilwoman.

7 Thank you again and have a good evening.

8 (Applause).

9 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will
10 be Henry Calderon, to be followed by Rebecca
11 Mayfield.

12 A SPEAKER: Never follow a child. Good
13 evening, Chairperson Romano and Commission
14 members.

15 My name is Henry Calderon, and I am the
16 Chairperson of the East Harlem Chamber of
17 Commerce, I am also the owner of a small business
18 in East Harlem. I was born and raised in East
19 Harlem and I have worked here all my life.

20 I was a member of the previous Districting
21 Commission in the year 2002, 2003, and I was
22 privileged to service as Chair of that
23 Commission.

24 I appreciate the difficult task that you
25 have before you: You need to implement a simple

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1 but crucial concept, one-person-one-vote.

2 You need to ensure that minority groups are
3 fairly represented.

4 There are many council districts in the
5 City, which minority groups constitute a
6 numerical minority. This is when one looks at
7 communities of interest in order to have
8 equitable district lines.

9 What are the criteria for community of
10 interest?

11 Language is one, culture is another.
12 Geography is important as well. Another one is
13 having the same landlord.

14 People who have the same landlord can
15 certainly have shared experiences, especially
16 when the landlord is the City of New York.

17
18 The New York City Housing Authority has more
19 apartments in East Harlem than any other part of
20 the City, and having district lines that meander
21 through our housing projects creating artificial
22 boundaries only adds to the many problems that
23 already exist to the housing projects.

24 The people of the South Bronx and East
25 Harlem share a similar history. The majority of

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1 the residents speak the same language and listen
2 to the same music. Many shop at La Marqueta, and
3 have picnics in the South Bronx St. Mary's Park.

4 We share more than just the number 6 train.
5 We share heart and soul. It is possible that
6 someone just looks another a map and doesn't know
7 the people that live there and could take away La
8 Marqueta from its people.

9 This is why we look to the Commission to
10 correct this error and put La Marqueta back into
11 CD #8.

12 (Applause).

13 Having closed the map, which we call deep
14 Harlem, South Bronx, of People United.

15 Thank you.

16 (Applause).

17 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will
18 be Rebecca Mayfield to be followed by Melissa
19 Mark-Viverito.

20 A SPEAKER: My name is Rebecca Mayfield and
21 I attend school 163.

22 I am a supporter of Melissa Mark-Viverito
23 because I believe that she has made a lot of
24 helpful changes in my school and the community.

25 For example, she designated funds for my

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1 school's after school program called LEAP. I am
2 the daughter of a single working mother so LEAP
3 is a safe environment for me to hang out until
4 she can pick me up.

5 If this affordable program is cut, kids will
6 not have a good place to hang out after school.

7 And in addition to this, Melissa Viverito
8 made sure that the dangerous intersection that I
9 use near the school had a crossing guard, making
10 it easy and safe for kids like me to get to
11 school.

12 If you take away Melissa, you are also
13 splitting up the community, and she is a part of
14 it just like you and me.

15 These are not just words of a 10-year old
16 girl, but these are the words of the community.

17 We will speak as a community, we will fight
18 as a community, because we want to stay as a
19 community.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause).

22 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
23 Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito --

24 (Applause).

25 -- to be followed by Julius Tajiddin.

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1 A SPEAKER: Commission members, if I could
2 ask: I actually came to listen for a little bit.
3 I know that I preregistered, but I would like to
4 maybe wait a couple more minutes while I hear the
5 other testimony and testify later.

6 Thank you.

7 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: So, our next speaker
8 will be Julius Tajiddin, to be followed by Herman
9 Francis.

10 A SPEAKER: Section two of the Voting Rights
11 Act, as amended in 1982, largely controls how
12 district lines can be drawn.

13 It prohibits any procedure that results in
14 the denial or abridgement of anyone's right to
15 vote, based on race, color or minority language
16 status.

17 And it prohibits laws or practices that deny
18 minority voters an equal opportunity to
19 participate in the political process and to elect
20 representatives of their choice.

21 The black electorate of West Harlem is
22 protected under section two.

23 According to the Center of American Research
24 as of 2010, according to the U.S. census, West
25 Harlem has approximately 60,000

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1 African-Americans, 52,000 so-called Hispanics and
2 32,000 whites.

3 The Commission's redistricting plan and even
4 a plan I read recently, the upper Manhattan plan
5 does not consider this data, which would make
6 such plans defective and unconstitutional on
7 their face.

8 The majority, section 5 of the Voting Rights
9 Act also addresses discrimination, but works a
10 little differently. It includes covering changes
11 to district lines.

12 New district plans will only be pre-cleared
13 if they are not intended to dilute racial and
14 language minority votes, and leave racial and
15 language minority voters no worse off than they
16 were before redistricting, using old district
17 lines now but new population data.

18 The Commission's redistricting plan leaves
19 the black voters of West Harlem way worse than
20 they are now.

21 Other plans do the same.

22 The black vote in West Harlem will be
23 diluted, and puts pockets of the black community
24 vulnerable to predators.

25 (Applause)

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1 -- for Justice, the Guide to Redistricting
2 of 2010 edition, it was determined that because
3 Barack Obama had been carved out of a
4 Congressional District, that he previously ran
5 for back in 2000, such redistricting was unfair.

6 Why? That is because Obama was won more
7 than 30 percent of the vote against incumbent
8 Bobby Rush and such showing after relatively
9 hasty campaigning, set the stage for um, a real
10 potential rematch.

11 Similarly, I ran against Robert Jackson in
12 2009, for his councilmanic seat in District 7,
13 although I lost there is an inclination that I
14 would run again in 2013 because he will be termed
15 out and I demonstrate strong possibility of
16 winning that vacant seat.

17 However, the Commission's proposed map
18 carves me out of district not by blocks, but by
19 cutting through an ally and going around the
20 block where I live.

21 Moreover, the Commission's redistrict
22 weakens the black electorate in District 7 and
23 creates a reformed district that would make the
24 minority white electorate in the West Harlem area
25 the majority by adding to District 7 the upper

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1 west side.

2 Notwithstanding federal law, the New York
3 City Charter at section 52 sets the criteria for
4 redistricting, and includes keeping intact
5 neighborhoods and communities with racial,
6 economic, ethnic, religious and cultural ties.

7 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you. We will
8 need to continue. Remember that when you go over
9 time, it makes it so that your neighbor may not
10 be able to testify.

11 A SPEAKER: I am almost finished. I have a
12 couple more line.

13 The subculture of Harlem is such a
14 community. It ignores that Harlem has a black
15 American history culture and style that is even
16 more connected by spirituality and economy. This
17 connection has been intact for over 100 years.

18 Harlem includes West Harlem, but for
19 purposes of districts West Harlem must remain
20 intact in District 7.

21 (Applause).

22 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

23 A SPEAKER: Some of these plans, including
24 the Commission's, makes District 7 like a railcar
25 which that is also a violation of section 52 of

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1 the New York City Charter.

2 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you. The next
3 speaker is Herman Francis, to be followed by
4 Margaret Fung.

5 A SPEAKER: Good evening, Commissioners.

6 Yes. I spoke.

7 I am a long time Bronx resident, former
8 member of Community Board 1, also a former school
9 board member.

10 Yes, you have made my case, when you talked
11 about the Voting Rights Act, on Tuesday night,
12 about the lack of morality and the decision
13 making process.

14 The Voting Rights Act came out directly
15 because of the 15th and 19th amendments of the
16 U.S. Constitution.

17 Non of you females could vote in the 1920s,
18 because of the 15th amendment which gave black
19 males which -- did not give black females the
20 right to vote. Everybody that come here has
21 benefited from the 13th, 14th, 15th amendments of
22 the Constitution, which the Voting Rights Act
23 derived from because of the lack of moral
24 behavior for those who made decisions to enforce
25 the 13th and 19th amendments of the Constitution.

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1 The division of the 8th district where I
2 live at in the Bronx is solely because of the
3 distribution of goods and services, pitting one
4 side against the other.

5 The key to this is the ED, electoral
6 district -- county lines, assembly districts.

7 And the big fight will be the congressional
8 and state districts within the county lines.

9 But yet you decide to split the City Council
10 line, solely to fuel the real estate industry.

11 Integration is legal.

12 Our ancestors fought hard and long in this
13 struggle to put us in the position we are in
14 today right now.

15 (Applause)

16 And we intend to make the -- into a fight
17 for --

18 This is a decision-making process. As one
19 who got drafted 45 years ago by the U.S. military
20 to dodge bullets for the policy of the U.S.
21 government, the policy you have now borders on
22 worse than what Hitler and Mussolini put in
23 Germany and Italy.

24 (Applause)

25 I am telling you this right now: Even

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1 though you were appointed, you still short-handed
2 up there because some of you are not taking your
3 responsibilities seriously enough.

4 Yet there is a city-wide election next year
5 where we intend to make sure that we put some of
6 you on the cheese line and make you understand
7 what it is to earn a living.

8 You all have a very blessed year.

9 (Applause).

10 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is,
11 (Applause) our next speaker is Margaret Fung to
12 be followed by Gloria Anne Kerstein.

13 A SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Margaret Fung
14 and I am executive director of the Asian-American
15 Legal Defense and Education Fund.

16 We are a 38 year old organization that
17 defends the civil rights of Asian-Americans
18 through litigation, advocacy, education and
19 organizing.

20 We were involved in the 1991 redistricting
21 process by submitting testimony and proposed maps
22 when the Council was increased from 35 to 51
23 seats, and we testified again in 2002.

24 This year with our partners, Latino Justice,
25 the National Institute for Latino Policy and the

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1 Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers
2 College, we submitted a full 51 district map to
3 this Commission.

4 Now, unfortunately, we are disappointed that
5 the Commission's preliminary map, which was
6 released on September 4th, failed to take into
7 account many of the statements made by advocates
8 and community residents who took the time out to
9 testify at the first round of public hearings in
10 August.

11 In Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens,
12 Asian-Americans repeatedly pointed out that the
13 changing demographics of our City required,
14 required changes that would allow impossible to
15 keep Asian-American neighborhoods together within
16 single district. Every other community of color
17 in New York City is facing the same kinds of
18 issues.

19 So, look in Queens, the south Asian and
20 Indo-Caribbean communities, the Richmond Hill and
21 South Ozone Park continue to be split in half.

22 In Brooklyn, Bensonhurst Brooklyn with the
23 growing Chinese- American community, our
24 neighborhood continues to be split among four
25 council districts.

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1 And in Lower Manhattan, districts 1 and 2,
2 they were created in 1991 as Asian-Latino
3 opportunity district and now they are both
4 predominantly white.

5 District 1 is 45 percent white, and the
6 Asian-American population has dropped to 36
7 percent in Chinatown.

8 In district 2 it is now 57 percent white
9 with only 20 percent Latino and 11 percent
10 Asian-American residents.

11 It is possible to create an Asian-Latino
12 coalition district to preserve minority
13 representation in Lower Manhattan in the coming
14 decade, and without pitting incumbents against
15 each other, so this hasn't been considered.

16 So we urge the Commission to take a closer
17 look at the Unity Map that follows the legal
18 criterion of one-person-one-vote, the Voting
19 Rights Act and the City Charter.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause).

22 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
23 Gloria Kerstein to be followed by Plot Eggers.

24 A SPEAKER: I am Gloria Kerstein, and I am
25 the President of the Duke Ellington Boulevard

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1 Neighborhood Association.

2 The Commission Members up there know where
3 Duke Ellington Boulevard is?

4 No?

5 West 106th Street where the Duke lived many
6 years ago, and it is in the heart of Manhattan
7 Valley, which is the very unique community that
8 is right now being split in half by the current
9 proposal from you, the Commission.

10 Manhattan Valley has struggled for many
11 years as a primarily minority immigrant
12 neighborhood from the time that my grandmother
13 came in 1911 from Ireland when the neighborhood
14 was the Kellys and the Cohens, the Irish and
15 German Jewish and then it became Puerto Rico and
16 Dominican, and now primarily still Dominican and
17 Latin, as a whole from 110th down to 100, West
18 110th, West 100th from Broadway to Central Park
19 West.

20 We struggled as a community 30 years ago
21 when I first came there, because we had a "king"
22 in our neighborhood called crack.

23 And I want you to just try to visualize 15
24 different block associations and neighborhood
25 associations and coops from the Manhattan Valley

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1 area, which included small blocks west of
2 Amsterdam to Broadway, 109 where Obama once
3 lived, 107 and 108, along Duke Ellington
4 Boulevard, down to north of Central Park, a
5 multiblock association -- I want you to envision
6 17 years ago us boarding a bus because we had a
7 hotel which rented rooms by the hour, 52 units,
8 to the drug trade so people could smoke up their
9 crack.

10 We boarded the bus and went up to Scarsdale
11 to the owner's home to protest the fact that his
12 hotel was a boom to the drug trade and we in
13 Manhattan Village we angry and wanted that hotel
14 closed down.

15 I want you to envision the entire
16 neighborhood getting on the buses and going up
17 there.

18 And now you are splitting us up.

19 By the way, those buses included Frederick
20 Douglas Houses, and the tenant association
21 leaders there, I wanted you to see that to break
22 the spine of Manhattan Valley does not address
23 the struggle that we had to bring our
24 neighborhood out of crack, make it a safe and
25 good neighborhood that you should not break this

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1 up.

2 (Applause)

3 Melissa Mark-Viverito supported us in our
4 efforts.

5 And we want Melissa Mark-Viverito to
6 continue with us, because she knows what it means
7 to face these struggles.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause).

10 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
11 Ptol Eggers, to be followed by Blanca Vasquez.

12 A SPEAKER: Ptol Edgars is a student at PS
13 163, and speaking for Ptol as a colleague is Mei
14 Gellert.

15 A SPEAKER: Hello ladies and gentlemen.

16 My name is Mei Gellert and I am in the fifth
17 grade at PS 163 in Melissa Mark-Viverito's
18 district.

19 Please pay attention to me because I have
20 something important to say.

21 (Applause).

22 I am here because I want you to know that my
23 school district needs Melissa as a councilwoman.
24 She looked after our safety and gave a voice when
25 it was needed.

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1 We also need her to keep fighting for the
2 support of our community.

3 On 97th Street there is a great need for
4 safety. The big complex was getting built.

5 Most of us to fought to get a crossing guard
6 so that no one would get hurt, by the big trucks
7 transporting materials.

8 To this day, the crossing guard protects us
9 and a mechanism was installed to add extra time
10 to cross the street.

11 I am really lucky to have a parent who can
12 pick me up after school, but I have friends that
13 attend the after school program.

14 This is a safe place where kids can play and
15 do their homework until their parents can come up
16 and pick them up.

17 Imagine if we get someone new to represent
18 our district, they may not consider finding the
19 money to fund our after school program.

20 We need a representative that will continue
21 to find the resources that will keep LEAP
22 leaping.

23 Ms. Viverito continues to work on many
24 issues that support our community. She supports
25 people that need housing and tries to get to know

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1 our community.

2 Melissa took the time to visit us at our
3 school. We asked her very hard questions about
4 her job and our government -- not once, not
5 twice, but three times.

6 If it is not broken, don't try to fix it.

7 Thank you.

8 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
9 Blanca Vasquez, to be followed by Peggy Morales.

10 A SPEAKER: It is an honor to follow you.

11 I am going to make three points.

12 I have been living in Manhattan Valley 96 to
13 110th Street for over 30 years.

14 I am the co-chair of the Manhattan Valley
15 Preservation Coalition. It is a very unique
16 neighborhood, it is a neighborhood -- we have
17 rich neighbors on Riverside Drive and we have
18 projects.

19 It is a mixed income neighborhood, it is one
20 of the few that still remains in Manhattan.

21 We also had been a very successfully
22 organized neighborhood and we are really
23 concerned that this is why or at least part of
24 why these lines are drawn.

25 We were successful in -- after the Extel

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1 building built a -- you know, that actually, you
2 could see from anywhere in the neighborhood, and
3 it was out of character with our community.

4 Manhattan Valley organized to curtail that
5 kind of run-away development, so that we were
6 long process with the community board and a lot
7 of the housing groups, this is a neighborhood
8 that has a very strong history of housing, it
9 goes back to the '60s and '70s, a lot of HDFCs
10 which I live in, right -- low income non-profit
11 housing.

12 We were able to keep tall buildings down to
13 12 stories on the big avenues and small buildings
14 down to seven stories on side streets.

15 You don't do that without a lot of
16 organization.

17 In other words, our little piece of
18 Manhattan, Manhattan Valley succeeded in
19 curtailing high-rise development.

20 Now we get lines that destroy us, that split
21 us in half, that takes the community that is well
22 organized, and the people have long-term
23 relationships: Tenant associations, HDFCs, large
24 garden groups.

25 I mean everybody joined in this effort. We

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1 feel like we were being punished for having
2 succeeded.

3 So we are concerned with what you have done
4 to us. Attached just to a richer community below
5 us, the south of us and taken the north of us and
6 actually attached us to Columbia University. I
7 am a graduate of Columbia, you know, but they are
8 over delving.

9 (Applause).

10 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: The building security
11 has asked that if those who are sitting, standing
12 in the aisles could take seats, they would very
13 much appreciate that.

14 Our next speaker is Peggy Morales, to be
15 followed by Rachael Fauss.

16 A SPEAKER: Good evening members of the
17 Council, members of the community.

18 My name is Peggy Morales and I am the
19 district leader for the 68th assembly district,
20 part B, and I am also the state committee woman
21 for the 68th assembly, and I am here because this
22 is personal, this is personal to all of us.

23 This is not just a political ploy, this
24 cannot be a political ploy, this can't be a map
25 that was drawn, you know, because we needed

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1 160,000 people here or 160,000 people there, in
2 order to fill the gap and make sure that all of
3 us have what we need.

4 At the end of the day, I am a resident of
5 East Harlem, I was born in East Harlem, I was
6 raised in East Harlem.

7 And I am the third generation of Puerto
8 Ricans to immigrate into the East Harlem
9 community.

10 My grandmother and my mother and myself, and
11 all of the members of my family for as long as we
12 can remember shopped at La Marqueta, which is
13 specifically what I am here to address and talk
14 about.

15 (Applause.)

16 A SPEAKER: La Marqueta, to the East Harlem
17 community, whether you are Puerto Rican, Mexican,
18 African-American, or anyone else, is part of our
19 history, part of our culture, part of what we
20 call our own historic icon.

21 It is part of the very fabric of what makes
22 the East Harlem community the East Harlem
23 community El Barrio.

24 It is because of La Marqueta that so many of
25 us have grown, have come together, have shared,

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1 and have now become attached to it in a way that
2 is personal. It is not only the music, it is not
3 only the sounds, it is the smells, it is the
4 taste, it is everything about La Marqueta that
5 reminds you that you are in a place that is like
6 no other in the City of New York, which is El
7 Barrio, East Harlem.

8 And we will ask and fight this Commission in
9 necessary and anyone else that attempts to take
10 it out of the East Harlem community, out of
11 district 8, under Melissa Mark-Viverito.

12 Thank you for your time.

13 (Applause.)

14 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will
15 be Rachael Fauss, to be followed by Yma
16 Rodriguez.

17 A SPEAKER: Good evening, members of the
18 Commission.

19 My name is Rachael Fauss, and I am the
20 policy and research manager of Citizens Union, a
21 non-partizan good government, dedicated to making
22 democracy work for all New Yorkers.

23 I first wanted to thank you for doing some
24 steps to improve the transparency of the
25 Commission, through your Website and offering

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1 online software. We met with the staff of about
2 this and appreciate the work that you have done
3 on that.

4 I will get right to the recommendations that
5 I have.

6 I have more detailed testimony that I will
7 leave with you.

8 First, districts should be corrected to
9 ensure proper representation, an opportunity for
10 minority groups to elect candidates of their
11 choice, where the population and other important
12 redistricting criteria such as protecting
13 communities of interest with support in the
14 creation of majority minority districts.

15 In Manhattan, specifically the Commission
16 should look at increasing Asian representation in
17 district 1, by looking to neighboring lower areas
18 in Manhattan.

19 In Brooklyn, the Commission should examine
20 creating more cohesive districts for Latinos and
21 Asian-Americans in Brooklyn, looking at
22 population centers in Bensonhurst and Sunset
23 Park.

24 In Queens the Commission should look at
25 increasing the ability of Latinos and

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1 Asian-Americans to the candidates of their
2 choice, specifically looking at Elmhurst and
3 Jackson Heights.

4 And in the Bronx, as the district 8 is
5 currently drawn, it under-represents Manhattan.

6 The districts have a deviation of over 4
7 percent, meaning that they are over populated.

8 And we think that this should be corrected
9 by putting more of district 8 back into
10 Manhattan.

11 In Staten Island, district 49 should be more
12 compact and better aligned with existing
13 neighborhood boundaries.

14 Specifically, looking at the size of the
15 district, we think that the Commission should try
16 to narrow it to as much as possible to be within
17 one percent of the ideal size of the district.

18 We also wanted to let you know that we
19 consider -- (inaudible) -- Staten Island having
20 three full districts is a positive one.

21 Lastly, we have urged the Commission to
22 release a score card that lists the criteria used
23 in proposing the districts.

24 It will be helpful for New Yorkers to have
25 greater details regarding the adherence to

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1 criterion of the Charter so it can be known what
2 factors were used in balancing the districts.

3 And we are going to present further
4 testimony next week.

5 Thank you.

6 (Applause)

7 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
8 Yma Rodriguez to be followed by Viveca Diaz. Yma
9 Rodriguez of the Puerto Rico Unidos.

10 (Pause)

11 Okay. To be followed by Viveca Diaz.

12 (Pause)

13 So, when you hear your name called, if you
14 can make your way down towards the microphones,
15 so that you are ready to be next. That would be
16 appreciated.

17 A SPEAKER: Okay. Good evening. My name is
18 Viveca Diaz, and I am a resident of El Barrio
19 East Harlem. (Applause)

20 And thank you.

21 Land, money, votes.

22 Votes, land, money.

23 What does thou see?

24 Hopefully you do not see us, the people of
25 El Barrio as trees.

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1 Hopefully we will be seen as a recognized
2 community who fights together for their land, El
3 Barrio.

4 Hopefully, we will be recognized for all of
5 the new and old money coming in, because our next
6 big marketplace La Marqueta, once again, is on
7 116th and Park Avenue.

8 (Applause).

9 Hopefully, we will be recognized for our
10 faithful voting power: Land, money, votes, votes
11 land, money.

12 But what does thou see?

13 (Applause).

14 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Do we have Yma
15 Rodriguez?

16 A SPEAKER: My name is Yma Rodriguez.

17 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: To be followed by Raul
18 Reyes.

19 A SPEAKER: Yes.

20 My name is Yma Rodriguez.

21 And I am with Puerto Rican Unidos, and we
22 brought over close to 1,000 signatures from
23 community residents who would like to see East
24 Harlem stay East Harlem.

25 We want the Commission to follow their, the

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1 Charter and make sure that this community stays
2 intact. I not only represent Puerto Ricans in
3 this community but all Latinos. We deserve to
4 keep our market -- La Marqueta is an icon for
5 Puerto Ricans in East Harlem and throughout the
6 world.

7 And I think that we need to be respected.

8 (Applause).

9 Puerto Rican Unidos supports the map put out
10 by the unity coalition, and we would like to see
11 that map being considered.

12 And we are asking that you guys do your job
13 and keep this community intact. We deserve that.

14 Thank you.

15 (Applause).

16 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
17 Raul Reyes, to be followed by Council Member
18 Ydanis Rodriquez.

19 A SPEAKER: Could I please have a
20 translator.

21 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: We will have a
22 translator come down.

23 So for those of you who need interpreters,
24 if you can let them know at the desk, they can
25 have one available for you. Our staff will get

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1 you an interpreter.

2 Stay there if -- we will move on to the
3 Council Member and then you will be called next.

4 A SPEAKER: Can I have my own translator?

5 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Is that her? All
6 right. Raul Reyes.

7 A SPEAKER: (Through a Spanish Interpreter).

8 Good afternoon, members of the Commission.
9 We again find our bottom for the El Barrio.

10 I don't know what is this idea, where you
11 get it from, but this is not acceptable for El
12 Barrio.

13 I don't speak English but I, because I eat
14 rice and beans and no hamburgers.

15 I don't know how many of you members know El
16 Barrio, know La Marqueta. The points that, to
17 remove our important and you cannot take it from
18 El Barrio.

19 (Applause.)

20 111th, that belongs to HPD, the next year it
21 will be, that belong to the HPD department, and
22 it will be in construction until next year.

23 The three million that are coming, if we can
24 tolerate that we lost the three million that come
25 for La Marqueta.

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1 Okay. What Raul is saying is a lot of the
2 areas that have been taken out of our district,
3 primarily 111th street and other properties, are
4 key properties to our district that will be
5 developed or there are plans to develop, HPD has
6 plans to develop these and there are interests
7 who want these properties and they should stay in
8 El Barrio.

9 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: We move to move on to
10 our next speaker.

11 A SPEAKER: (Speaking in English).

12 My translator was not doing a good job.
13 Sorry.

14 A SPEAKER: (Through a Spanish Interpreter)
15 The translator was not up to par, so he needs to
16 have more time.

17 Basically, what Raul is saying is that the
18 terminal at 127th Street, which belongs to East
19 Harlem, is another area that wants to be, that is
20 important in our district that has been taken out
21 and that he feels should be in our district.

22 We feel. What Raul is saying is that this
23 Commission, historically or is, is putting,
24 pitting community against community, they are
25 pitting us against the Bronx and they are pitting

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1 us against Central Harlem and we will not
2 tolerate that.

3 (Applause).

4 Basically, Raul is saying that he is --

5 Oh, my God, it couldn't have been said
6 better.

7 Basically, what Raul is saying is we are not
8 tolerating this, he is a longstanding, he is a 55
9 year resident of East Harlem, and this is, this
10 is a political game, basically.

11 (Speaking in Spanish).

12 (Applause)

13 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: There are others
14 waiting to be testifying.

15 A SPEAKER: (Speaking in English) Let me
16 finish.

17 Look back, in the elections that East Harlem
18 -- we decided that, -- we decided that, nobody
19 else.

20 Six years the district -- who will be --

21 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

22 (Applause)

23 A SPEAKER: (Speaking in English).

24 We are not playing games with this issue.

25 We are supporting the district as it is, always.

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1 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: We have to have other
2 speakers.

3 A SPEAKER: (Through a Spanish Interpreter) I
4 think he said it best.

5 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
6 Council Member Ydanis Rodriquez.

7 A SPEAKER: Thank you.

8 First of all I would like to thank the
9 Commission for the great work that you have been
10 assigned to do.

11 Second, I would like to say, to say and show
12 everyone, that last week, the Black Asian and
13 Latino Caucus, in a meeting we passed the
14 resolution making it the public statement calling
15 for the Commission to guarantee that the Black,
16 Asian and Latino empowerment does not get
17 reduced, diminished in our City.

18 (Applause)

19 You know, we are the great City, we have
20 great nation.

21 As a former social study teacher I would
22 never know when I started teaching that I will
23 share with my former students that the first
24 person who settled in New York City was a
25 Dominican, who came in 1613, a Latino became the

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1 first immigrant that settled our island.

2 When we see the exhibition here, you know to
3 be more aware that in 1862, the majority of the
4 population of this nation, 80 percent were black.
5 Suddenly, also when I was elected, I had the
6 great privilege and opportunity to serve with my
7 colleague, Melissa Mark-Viverito, and the rest of
8 my colleagues.

9 In a Council Member that for the first time
10 black, Asian and Latino made the majority 27 out
11 of 51.

12 (Applause).

13 A SPEAKER: I ask each member of the
14 Commission to look to the audience.

15 This is what New York City is right now, a
16 City that is composed of majority by black, Asian
17 and Latino, and working together, with --
18 brothers and sisters, we have the opportunity to
19 be sure that at the end of this process, that the
20 black vote and Asian vote does not get diluted.

21 That is what I am calling you here today,
22 and that is what I expect to see.

23 (Applause).

24 A SPEAKER: I finished saying that I am
25 really disappointed in how the line really

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1 changed in El Barrio and taking the La Marqueta
2 out of Melissa Mark-Viverito's district, how this
3 --also, had been reviewed by 76 percent voting
4 population, to 63 percent, even my district
5 office, at 177th and Wadsworth has been taken
6 out, removed from this.

7 So, I hope that at the end of this process
8 and we will be able to make those changes, and I
9 hope that this will be mainly composed of one --
10 Ft. Tryon Park to Inwood and 7, keeping it
11 basically as it is now.

12 I submitted a map to the Chairman of the
13 Executive Commission, and I hope that we will
14 work together with Melissa, the Unity Map and the
15 black and Latinos to be sure that each different
16 ethnic group vote does not get diluted.

17 Thank you.

18 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
19 Agnes Rivera to be followed by Council Member
20 Inez Dickens.

21 A SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Agnes Rivera, and
22 I am with Community Voices Heard, known as CVH.

23 And just to let you know, I am a member and
24 a leader of my area in district 8 and I am very
25 proud to live in the East Harlem and also being

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1 born there.

2 You are destroying history, culture, you are
3 not taking any opportunity to say: Would you do
4 this to Little Italy, would you do this to
5 Chinatown? Would you do this to anybody else?

6 (Applause).

7 Latinos, I am a Latina, and I am proud.
8 Shame on you, shame on you to take this moment as
9 a political place. Shame on you.

10 This is not what history is supposed to be
11 like.

12 History is culture. History is love.
13 History is unity.

14 History is not destroying that what is built
15 from my grandchildren, that sit in this arena
16 listening to all of us and shame that you have to
17 have little children to save their district, to
18 speak to you.

19 How dare you? You will not destroy us.

20 We are down with the Unity. We are down
21 with the Unity Map. And we want that.

22 Extend it to Third Avenue.

23 I will help her. I will help her to
24 door-knock and do whatever it needs to be done,
25 but don't destroy La Marqueta, don't destroy my

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1 --

2 (Applause)

3 Don't destroy. How dare you.

4 (Unanimous shouts from the audience: Shame
5 On You, Shame On You)

6 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is a
7 Council Member, our next speaker is Council
8 Member Inez Dickens to be followed by --
9 (Applause) -- to be followed by Belina Anderson.

10 A SPEAKER: Good evening to the Districting
11 Commission and the members of my community and
12 all communities that are here today.

13 (Applause)

14 The critical nature of the districting
15 process is not lost on anyone in this room.

16 We have come here to say to you that we know
17 that districting will affect the future of our
18 community for the next decade.

19 Today I am no doubt speaking to you as a
20 senior member of the New York City Council,
21 representing the district that we currently sit
22 in, but I am also speaking to you as someone that
23 has lived in upper Manhattan, in Harlem, my
24 entire life.

25 I am speaking as someone that has

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1 participated in shaping and fostering the
2 vitality of our communities, its political
3 vitality, its social vitality, its culture
4 vitality.

5 Moreover, I have owned and operated a
6 business in this community, a business that
7 depends upon the deep knowledge of the
8 constituent communities and demographic patterns
9 that make up upper Manhattan. I can say with the
10 assurance of multiple generations that I know
11 this robust and dynamic part of the City and
12 maybe better than you do.

13 And it is with that deep knowledge and
14 experience that I can say that the Districting
15 Commission's first map does not reflect the
16 reality of any of our communities.

17 And at first glance I was disappointed in
18 the map because it appeared to ignore obvious
19 natural boundaries, like the large cliff that
20 separates the Polo Grounds and Rangel houses from
21 Washington Heights, that connects those
22 developments to Central Harlem in the valley.

23 I was disappointed that the Commission map
24 ignored the obvious and more importantly simple
25 demarcation that Amsterdam Avenue constitutes

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1 between 125th Street, all the way to 155th
2 Street; and was disappointed that Commission's
3 proposal ignored the desires of the community
4 between 96th and 110th Street on the west side to
5 be represented by one elected official that could
6 be -- Applause) -- accountable to their needs,
7 instead of straight across multiple elected.

8 It was damn disappointing that La Marqueta,
9 an important institution in East Harlem would be
10 irrationally drawn into my district.

11 (Applause)

12 But, quite frankly, nothing was more
13 disappointing than the manner in which the
14 proposed plan encodes a cynicism pushed by some
15 disparaged element, in our communities that
16 Latinos and African-Americans cannot work
17 together to elect a representative of the
18 community choosing; a proposed plan that assumes
19 that Latino is just Latino and ignores the rich
20 national identities that distinguish Puerto
21 Ricans, the Dominicans, Mexicans and Columbians
22 to name just a few.

23 (Applause)

24 A SPEAKER: We reject the cynicism of a plan
25 that cracks the Dominican community in half at

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1 I95 and asserts that the Dominican community
2 south of I95 has more in common with the Upper
3 West Side than with the other parts of Washington
4 Heights, currently represented by that same
5 elected official.

6 But that disappointment was at first glance,
7 because I was thankfully informed by the
8 Commission that this was merely their first
9 draft, and I know that they are going to make
10 some changes.

11 (Applause).

12 A SPEAKER: But their first draft was
13 produced looking solely at census numbers,
14 indiscriminate of the particulars of all of our
15 communities.

16 I was informed that the testimony provided
17 tonight would guide any further attempts to draw
18 the maps and those maps would undoubtedly and had
19 better be a more accurate depiction of our
20 communities.

21 After closely examining the rationale that
22 produced the proposed maps by the Commission, we
23 are here today to describe to you what we are
24 calling the Upper Manhattan Empowerment
25 Districting Plan, the plan corrects the

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1 disappointments that I have just described to
2 you.

3 Let's talk some boundaries, and we can also
4 talk numbers, because I gave that in as part of
5 my testimony.

6 Because I know you don't go by emotions, you
7 know by numbers, and I dealt with numbers.

8 (Applause)

9 You go by numbers.

10 Our plan suggests these boundaries, the
11 district boundaries of 9th councilmanic district
12 should be Amsterdam and Morningside Avenues to
13 the west, and 110 Street to the south, 155th
14 Street, and my Polo Grounds and Rangel Houses to
15 the north and Lexington Avenue and Madison
16 Avenues to the east, as it is now, and not an
17 invasion into East Harlem.

18 (Applause)

19 The district boundaries of the 7th
20 councilmanic district -- and the reason I am
21 saying about the 7th and maybe the 8th, and the
22 10th, is because when you draw lines for your, my
23 own district, it impacts upon my neighbors.

24 So I cannot, it would be remiss if I did not
25 discuss that.

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1 The district boundaries of the 7th
2 councilmanic district should have a contiguous
3 border along the Hudson River --

4 (Prompting by the General Counsel)

5 A SPEAKER: No, I will not stop.

6 (Applause)

7 A SPEAKER: -- along the Hudson River to the
8 west at 97th Street to the south, Morningside and
9 Amsterdam Avenues to the west, and --

10 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Can we --

11 (Chanting by the audience: Let Her Speak)

12 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Councilwoman, can we
13 take this part of it as a written submission?

14 We have so many speakers to get to tonight.

15 Audience Yelling)

16 It is the kind of data that we actually, it
17 is helpful to have it in writing as well. And we
18 have many other speakers that need to speak
19 tonight, and we will run out of time.

20 A SPEAKER: Do you all want to hear the
21 boundaries that I am proposing?

22 All right.

23 Are you listening to the communities or are
24 you not?

25 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: I am also listening to

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1 the list of people that signed up.

2 A SPEAKER: Are you listening to the
3 communities?

4 (Chanting by the audience: Let Her Speak)

5 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: We have a list of
6 speakers. We will not have an opportunity to
7 hear them. Anyone else -- I am afraid that we
8 will just run out of time.

9 (Chanting by the audience: Let Her Speak)

10 A SPEAKER: If you let me go on: You
11 wouldn't have wasted this time. I95 is a common
12 sense boundary and the district lines should not
13 go further north than I95.

14 Also to follow historic district lines and
15 maintain the connections of communities of
16 interest, the district should also include the
17 area encompassing Jumel Terrace historic
18 district.

19 The boundaries of the 10th councilmanic
20 district should include the total areas north of
21 I95, including the wholly contained neighborhoods
22 of Hudson Heights and Inwood.

23 For population purposes, the district has to
24 extend south of the common sense boundary, and
25 that extension should not crack half of the heart

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1 of Washington Heights' Dominican community.
2 Instead the area east of Ft. Washington Avenue
3 and west of Amsterdam Avenue, down to 155 Street
4 should be included.

5 If we follow these boundaries, we end up
6 with a plan that is simple, balanced and fair. A
7 plan that is simple because we use long unbroken
8 common-sense boundaries, and stay away from the
9 jagged blocks that are the harbingers of
10 gerrymandering.

11 These recommended district boundaries are
12 logical because they are based on community
13 district lines recognized in this City since
14 1975.

15 The plan is balanced, because we managed to
16 keep major institutions within single districts.

17 We also do the same with communities like
18 Hudson Heights and Inwood, Sugar Hill, Hamilton
19 Heights and a portion of the upper west side,
20 otherwise known as Manhattan Valley; instead of
21 splitting and instead of splitting between
22 districts, these neighborhoods are now contained
23 wholly within one district or another.

24 Finally, and most importantly, the plan
25 introduces the realistic characteristics of upper

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1 Manhattan, which previous maps ignore. Our plan,
2 the people's plan acknowledges that the 9 council
3 district that I represent is a traditionally
4 black district that deserves to be protected.

5 (Applause).

6 A SPEAKER: The plan does not crack in half

7 --

8 And I want you all to learn the definition
9 of cracking.

10 But instead recognizes the demographic
11 realities of our north and solidifies the 10th
12 council district as a primarily Dominican
13 community; and our plan sees the potential for
14 collaborative action, for a coalition, if you
15 will, in the 7th council district.

16 This is a critical component to fairness
17 because that district is in transition. It is
18 extraordinarily mixed with African-Americans,
19 other blacks, Latinos of multiple nationalities,
20 and white voters.

21 For a fair coalition, the courts have set
22 three important standards that our proposed
23 district meets: First the majority of the
24 district has to be constituted.

25 Ours is not only a majority, but with that

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1 majority, composed with over 50 percent of the
2 population.

3 Second, there has to be a pattern of voter
4 behavior confirming the possibility for a
5 coalition. That most definitely exists.

6 Even a cursory look at the voting patterns
7 in the areas we have identified does not indicate
8 that voters will only vote only for their race.
9 In fact races over the past ten years, up and
10 down, the ballot proves otherwise.

11 And finally, there needs to be evidence that
12 a minority candidate can beat a majority
13 candidate and that is obviously the case in this
14 district.

15 (Applause)

16 Several court cases, including cases even in
17 the State of New York, and I have given you
18 exhibits of Thornberg versus King.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Councilwoman, we have
20 your boundaries, we have the boundaries.

21 A SPEAKER: Our approach and the approach
22 cynicism --

23 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: We must move on.

24 A SPEAKER: That we can work together is the
25 right approach. Simple fair and balance we ask

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1 you.

2 I ask you as a lifetime resident of this
3 community, as a representative of this community
4 to adopt this approach.

5 Thank you for your time and you are trying
6 to get me to stop speaking.

7 (Applause).

8 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

9 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is --
10 (Continued Crowd Cheering)

11 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: We will recess.
12 Thaddeus, we will recess.

13 Five minutes. We will take a five minute
14 recess.

15 (Whereupon, a short recess was taken.)

16 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: I will call the next
17 speaker.

18 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: I just wanted to
19 remind you that we have to leave this facility at
20 9 p.m.

21 So, to the extent that you exceed the time,
22 two minutes, you are depriving your neighbor of
23 being able to testify. Please keep that in mind.

24 Our next speaker is Belina Anderson, to be
25 followed by Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito.

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1 A SPEAKER: Good evening.

2 I would like to think that that applause was
3 for me, but I am sure that it is for Councilwoman
4 Viverito.

5 My name is Belina Anderson.

6 And thank you for the opportunity to testify
7 this evening, and for your service on the
8 Commission.

9 I moved to my current neighborhood of
10 Manhattan Valley in 2006 and I tried to become
11 oriented to the neighborhood, its cultures
12 reflected therein and the City' elected
13 representatives that represent my neighborhood
14 and other areas nearby.

15 I became especially interested in my elected
16 City representatives when I became the president
17 of my condominium board, and I just do have to
18 say that Councilwoman Mark-Viverito and her staff
19 has been very responsive to our needs.

20 I am not here, however, to speak for or
21 against the proposed maps, because of a
22 particular elected individual, Councilwoman
23 Mark-Viverito or any other.

24 Quite to the contrary, I think that the
25 Redistricting Commission should not take into

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1 consideration the political fortunes or
2 misfortunes, its decisions may bestow or inflict
3 as the case may be upon any particular
4 representative.

5 I simply wish to explain why I am here.

6 I am paying much closer attention to City
7 politics in my current position as representative
8 for my building.

9 That said, I need to say that I am here in
10 my individual capacity and my views expressed
11 tonight are my own.

12 I visited the Commission's Website and
13 informed myself about the process and the
14 criteria for the districts. My comments are
15 directed to the process and specifically the lack
16 of information correlating the criteria with the
17 proposed changes.

18 Please direct me to a source for this
19 information, if I have missed it, but I did not
20 see an explanation for the proposed changes and
21 how they further the Commission's mission to
22 advance the objectives found in the City's
23 Charter.

24 Therefore, it is difficult to support or
25 oppose the Commission's proposed changes because

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1 I just don't know the underlying basis.

2 Again, if I missed it please let me know
3 where to find it.

4 I will just quickly --

5 I would add a couple of points from the
6 perspective of someone that is not deeply
7 immersed in this issue. Just looking at the maps
8 on the Website, it seems that they are not very
9 contiguous since they seem to go over water
10 boundaries and connect different parts of the
11 City, three different boroughs.

12 Again, this is a sketchy look from the
13 Website. So it is hard to understand how these
14 boundaries can be considered compact, of one
15 criterion, or keeping intact neighborhoods and
16 communities of interest which is another.

17 My last point is about continuity.

18 During the past years I have lived in
19 Manhattan Valley my polling place has changed
20 twice: It started at Towers on the Park, moved
21 to Frederick Douglas Boulevard and is now it is
22 on 109th Street.

23 I just want to say that continuity really
24 helps to keep people engaged and continuously
25 engaged. And the continuity of the district

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1 boundaries is something to be considered.

2 (Prompting by the General Counsel)

3 One sentence, please.

4 Finally and most importantly, I am not
5 asking the Commission for a particular outcome or
6 proposing my own map, I am asking the Commission
7 to justify its proposed changes during the
8 deliberation and public comment period and when
9 it presents its final map.

10 Thank you.

11 (Applause).

12 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Once again, I want to
13 remind everyone that because we have so many
14 speakers that it is unlikely that we will get
15 through everyone by the end of the night. So
16 each additional minute that you speak is a minute
17 that you have deprived from your neighbor.

18 Our next speaker will be Council member
19 Melissa Mark-Viverito -- (Applause) -- to be
20 followed by Council Member Robert Jackson.

21 A SPEAKER: I want to thank the Commission
22 members and everyone that is here and I also want
23 to thank my colleagues that spoke before me.

24 Clearly, we are not to be divided.

25 And I think one greater symbol of unity than

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1 to be in this institution Schomberg Research
2 Library, who is a -- (Speaking in Spanish) -- we
3 are united, there are points of unity, we will
4 not be divided.

5 (Applause.)

6 So, I am Council Member Mark-Viverito, and I
7 proudly represent council district 8, El Barrio,
8 East Harlem, Manhattan Valley, part of the upper
9 westside and parts of Mott Haven.

10 I am here this evening to express serious
11 concerns, as you are hearing here tonight, across
12 my district that are being expressed with regards
13 to your preliminary draft.

14 It splits up neighborhoods, in opposition to
15 the Charter mandate.

16 I join my community strongly in urging the
17 Districting Commission to use the Unity Map
18 proposal as a starting point in redrawing the 8th
19 councilmanic district.

20 This proposal maximizes representations of
21 people of color, in our City, and it preserves
22 communities of interest and respecting
23 neighborhood boundaries.

24 The Commission's proposal radically,
25 radically changed district 8 on all fronts.

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1 The west side of the district, 30 percent of
2 the district was radically and just overnight
3 eliminated.

4 The El Barrio -- (inaudible) -- boundaries
5 were severely shifted and suddenly the Bronx part
6 of my district grew from 10 percent to more than
7 50 percent.

8 Despite the Charter's requirement that
9 district be -- (Applause) -- preserve communities
10 of interest, this draft goes against that at its
11 core.

12 And what makes no sense whatsoever and
13 really at the heart of it is La Marqueta.

14 The El Barrio, East Harlem neighborhood is
15 the cradle of the Puerto Rican community, not
16 only to New York City but to cities across this
17 nation.

18 (Applause)

19 La Marqueta is the iconic landmark of the
20 Puerto Rican community, which speaks to I believe
21 the fact that I don't understand if you truly
22 understand the neighborhoods for which you are
23 drawing lines.

24 I will say that I welcome the opportunity to
25 increase my representation of the Bronx, in fact,

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1 the Unity Map proposal nearly doubles districts
2 8's portion of the Bronx, from 11 to 20 percent.

3 The concern though is under the Commission's
4 proposal, the average Manhattan Council Member
5 would represent a 167,000 people, the highest
6 number of any of the five boroughs which in fact
7 leads to under representation.

8 Moreover, it is residents and not boroughs
9 that have a right to equal representation.

10 There is nothing in the Charter, the
11 Districting Commission rules or equal protection
12 law that provides for borough representation. In
13 fact the very reason that the City Charter was
14 amended in 1989, was that the Supreme Court found
15 that the emphasis on boroughs had the actual
16 effect of disenfranchising voters.

17 (Applause)

18 So, to conclude, I have heard the message
19 from my constituents loud and clear, and
20 hopefully you are hearing them loud and clear
21 here tonight: The proposed district lines as
22 currently drawn can't stand.

23 I urge the Commission to use the Unity Map
24 as a basis for reconfiguring upper Manhattan and
25 the Bronx, as a way of preserving communities of

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1 interest, and minimizing the splitting up of our
2 city's neighborhoods.

3 I also urge the Commission to consider an
4 additional set of hearings where the community
5 can have another opportunity to weigh on the
6 lines -- (Applause) -- because after tonight, you
7 don't have on your calendar a scheduled hearing
8 in which we will see the second redrawing of the
9 lines.

10 We need transparency, we need
11 accountability, we need another set of hearings.

12 Thank you.

13 (Applause)

14 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you. Before I
15 call the next --

16 Before I call the next speaker, can we have
17 order --

18 We need to hear from other witnesses.

19 Thank you.

20 Before I call the next speaker, I would like
21 to remind you that the building security has
22 asked to please those that are standing in aisles
23 can take seats. Let's be respectful to our host
24 here and do as they ask, please.

25 Our next speaker is Council Member Robert

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1 Jackson, to be followed by Debbie Quinones.

2 A SPEAKER: Well, first, let me thank the
3 Commission for being here in Harlem.

4 As you know, I am a member of the City
5 Council representing the 7th councilmanic
6 district, but also I co-chair the New York City
7 Council black Latino and Asian caucus. There are
8 27 members of us.

9 In general let me say that clearly the
10 message that I want to community this evening
11 from a general point of view is that we want to
12 continue the diversity of our great City and we
13 do not want to dilute the minority representation
14 in our great City. I ask you that loud and
15 clear.

16 I read in The New York Times, on Wednesday,
17 about people raising that in the Bronx, and I
18 raise that to you tonight.

19 But also more specifically, when I last was
20 in front of you, I had asked you to keep the 7th
21 councilmanic district as it was.
22 Obviously, that did not occur because you came
23 out with your preliminary map. I am a realist
24 and I do understand that the 10 councilmanic
25 district is so low it has to go somewhere.

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1 But, clearly the jagged lines that you make
2 the 10 councilmanic district come down to the
3 Heights and then the 7 to come up on the east
4 side of Washington Heights, that is not the best
5 lines that you can do.

6 So, I ask you to take a look at that again,
7 understanding that in New York County, in
8 Manhattan, you have 10 Council Members in
9 Manhattan, New York County, with six of them
10 being people of color.

11 That should not be diminished, because we
12 are protected under the Voting Rights Act with
13 Manhattan.

14 (Applause)

15 So I ask you to look at that. Clearly the 9
16 councilmanic district should remain a majority
17 district where black representatives should
18 elected. The 7 councilmanic district should
19 remain where either a black or Latino should be
20 elected and the 8 councilmanic district where a
21 Latino should be elected.

22 I ask you to consider that in your
23 deliberations.

24 Thank you.

25 (Applause)

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1 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

3 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you. Our next
4 speaker is Debbie Quinones, to be followed by
5 Ruben Vargas.

6 A SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Debbie
7 Quinones and I am a life-long resident of East
8 Harlem and El Barrio.

9 Thank you for this opportunity to testify on
10 the City Districting Commission.

11 My testimony this evening comes from a place
12 of deep profound respect and love for my
13 community.

14 And I apologize in advance if I become
15 emotional. As --

16 A SPEAKER: Take your time.

17 A SPEAKER: I am. That's right. As a
18 life-long resident of East Harlem, community
19 leader and activist and board member of the upper
20 Manhattan Empowerment Zone and former board
21 member of Civitas, and currently on the community
22 board, I understand the difficulties that this
23 Commission faces in trying to keep a process that
24 promotes integrity, it promotes --

25 I can't even see what I wrote down. I am

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1 sorry.

2 But, here it is.

3 The process, intent and responsibility to
4 engage in the community and maintaining a
5 transparency are very difficult.

6 So, with this I want to thank the Commission
7 for all of the hard work that you have done.

8 But I also must address the issue of
9 redistricting itself and the process of the
10 discussions with the incumbents to seek their
11 approval, that keeps them, wow, that keeps them
12 from really talking to the community about the
13 issue that they can serve us better.

14 I find that this discussion started a year
15 ago, was glossed over by the elected officials
16 assuming that from the lack the community
17 participation in the past, that they just do what
18 they do and they get what they get.

19 I went to a meeting last year and only 8
20 people showed up. There was no follow-up. There
21 was no communication.

22 So I am concerned why is it that there was
23 no political or public education campaign to help
24 us to participate in the process?

25 I am very concerned about the elected

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1 officials who did not follow up, but instead
2 arrogantly assumed that they were untouchable.

3 Guess what? We are all touched by the loss
4 of La Marqueta and Randall's Island.

5 (Applause)

6 You know. There is clear violations in the
7 City Charter with the placement of Randall's
8 Island in Queens, that states that a district
9 should not cross over borders into another
10 borough unless absolutely necessary.

11 Well, what's so necessary?

12 I don't understand why do you have to go to
13 Randall's Island, has to go to Queens. It
14 doesn't make sense. For years, it has been in
15 district 8, for years East Harlem residents have
16 attempted to have a better relationship with
17 Randall's Island.

18 Is this some backlash because we want to do
19 the right thing and hold them accountable.

20 I don't understand.

21 I have a deep concern for La Marqueta, which
22 is by the way a cultural and spiritual sanctuary
23 in El Barrio; it has become a political football,
24 but it still belongs in our district.

25 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you for your

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1 testimony.

2 Our next speaker is --

3 A SPEAKER: Wait a minute.

4 I have some more things to say.

5 East Harlem its not "Silly Putty" for us to
6 be stretched away to the point where we have no
7 representation.

8 Two minutes is not enough to hear what we to
9 say, because this community is being ripped off
10 and this can no longer be tolerated.

11 Thank you.

12 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
13 Ruben Vargas to be followed by Harry Rodriguez.

14 A SPEAKER: Good evening, everyone. Good
15 evening distinguished commissioners.

16 My name is Ruben Dario Vargas, I am a
17 representative of the United Democratic
18 Organization.

19 We are an organization that encourages the
20 regular citizens to participate in the electoral
21 democratic process.

22 In fact, our mission statement is we do
23 politics, we make politicians.

24 Our organization doesn't like to see elected
25 officials running on a -- (Inaudible).

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1 Our organization is to reinforce the
2 American democratic process.

3 Concerning the district, the redistricting,
4 it is hard to understand -- that the reason why
5 the district has been, are being redrawn, it is
6 because it is required by law, it is because of
7 the census, the last census, indicated that we
8 had lost people from Manhattan, they have been
9 shifting to the Bronx.

10 No one wants things in the way that
11 sometimes have to be done.

12 But the district has been in compliance with
13 the voting right after 1965, with the City
14 Charter section of 5052, and especially has been
15 in compliance with section 5 of the voting right
16 after 1965.

17 I like to clarify here, the people are
18 believing that by the way the district has been
19 drawn, that means that somebody is going to carry
20 in a flat, carry La Marqueta to the Bronx, that
21 is not what happened.

22 La Marqueta will stay right where it is, and
23 everyone will stay where we are.

24 I just want to congratulate the Commission
25 for a job well done.

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1 Keep it like it is. Thank you.

2 (Applause)

3 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
4 Harry Rodriguez, to be followed by Assembly
5 Member Keith Wright.

6 A SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Harry
7 Rodriguez, and I am the -- (Applause) -- senior
8 district leader here in East Harlem, 68 Part B,
9 also the -- (Applause) -- New York Council
10 Democrats.

11 I am also was a former chairman of planning
12 board 11, for several terms. Now, I am here to
13 let you know the outrage of my community
14 regarding La Marqueta.

15 For one, nobody lives there.

16 So why would you count them?

17 Why would you move La Marqueta?

18 Why would you move them to councilmanic
19 district 9? There are homeless people living
20 there?

21 I don't think so.

22 And you know that La Marqueta is a jewel for
23 the people of East Harlem, especially to the
24 Puerto Rican people where I reside.

25 And all my friends out there they love La

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1 Marqueta, the development of La Marqueta, so we
2 can get the jobs that we need in our community.
3 Okay.

4 That is the reason why they are trying to
5 take La Marqueta away from us. We will never
6 stop fighting. And we will fight until we stop
7 this.

8 Okay. I just want to say that, I recommend,
9 with the Unity Map and make sure that the 6, 7
10 district is coterminous and go further out to a
11 little part but about not 50 percent.

12 Maybe -- that will cover everything, and
13 make East Harlem whole and not affect anybody
14 else, keep it the way it was.

15 But I am personally here to let you know
16 that my community is very angry and they will be
17 coming and fighting, and we will get it together
18 and make sure that you guys come up with good
19 lines.

20 We will not take this lying down. The
21 community has spoken, and you know how they feel
22 and we will continue fighting.

23 Thank you for the time.

24 (Applause)

25 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is

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1 Assembly Member Keith Wright, to be followed by
2 M. Ndigo Washington.

3 A SPEAKER: Good evening.

4 I want to thank the New York City
5 Districting Commission for allowing me to give
6 testimony as to why it is of the utmost
7 importance that we reconsider the proposed
8 district maps for the New York City Council.

9 As your Commission tackles yet another
10 legislative redistricting attempt, it is
11 essential that you work together with the elected
12 officials that understand the needs of these
13 neighborhoods, and with the community members who
14 deserve fair and effective councilmanic
15 representation.

16 In my testimony I will outline why the upper
17 Manhattan we must promise a fair and smart
18 redistricting process, in order to preserve the
19 unity and progress that has empowered our
20 communities.

21 As it stands, the New York City Council maps
22 do little to bind together communities of
23 interest, or to allow the Hispanic and
24 African-American population in upper Manhattan a
25 necessary voice in City government.

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1 I support the upper Manhattan empowerment
2 redistricting map, which will effectively
3 maintain political participation and viability,
4 and this plan is simple and fair, because it uses
5 community districts as its base.

6 Any changes to existing boundaries were done
7 carefully, are not drastic and reflect the
8 success that the existing neighborhoods have.

9 The plan adheres to the provision of the
10 Voting Rights Act while also protecting the
11 historic and diverse demographics of upper
12 Manhattan.

13 The plan also grants many of the large
14 institutions contained in the area their own
15 council district, allowing for more focus, better
16 representation and centralization of resources
17 for both the districts and the institutions.

18 Perhaps most foolishly, the proposed map
19 slices through many of upper Manhattan's most
20 well established and well-known areas and
21 neighborhoods, including El Barrio in East Harlem

22 --

23 (Prompting by the General Counsel).

24 Just wait a minute.

25 -- on the heels of a huge revitalization of

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1 El Barrio, the same for La Marqueta, this
2 Commission is looking to split the marketplace
3 between districts, neglecting to consider that
4 the site is of economic importance, and
5 historically part of the 8 councilmanic district.

6 This type of oversight is careless, but
7 avoidable. It would undoubtedly have a
8 devastating effect on our community, and the map
9 proposed by the New York City Districting
10 Commission represent an eerie, eerie reoccurrence
11 of the federal court's failure to address the
12 needs of upper Manhattan in the recent statewide
13 redistricting process.

14 As you move forward in this redistricting, I
15 ask that you familiarize yourself with the needs
16 of these communities, and consider what in fact
17 is at stake, if you neglect existing boundaries,
18 and attempt to reshape neighborhoods that have
19 been solidified for the at least the last decade.

20 District 8 currently goes into the Bronx.
21 There is no reason why it needs to be 50 percent
22 in the Bronx.

23 There is no reason.

24 (Applause).

25 There is no reason.

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1 So, I just want to say thank you very much
2 for allowing me to deliver this testimony on
3 behalf of the communities that I have dedicated
4 my life and career to representing.

5 And I will be glad to answer any and all
6 questions, which I am sure you won't ask.

7 All right. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

9 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will
10 be M. Ndigo Washington to be followed by
11 Esmeralda Simmons.

12 A SPEAKER: Good evening, members of the New
13 York City Districting Commission.

14 My name is Monique Ndigo Washington, and I
15 am the president of the Terrace Apartments Tenant
16 Association, which includes four buildings near
17 the southern district of district 7.

18 I am here to lend my voice as a member of
19 the Harlem community, and join with others to
20 ensure that the boundaries of district 7 are
21 drawn to meet the legal criteria set forth by the
22 New York City Charter, the Voting Rights Act and
23 the Justice Department.

24 I represent four generations of residing in
25 West Harlem.

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1 Let me take a quick moment to explain why
2 this is significant.
3 If you ask any person, anywhere in the world if
4 they ever heard of Harlem, I am sure their answer
5 would be a resounding Yes.

6 Harlem is known for its unique culture,
7 history and heritage. We have given rise to
8 artists, writers and activists. Harlem was the
9 place to be seen and to see.

10 However, that dirty word gentrification
11 arrived 20 years ago and has threatened to change
12 and erase our history.

13 I witnessed landlords evict tenants
14 illegally from rent stabilized apartments and
15 Mitchell- Lama housing so that they can increase
16 their rent and secure market rate. Small
17 business owners have suffered the same fait, and
18 had to close their doors because they are unable
19 to compete with big-box retail stores such as
20 banks, Columbia, Duane Reade, Starbucks and Chase
21 Bank.

22 Some of the black-owned businesses who have
23 remained more recent, have recently shut their
24 doors and remained on the 125th Street corridor
25 have relocated more often and have had to go on

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1 further east.

2 This is a huge concern for the future of our
3 community since Mayor Bloomberg's proposal revamp
4 125th Street.

5 I would like to call your attention to an
6 important aspect as occurred with drafting the
7 preliminary lines.

8 On 128th Street, cuts across St. Nicholas
9 Avenue and Convent Avenue. Why has this line
10 been cut across an ally which is literally
11 sandwiched between a building where St. Nicholas
12 park ends.

13 Why would this line stop at 128th Street and
14 not extend to 127th Street?

15 After realizing that I was not the only
16 person who has been cut out of a line in district
17 7, as well as other communities in Brooklyn, I
18 can't help to be suspicious and conclude that
19 this drawing-out was intentional and absolutely
20 political.

21 (Applause)

22 Is this an attempt to silence the voice of
23 grass roots and possible elected representatives
24 for the upcoming 2013 City Council race,
25 representation that may challenge politics and

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1 buck the status quo?

2 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: We need to move an
3 ahead.

4 (Applause)

5 A SPEAKER: I am the founder of the group,
6 Take Back Our City.

7 We ask that a take a close look when you
8 consider drawing these lines to strike a balance
9 between me and the criteria outlined in the
10 Justice Department and the current population of
11 this district.

12 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: We need to move on.

13 A SPEAKER: Yes, I am.

14 Respectively, 8 and 9.

15 Be reminded that the residents here, we
16 share a common bond. We send our children to
17 schools in the area, participate in civic and
18 religious organizations and support our
19 institutions.

20 We hope that this will be protected and
21 maintained.

22 Thank you for your time.

23 And I hope you will include my testimony as
24 we move forward to finalize these lines.

25 And we will not be silenced.

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1 Our voice is important.

2 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
3 Esmeralda Simmons, to be followed by Council
4 Member Rosie Mendes.

5 A SPEAKER: Good evening.

6 My name is Esmeralda Simmons and I am the
7 executive director of the Center for Law and
8 Social Justice of Medgar Evers College CUNY.

9 The center has a 25 year history of doing
10 voting rights work in New York City.

11 Our most recent exercise in voting rights
12 work has been in the New York State redistricting
13 process, where along with our other Unity Map
14 colleagues, we were successful in having the
15 federal court adopt the Unity Map for the
16 congressional lines.

17 We are now here before you.

18 Through our current racial and justice
19 redistricting project, the Center for Law and
20 Social Justice has been an active member of the
21 Unity Map group that produced the City Council
22 Unity Map that has been submitted to the
23 Commission.

24 The Unity Map coalition also is now making
25 the following recommendations.

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1 And the Center for Law and Social Justice
2 requests and strongly urges this Commission to
3 number 1, adopt a Unity Map as its final plan.

4 The Commission has a historic accomplishment
5 before it, for consideration at this time.

6 The Unity Map for the City of New York is
7 the first ever 51 district plan that has been
8 submitted with Latino, black and Asian advocates
9 and community groups, not everybody, I admit not
10 everybody, agreeing to respect each others'
11 communities and fairly share the City' districts.
12 The Unity Plan --

13 Let me finish by saying this.

14 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Is there anything in
15 writing that you can share with us?

16 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Is there anything in
17 writing that you can share with us?

18 A SPEAKER: I have given copies. You have
19 copies of it.

20 There are two things that I need to say.

21 The Commission has to complete its task
22 within a time frame. We all understand that.

23 However, the Commission should complete its
24 task by allowing public comment to the Commission
25 on its final plan before it is submitted to the

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1 City Council.

2 Anything less would be making a mockery of
3 the Commission's pledge to have an open and
4 transparent process, which allows for real public
5 comment.

6 (Applause).

7 A SPEAKER: The final plan is the most
8 important document that the Commission will be
9 releasing during its tenure, say for any amended
10 final plan.

11 The final plan is a document that the public
12 is waiting for, and that is the document that we
13 seek to comment on.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

15 A SPEAKER: Finally, finally, in my written
16 testimony, and we will testify again in Brooklyn,
17 we talk about the fact that in Harlem the
18 Commission's draft district 9, not only splits
19 Central Harlem from West Harlem, but Central
20 Harlem from East Harlem. It cuts off El Barrio,
21 it cuts off the Community Cultural Center, it
22 cuts off Randall's Island.

23 It is completely unnecessary and callous to
24 the community's interests.

25 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

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1 We have to move on because we have other
2 speakers.

3 A SPEAKER: We will be -- we will continue
4 to be watching the Commission.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

6 A SPEAKER: And we hope that we can be
7 cooperating with you to a final product that we
8 could all see actually represents the voters of
9 this City.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

12 (Applause)

13 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
14 Council Member Rosie Mendez, followed by Council
15 Member Margaret Chin.

16 A SPEAKER: Fair evening.

17 I can't say good evening because I don't
18 know if it is going that good.

19 But, I am here to talk about my district,
20 district 2.

21 I represent the Lower East Side, what is now
22 called the East Village and I still call the
23 Lower East Side, Gramercy Park, Kips Bay and
24 parts of Murray Hill.

25 My first statement goes to the proposed

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1 Unity Map, which I am not in favor of.

2 The proposed Unity Map takes away
3 approximately 6,000 units of low and moderate
4 income housing for my district. That is
5 approximately 10,000 in population of Latino and
6 African-American residents.

7 It takes away 4 public housing, it takes
8 away two Mitchell-Lamas and it takes away a small
9 portion of a co-op that still has rent stabilized
10 individuals in there.

11 So, losing that um, in the Unity Map
12 compromises me as a minority person elected to
13 that district, it also compromises district 1 and
14 3 where we have an Asian representative and a
15 LGBT representative.

16 So the Unity Map really destroys three
17 minority represented districts.

18 And I am not in favor of it.

19 In terms of the proposed District Commission
20 map, um, my objections with it is that it puts a
21 lot of the west side and takes me from being an
22 eastside Council Member to also representing a
23 large portion of the west side.

24 I believe that we can tweek the current map
25 to keep it in the eastside, about 10 blocks that

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1 are heavily populated were taken out of my
2 district.

3 If that is put in with more some more blocks
4 we can achieve the same amount of racial
5 composition that the district currently has.

6 Thank you for letting me testify tonight.

7 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you very much.

8 A SPEAKER: In time, yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Most appreciated.

10 A SPEAKER: Thank you for the opportunity to
11 testify before you.

12 My name is Margaret Chin, and I am the City
13 Council Member that represents district 1, in
14 Lower Manhattan.

15 22 years ago I testified before the
16 Districting Commission, asking for Chinatown to
17 be kept as a whole and connected to Manhattan,
18 Lower Manhattan neighborhoods, Battery Park City,
19 Tribeca and the financial district, and parts of
20 the lower east side.

21 At that time we asked for an opportunity to
22 have Asian representation. And the District
23 Commission at that time created 3 districts,
24 because also wanted to support the hopes and
25 aspirations of the Latino community to have

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1 representation in lower Manhattan, as well as the
2 gay community.

3 So 3 districts were created and the third
4 district and also the district that Rosie
5 represents, they had a minority -- a Latino
6 represented district too, since the beginning.

7 The Asian community, it took us a little
8 while, it took us 20 years to get here. We had
9 to register people to vote and we had to get them
10 to come out to vote. But there were also
11 opportunities where we had three Asian candidates
12 running.

13 And we saw the potential.

14 And in the election of 2009, we had two
15 Asian candidates running, and we were running
16 against an incumbent and we were able to elect an
17 Asian-American, myself to the City Council.

18 So that is why --

19 (Applause).

20 That is why I support the preliminary map
21 that the Commission has put out for district 1
22 that pretty much kept district 1 as is.

23 There will be some minor adjustments along
24 the border.

25 And that is why I do not support the Unity

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1 Map proposal for Lower Manhattan, because that
2 map, the Unity Map pits two minority groups
3 together.

4 And right now, we have Latino representation
5 and we have Asian representation, and we work
6 well together. So, I think that we should really
7 keep our district the way it is. Thank you very
8 much.

9 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you very much.

11 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
12 Edwin Marcial to be followed by David Nocenti.

13 A SPEAKER: Thank you.

14 Long time. My name is Edwin Marcial, and I
15 represent the United Puerto Rican of the State of
16 New York, Inc.

17 And before I start with my little speech, I
18 would like to find out, with all your respect,
19 how many Latinos are on the Commission right now?

20 AN AUDIENCE MEMBER: None.

21 A SPEAKER: One. One.

22 And at least we got one in there. So you
23 are supposed to fight for us?

24 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Me.

25 A SPEAKER: You too. You are a Puerto Rican

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1 today?

2 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Puerto Rican today.

3 A SPEAKER: Good. Good.

4 All right. Beautiful. So we got two. All
5 right.

6 Don't forget, this is the beginning, this is
7 the beginning of a movement. We need, we need
8 our district the way it is.

9 If we had to change a little bit, fine, I am
10 agreeing with that. I don't know where you come
11 from, because I never seen your face before in
12 East Harlem. We need people from East Harlem to
13 make the decision, of whatever East Harlem is
14 going to be. I respect, I respect you as a
15 Commission, because I believe -- they have brains
16 to decide what the best, is best for our
17 community.

18 I have close to 3,000 petitions here.

19 (Applause).

20 I have, I believe that about three or four
21 thousand more around here today. So, I would
22 like to give this to you as a token of our
23 communication, our dedication and organization.
24 Because you know, when I get mad I get stupid and
25 I don't want to be stupid here today.

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1 Please make sure that whatever decision you
2 make, keep the goddamn Marqueta the way it is.

3 (Applause).

4 A SPEAKER: I am sorry about my language.
5 But my time is finished?

6 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Yes.

7 A SPEAKER: I want to continue a little
8 more.

9 Thank you and I appreciate what you are
10 doing. But make sure, make sure, if it is
11 broken, don't try to fix it.

12 (Applause).

13 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
14 David Nocenti. David Nocenti, to be followed by
15 Gustavo Rosado.

16 (Audience Chanting: Save East Harlem).

17 A SPEAKER: Chairman Romano.

18 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Someone is trying to
19 speak.

20 A SPEAKER: Chairman Romano and members of
21 the Commission, my name is David Nocenti, the
22 executive director of Union Settlement
23 Association, which is the oldest and largest
24 social service provider in East Harlem, we have
25 been there since 1895.

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1 I am also a member of the East Harlem
2 Chamber of Commence.

3 I am a member of East Harlem Human Services
4 Consortium.

5 I am a member of East Harlem Community
6 Alliance. We work closely with the East Harlem
7 Business Capital Corporation, with the East
8 Harlem Mexican Chamber of Commerce, with the East
9 Harlem Council of Community Improvement and I
10 could go on.

11 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Your expertise is
12 acknowledged.

13 A SPEAKER: East Harlem is undoubtedly a
14 single community of common interest.

15 This is, you have heard a lot about La
16 Marqueta, and it is not just about La Marqueta,
17 you can't solve the problem by simply moving one
18 line and moving La Marqueta back into council
19 district 8.

20 21 blocks of East Harlem have been removed
21 and they need to be moved back in.

22 This is more than just a historical or a
23 perception problem, this is a legal problem.

24 You are well aware of the requirements of
25 the City Charter which require that you keep

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1 intact communities of common interest such as
2 East Harlem El Barrio and a compactness
3 requirement which prohibits the creation of
4 districts that are more than two times as long as
5 they are wide.

6 With the new district that goes up to the
7 Highbridge area of the Bronx, even if you take
8 out Central Park, in council district 8 and move
9 that, you ignore that, it is still going to be
10 three times as large.

11 The Council, which the City Charter requires
12 that these, these criteria be followed to the
13 maximum extent possible, and I think the Unity
14 Map really shows what needs to be done with much
15 more compactness and keeping the communities of
16 interest intact.

17 (Applause)

18 So I want to state my strong support for the
19 other organizations that put together the Unity
20 Map.

21 I am afraid that I have only brought 290
22 petitions with me, not the 3,000 that you just
23 received.

24 I will leave them at the front desk. Thank
25 you very much for giving me the opportunity to

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1 speak.

2 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

3 (Applause)

4 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will
5 be Gustavo Rosado, to be followed by Joan Levine.

6 A SPEAKER: Good evening.

7 My name is Gustavo Rosado, and I am the
8 executive director of the El Barrio Operation
9 Fight Back -- (Applause) -- a community-based
10 organization that has been servicing the East
11 Harlem community for more than 25 years.

12 These lines not only attack a representative
13 that we have elected to represent us, but more
14 importantly, it attacks a community, East Harlem,
15 El Barrio, community planning board 11, which is
16 a community that is recognized and acknowledged
17 over a long period of time, with a distinct
18 history, identity and tradition.

19 The 8th council district lines, as they are
20 currently proposed, are designed to minimize and
21 practically eliminate our voice as a community.
22 It is like the dividing up a family of a
23 household and sending your son off to live with
24 your cousin, and your daughter to live with
25 someone else, and you to go live with families,

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1 with family friends.

2 Obviously, we could all agree that that is
3 something that does not make sense. In
4 particular, this neighborhood has traditionally
5 had a strong Hispanic presence, and at a time
6 when the Latino members are growing and we
7 finally have an opportunity for fair
8 representation, a plan like this appears to be
9 designed to strategically divide and conquer.

10 It is devastating to our community, it is
11 unfair, it is unjust and it doesn't have to be
12 this way. There are alternatives.

13 It is my understanding that there are
14 sufficient numbers in El Barrio, and with the
15 assistance of adjacent neighborhood areas to keep
16 El Barrio and community planning board together
17 as a community.

18 It needs to be done, and it must be done.
19 Thank you.

20 (Applause)

21 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
22 Joan Levine, and to be followed by Madelyn
23 Innocent.

24 A SPEAKER: Good evening.

25 I would like to speak about a community of

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1 interest.

2 My name is Joan Levine, and I am co-chair
3 with Ms. Sarah Martin of the Morningside Heights
4 West Harlem Sanitation Coalition.

5 Ms. Martin is president of the Grant Houses
6 Residents' Association, a public housing
7 development containing 1,940 units.

8 I am the former chair of the community
9 relations committee at Morningside Gardens, a
10 co-op containing almost 1,000 apartments,
11 adjacent to Grant Houses.

12 Both developments were part of the same
13 redevelopment project completed in 1957. Our two
14 developments run from 123rd to LaSalle Street,
15 from Broadway to both sides of Amsterdam Avenue.

16 Almost 20 years ago, the group from the two
17 complexes formed a coalition in order to work on
18 quality of life issues in our neighborhood
19 together. We decided correctly that in unity
20 there is strength.

21 Since that time, we have been a force in the
22 community. All of these accomplishments would
23 not have been possible if both developments had
24 not been in the same councilmanic, assembly and
25 state senatorial districts.

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1 The project -- projected redistricting lines
2 for the new district 7 seem to keep us together
3 once more, but it is imperative that the final
4 draft does the same.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

7 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
8 Madelyn Innocent, to be followed by Roberto
9 Anazaghati.

10 A SPEAKER: Good evening.

11 My name is Madelyn Innocent, and I have
12 lived in Douglas Houses since 1957. I am aware
13 that this meeting is about redistricting, ah,
14 district 8, and that means that we will be losing
15 a great human being and a great Council Member,
16 Melissa Mark-Viverito, who I got to know --
17 (Applause) -- who I got to know what she stands
18 for and what she will fight for, as well.

19 I met Melissa Mark-Viverito on Broadway when
20 she was campaigning for Council Member, and she
21 seemed to be very interested in helping the
22 neighborhood as well as being sincere about
23 improving the conditions of public housing.

24 That was the first politician to engage me
25 in conversation, for public housing, and that

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1 impressed me very much.

2 I mention these things, because when my
3 mother told me stories before we moved into
4 public housing, how local politicians helped my
5 family to move in and other families, as well.

6 Council Member Viverito has restored my
7 faith in politicians because of her time and
8 dedication to the improvement of public housing.
9 Melissa is a person who inspires people to do
10 better in their lives.

11 Melissa has the most public housing in her
12 district, and gets the challenges and issues
13 public housing residents are facing.

14 For the last two years I have been working
15 with Melissa and her staff with participatory
16 budgeting in district 8, and I have seen her
17 engage with the residents of Douglas Houses
18 whereas there has not been anyone putting in the
19 time and effort as well as money to ensure public
20 housing will be saved.

21 This reminds me of the old days and the
22 stories my mother told me as a child, and as a
23 young adult.

24 Losing her will be devastating to the
25 residents because we will be losing one person

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1 that I feel who had taken the time to help us in
2 our problems, and believe me there are huge
3 problems with NYCHA.

4 (Applause)

5 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you very much.

6 A SPEAKER: I have a little more.

7 Lastly, in my life I have experienced good
8 and bad.

9 The good, the good is that Melissa Viverito
10 is an asset to our community, that empowers us to
11 speak up and get involved with things, things you
12 may not otherwise get involved with.

13 The bad is that we have to start over and go
14 backwards in time to someone who doesn't know us
15 at all.

16 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

17 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
18 Roberto Anazaghsti, to be followed by Curtis
19 Arluck.

20 A SPEAKER: My name is Roberto Anazaghsti, I
21 was born here, 117th Street. And this, and this
22 is -- this piece is called a legitimate rape of
23 El Barrio.

24 Number 1, we should be having a hearing in
25 East Harlem, number 1.

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1 This hearing is good, very good. It should
2 be another one.

3 (Applause)

4 It reminds me of my old days with the urban
5 renewal plan, which only had a polling place to
6 elect people back in 1965. I am only 76.

7 I do not agree with any of the borders
8 suggested in the maps made by the Unity Coalition
9 and/or the Commission. And the so-called unity
10 plan it lives out Fifth to Madison Avenue, which
11 includes Taft Projects, which is between 111 and
12 112 Street which has over 5,000 families, and I
13 forgot to put in Schomberg and 1270 Fifth Avenue
14 and others.

15 Then it goes to Highbridge to pick up
16 population.

17 Does that make any sense?

18 Leaving out the famous La Marqueta is really
19 a cultural and economic attempt to legitimize the
20 rape of El Barrio, not only for the Puerto
21 Ricans, but for the Mexicans and Africans, and to
22 bring in outsiders who already represent the one
23 percent in their quest to big in big-box
24 multinational corporations.

25 Do we want in El Barrio like 125th Street,

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1 the way it looks now, with the big-box stores, or
2 do you want the small stores, which will be
3 pushed out when the big guys come.

4 This is a survival issue for
5 African-Americans, Africans who are now new
6 immigrants, and also Latino owners of businesses.

7 Many of us appreciate the street vendors,
8 they remind us of us when the Puerto Ricans
9 started back in the 1930s, with bodegas and
10 selling shopping bags and shoe shining
11 operations.

12 This represents a tourist opportunity like
13 Chinatown or Harlem with their marketplace.

14 It also provides goods and services that our
15 population can afford.

16 I propose that the community adopt the same
17 lines of the community board 11, which is from
18 96th Street to the bulkhead on 141st Street.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you very much.

21 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
22 Curtis Arluck to be followed by Henrietta Lyle.

23 A SPEAKER: I am Curtis Arluck, and I am the
24 democratic district leader from the 69th assembly
25 district, part C, covering Morningside Heights

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1 and parts of Manhattan Valley.

2 I am not a candidate for City Council nor do
3 I have a candidate for City Council.

4 In 2009, I had three candidates for City
5 Council, and that is part of the crux of my
6 testimony.

7 I am happy to report that one of my three
8 candidates for City Council, Melissa
9 Mark-Viverito, who spoke so eloquently today,
10 received a higher percentage in the upper west
11 side than she did in East Harlem.

12 We supported Melissa and we want to support
13 her again.

14 (Applause)

15 But, every community, every community is
16 entitled to representation.

17 Central Harlem is entitled to
18 representation, East Harlem, all of East Harlem
19 is entitled to representation.

20 Washington Heights is entitled to
21 representation. And the upper west side from
22 96th to west 125th, a compact cohesive community
23 of interest is also entitled to be part of one
24 district, not three districts, as it now is.

25 You should listen very hard, commissioners

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1 to everybody from a community, when they say: My
2 community cannot be cut up.

3 But you should listen less hard to people
4 who say: My community cannot be cut up, but we
5 want to grab parts from other communities.

6 Every community is entitled to
7 representation. I think that you have the germ
8 of a plan, some speakers have alluded to it, that
9 will work.

10 A 10th district based in Washington Heights,
11 a 9 district based in Central Harlem, an 8
12 district based in East Harlem, repeat, all of
13 East Harlem and a 7th district going roughly from
14 96th Street to 155th Street, encompassing all of
15 the upper west side along Hudson River, only two
16 community boards 7 and 9.

17 That is the plan that you should work on.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you very much.
20 (Applause).

21 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
22 Henrietta Lyle, to be followed by Sarah Martin.

23 A SPEAKER: Good evening.

24 My name is Henrietta Lyle and I am chair of
25 the community board 10. I have been in this

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1 community for 39 years, and I think many of our
2 board members were actually born in this
3 community, across the street at Harlem Hospital.

4 As the chair of community board 10, I have
5 an intimate knowledge of the districts that make
6 up Central Harlem. A sensible plan recognizes
7 that Harlem truly begins at 110th Street, a
8 Harlem based district needs to remain above 110th
9 Street.

10 The dividing line for the northern part of
11 this district has been 155th Street.

12 As board chair it is important to me that
13 the lines be maintained, at least for adherence,
14 to community district lines that are universally
15 recognized for community districts.

16 A district that attempts blatantly to cross
17 those lines, as does the 7 councilmanic district,
18 as proposed in the plan, is totally inappropriate
19 and drafts together two communities that are
20 fundamentally different.

21 I do support the upper Manhattan empowerment
22 district plan and I hope to, it moves further,
23 and I defer the rest of my time to our
24 Councilwoman Inez Dickens.

25 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

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1 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
2 Sarah Martin, to be followed by Laura Friedman.

3 A SPEAKER: My name is Sarah Martin, and I
4 live in Grant Houses, a public housing
5 development with approximately 4,400 people.

6 Across the street, as Joan Levine stated
7 before is Morningside Gardens, a middle income
8 co-op.

9 Approximately 18 years plus ago we joined,
10 because we realized that we had so many problems
11 in common.

12 You know, like our rats played together, and
13 we smell the garbage, et cetera, et cetera --
14 (Laughter) --

15 So, coming together we have cleaned up quite
16 a lot of that with our representatives, Robert
17 Jackson, Bill Perkins, and Assemblyman Daniel
18 O'Donnell, and to change that, I am hoping that
19 the plan stays the way it is, and -- I hope it
20 stays that way.

21 Because to change that would weaken our
22 voting strength and we will not be a larger
23 community as we are now.

24 And even furthermore, in all districts, all
25 I think we all want is a fair plan, and I think

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1 you have heard a couple of them here in this
2 auditorium.

3 So, I am hoping that the Commission will
4 take that into consideration, when the final plan
5 comes out. Because we are the people, the plan
6 should be for us.

7 Because without the people there is no need
8 for a plan.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause).

11 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

12 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
13 Laura Friedman, to be followed by Brian Paul.

14 A SPEAKER: My name is Laura Friedman and I
15 am the president of the Morningside Heights
16 historic district committee.

17 Thank you for allowing us to submit
18 testimony on behalf of the Morningside Heights
19 community today and tonight.

20 Morningside Heights is a diverse historic
21 and architecturally rich neighborhood. The
22 area's distinctive natural and landscaped
23 boundaries are defined by an elevated plateau,
24 boarded by two Twentieth century homestead
25 designed parks, Riverside Park at the western

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1 boundary and Morningside Park is the eastern.

2 The south boundary is formed by 110th
3 Street, and the north by 125th Street.

4 As diverse as we are, our community has a
5 long history of working together, to address
6 issues that affect our neighbors.

7 Currently Morningside Heights is allocated
8 to both the 7 and 9 districts, separated by a
9 wandering north-south border.

10 In your newly drawn draft plans you divide
11 our community along an east-west corridor, up the
12 middle of Amsterdam Avenue.

13 We ask you to recognize that the current
14 redistricting is an opportunity for the City to
15 restore our community to its natural borders with
16 its diverse population and to place us in one
17 community in one council district.

18 Morningside Heights is a vibrant and
19 coherent neighborhood.

20 There are many fine institutions in this
21 area, and in order to coordinate the needs that
22 they have, an organization was formed many years
23 ago that continues to exist today, and that
24 organization is called the Morningside Alliance,
25 which by its own definition seeks to foster

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1 communication and collaboration among the more
2 than 16 institutions that are located or doing
3 work in Morningside Heights.

4 Among them are Columbia University that has
5 student housing and schools on both sides of
6 Amsterdam, on both sides of Amsterdam, and the
7 Seminary which has its student housing on both
8 sides of Amsterdam, St. Luke's Hospital which is
9 entirely on the other side of Amsterdam, as is
10 the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

11 In the northern part of Morningside Heights,
12 and creating an amazing example of for us, is who
13 you just heard speak, Sarah Martin and Joan
14 Levine, creating the Sanitation Coalition. So we
15 all work together around that issue.

16 Another innovative organization was just
17 created called the Morningside Village, and the
18 president, ah --

19 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: I have a question.

20 A SPEAKER: I will wrap up in a minute.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: I have a question. If
22 you can just give me a concluding sentence --

23 A SPEAKER: President Irene Zola (phonetic),
24 she started a group called the Morningside
25 Village, which is a volunteer thing to help

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1 seniors and an organization to help seniors stay
2 at home with volunteers, and then the Morningside
3 Heights district committee which has members all
4 over the neighborhood and we work with block
5 associations and the co-op.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you. I have a
7 question.

8 You referred to the natural boundary that
9 ought to be applied to Morningside Heights, but I
10 don't think I heard --

11 What is in your view what is the natural
12 boundary?

13 A SPEAKER: 110th Street on the south side.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: On the east side.

15 A SPEAKER: Morningside Park.

16 The upper, the upper part of the park on the
17 east and Riverside Park on the west.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: And below Morningside
19 Park?

20 A SPEAKER: 110th Street is a natural
21 divide, as is 125th Street.

22 And we ask you to keep those borders
23 intact. And I submitted this testimony in
24 writing.

25 And we just want to say that we think that

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1 please don't chop us up into political pieces,
2 thus weakening our ability to represent our needs
3 and making a false divide where it, where it need
4 not exist.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

6 A SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Your next speaker is
10 Brian Paul, to be followed by Susan Rodriguez.

11 (Pause)

12 A SPEAKER: Sorry about that. I was out of
13 the room.

14 My name is Brian Paul, and I am the research
15 and policy coordinator at Common Cause New York,
16 non-partisan citizen body, a leading force in --
17 and accountable government.

18 Before getting into the Manhattan specifics,
19 we would like to thank the Commission for setting
20 up the enter-active mapping tool, and this is
21 definitely a step forward compared to anything
22 that we saw at state level redistricting.

23 That is a good step.

24 We encourage people to take advantage of it.

25 Pertaining to the Manhattan draft plan, this

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1 Commission described this plan as a base line,
2 which adjusts for population while making sure
3 following the Voting Rights Act and Charter
4 criteria.

5 Throughout most of the City, we -- we agree
6 that that is what was done, but it really seems
7 to us that the situation in district 8 doesn't
8 fly with what this draft is supposed to do.
9 There is no --

10 District 8 has to move further into the
11 Bronx, but there is no reason that it has to go
12 as far as this Commission draft drew it.

13 In this draft district 8 drops -- the west
14 side, but also major blocks along Park and
15 Madison Avenue and Randall's Island, and would
16 have a majority Bronx population.

17 And this, these changes are way beyond what
18 is necessary and looks like they were, it pushes
19 that far into the Bronx because all of the
20 districts in Manhattan are packed in, at almost
21 plus 5 percent, the legal limit, while the
22 districts in the Bronx are much less than one
23 percent on average.

24 That is a discrepancy. It doesn't seem
25 rational to us.

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1 And just to move on, it is very puzzling
2 that the map would move Randall's Island from
3 district 8, when the Charter says that the
4 districts should never cross borough borders
5 unless absolutely less.

6 Randall's Island is part of Manhattan, and
7 why should it move to Queens? That is very
8 strange.

9 The changes to East Harlem may look minor on
10 paper, just a block or two, as you heard many
11 people testify, these are really crucial
12 community institutions within those small areas.

13 So those should be put back, if we are
14 talking about respecting communities of interest.

15 And I will bring this testimony up to you in
16 a minute.

17 We were approached by community voices,
18 heard to examine how the draft would have to
19 change if we restored the boundaries in East
20 Harlem, and it is really not very much change
21 necessary.

22 You just bring district 15 in the Bronx,
23 south, district 17 over to Yankee Stadium
24 Highbridge, which it currently represents any way
25 and you would be able to pick up all of East

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1 Harlem that was cut out in this draft.

2 And this plan I have here demonstrates that
3 there is no demographic or legal reason
4 preventing district 8 from maintaining its
5 current boundaries in East Harlem.

6 We also suggest that the Commission take a
7 closer look at the Unity Plan, which is a good
8 model of the vibrations between different
9 interest groups.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

11 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Have you submitted that
12 to us?

13 A SPEAKER: I will bring it up.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

15 (Applause)

16 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
17 Susan Rodriguez, to be followed by Brad Taylor.

18 A SPEAKER: Excuse me. I am not your next
19 speaker, but I want to give you a point of
20 information.

21 You asked a question about Morningside
22 Heights.

23 I noticed that the people have a problem
24 saying --

25 Morningside Heights is in West Harlem, there

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1 is West Harlem, Central Harlem, East Harlem --
2 let's get it straight. Morningside Heights,
3 Manhattanville, Sugar Hill and Hamilton Heights
4 make up West Harlem.

5 155th -- so 110th, from the, from St.
6 Nichlaus Park, loosely over to the Hudson River.

7 I will be a speaker when you call my name,
8 but let's get West Harlem straight.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause)

11 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Susan Rodriguez, to be
12 followed by Brad Taylor.

13 (Pause)

14 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Do we have Susan
15 Rodriguez?

16 Brad Taylor? I will go to the next. Mark
17 Levine.

18 Yes, Mark Levine. Mark Levine followed by
19 Elizabeth Kellner.

20 A SPEAKER: Thank you. My name again is
21 Mark Levine, and I am a democratic district
22 leader from the 71st assembly district in
23 Washington Heights.

24 I am here to provide feedback on the drawing
25 of the 7th and 10th councilmanic districts

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1 uptown.

2 In short the Commissioner's proposal for
3 these districts was simply terrible.

4 There are few principles that most New
5 Yorkers expect commissioners to be mindful of in
6 drawing our new maps.

7 One, there should be an effort to keep
8 together communities of common interest.

9 Two, minority voting power should be
10 protected.

11 And three, the basic notion of fairness
12 should be adhered to.

13 Unfortunately when it comes to northern
14 Manhattan, the Commission's plan failed on each
15 of these counts.

16 First, the plan rips apart northern
17 Manhattan neighborhoods along the Hudson, namely
18 Hamilton, Washington Heights and Inwood, areas
19 with deep ties and decade long histories and
20 common representation in the 7 council district,
21 areas that remain connected today in the assembly
22 and senate districts.

23 I and many others testified about the nature
24 of these deep ties in the August hearing, so I
25 won't repeat myself on this today.

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1 Suffice to say that these waterfront
2 neighborhoods are connected by common parks and
3 transit lines, a common school district, the
4 presence of Columbia University campuses,
5 similarly high rates of home ownership and much
6 more.

7 That is why every effort should be made to
8 keep these waterfront neighborhoods together in a
9 common district.

10 Second, the Commission's preliminary plan
11 dramatically dilutes Latino voting power in the
12 10 district, which traditionally has been
13 overwhelmingly Latino, reducing primary
14 democratic voters to an expected 51 percent
15 Latino.

16 Unless you think that is made up for by
17 increasing Latino representation in the 7
18 district, that number drops to 30 percent
19 expected vote turnout in a democratic primary.

20 Finally, there is the issue of fairness as
21 it has been remarked on.

22 The districts of Manhattan have 5 percent
23 more voters than the comparable citywide average.

24 This has deprived our borough of a seat in
25 the City Council and has directly impacted

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1 northern Manhattan where the lines for the 7 and
2 the 10 have been even more distorted because of
3 the need to go over the average number.

4 There are good plans on the table, many have
5 been referred to today, and I urge you to drop
6 the preliminary draft and bring together the
7 neighborhoods of northern Manhattan.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause).

10 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

11 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
12 Elizabeth Kellner, to be followed by Mei Gellert.

13 A SPEAKER: My name is Elizabeth Kellner.

14 I have lived in Manhattan Valley for 36
15 years, with my husband, where we raised our two
16 now grown children. In 1976, when we were both
17 students at Columbia, we defied the university's
18 warnings never to venture south of 110th Street,
19 and we purchased an empty row house really cheap.

20 I come before you today to urge the
21 Commission not to divide the Manhattan Valley
22 neighborhood between two council districts, as
23 proposed, and to include it in the upper west
24 side district where it naturally belongs.

25 (Applause)

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1 The objective of this all important
2 redistricting exercise is to ensure fair and
3 adequate representation for communities of
4 interest, especially for historically
5 disenfranchised population groups.

6 It is not emphatically to accommodate
7 jockeying among the candidates for an advantage
8 in seeking future political office -- (Applause)
9 -- especially when that advantage would be won at
10 the expense of a community of interest.

11 I know Manhattan Valley extremely well.
12 Over the 36 years that I have lived there, my
13 family has been involved in many community groups
14 and activities on many issues: Tenants rights,
15 public schools.

16 My daughter went to that wonderful PS 163,
17 where the children spoke and I was on the bus
18 that went to Scarsdale to fight the owner of the
19 crack hotel.

20 Manhattan Valley is socially, economically
21 and ethnically diverse. We have a significant
22 number of public housing and subsidized units
23 and luxury co-ops and everything in between.

24 There are hostels and hotels, landmarks,
25 historic districts, new construction, nursing

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1 homes, senior assisted living, several free
2 schools, libraries, youth programs, drug rehab
3 treatment center, and it all works.

4 We have chain stores and mom and pops. I
5 could go on and on.

6 We all live, work, play, pray and volunteer
7 side by side.

8 What the Commission would do would destroy
9 our unified voice and set us back years.

10 I want to remind some of the people here
11 that in July of 1981, the cover of New York
12 Magazine was all about Manhattan Valley. The
13 name of that article written by Richard West was
14 Fighting to Save a Neighborhood.

15 Well, we thought we saved that neighborhood.
16 Please do not undo what we have achieved, and
17 keep us together as Manhattan Valley.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

19 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker I was
20 Mei Gellert, to be followed by Winifred
21 Armstrong.

22 Do we have Mei Gellert?

23 Winifred Armstrong.

24 Winifred Armstrong to be followed by Marc
25 Landis.

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1 A SPEAKER: Good evening Commissioners, good
2 evening neighbors.

3 Thank you for your work.

4 I am speaking from Park West, I am speaking
5 for the Park West Neighborhood History Group, on
6 a very compared to most of this, a relatively
7 small issue but similar.

8 We ask that in considering new council
9 districts City Council districts, Park West
10 Village be kept intact.

11 The present proposals of the district
12 commission divide a community that was built as a
13 village and which we have worked over the 50
14 years of its existence, to maintain and enjoy as
15 a community.

16 We are roughly 5,000 people living in 2,500
17 apartments in seven buildings between 97th and
18 100th Street, along Central Park West and
19 Columbus Avenue on the upper west side of
20 Manhattan. Park West Village was built on the
21 ashes of another old community, as one of the
22 urban renewal projects of Robert Moses. Its
23 express intent was to attract the multi-ethnic
24 middle class working community to this
25 multi-economic neighborhood.

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1 It succeeded, and I think by now we can say
2 that it is we who live there who have made it
3 succeed.

4 Our resident civic groups include people
5 from both sides of the street. We were conceived
6 as a neighborhood and are well served by a
7 library, police and fire station down 100th
8 Street, and a community board 7 who knows us
9 well.

10 Please do not divide us down the middle as
11 your proposals now do. I have a brochure, which
12 we prepared, Park West Village, History of a
13 Diverse Community, which will give you a further
14 sense of our community's past present and I hope
15 future.

16 Would you tell me where I should leave that,
17 please.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: You can leave it with
19 Mr. Hackworth.

20 A SPEAKER: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you very much.
22 (Applause).

23 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
24 Marc Landis, to be followed by Isaac Gluck.

25 A SPEAKER: Mark Landis had to go to a

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1 school event for his kids, and he seated his time
2 to me.

3 I am Joan Paylo, a 41 year resident of the
4 upper west side, and for the past ten years the
5 female democratic district leader who represents
6 part B of the 69th assembly district, which
7 includes the legendary Park West Village that Win
8 Armstrong just spoke about.

9 Park West Village has long been synonymous
10 with the upper west side, and as such I believe
11 that it is two super blocks which range from 97th
12 to 100th Street, Central Park West to Amsterdam,
13 must remain in one City Council district.

14 I also strongly urge that it be included in
15 district 6, along with the rest of the upper west
16 side.

17 Melissa Mark-Viverito has done a great job
18 for us -- (Applause) -- but when she leaves
19 office, we can't be guaranteed that we will get
20 another elected official in the Council who will
21 work so hard to come across the park and serve us
22 as she has tried. Yet her community office is on
23 the east side of the park, and it is not easy to
24 get there.

25 As Paul Bunton had stated in testimony that

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1 he has submitted to you, Park West Village
2 absolutely must continue to be part of a district
3 that is linked with its neighbors, by common
4 subway and bus lines, with easy access to the
5 constituent services available in a single City
6 Council district office.

7 If you live in or near Park West Village or
8 if you spend any amount of time there, it is
9 plain to see how much Park West Village is part
10 of the larger community that until recently was
11 known as the upper west side Mitchell-Lama
12 quarter.

13 If you stood on the corner of Columbus and
14 West 96th through West 97th for a few hours, you
15 would observe how people come from south and
16 north as part of one community, to use local
17 merchants, dry cleaners, delis, physical therapy
18 and veterinary offices, supermarkets, the
19 historic West 97th Street Green Market, schools,
20 Godard Riverside Community Center, its senior
21 centers, numerous houses of worship, the post
22 office, the library and public transportation.

23 Just a little more to say.

24 Park West Village has always been a solid
25 community, even when part of the community

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1 complex went condo --

2 And I am trying to read it off my
3 blackberry, and I left my printed copy at home.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Feel free to submit it
5 in writing.

6 A SPEAKER: I will send it by e-mail when I
7 get home.

8 Columbus Square was built in its midst, and
9 at that time the neighborhood from south of 96th
10 Street, including Godard, Riverside and
11 neighboring churches fought to keep Park West
12 Village as one.

13 They are very close --

14 And I will submit the rest of my --

15 I am everything a hard time reading this. I
16 apologize.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: We need to move on.
18 There are many people waiting. There are people
19 that have been waiting two hours to speak.

20 A SPEAKER: This is also important.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: They have important
22 things to say, as well.

23 A SPEAKER: The committee has sliced and
24 diced the upper west side.

25 In my district, from West 81 to West 100th

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1 Street, I have 3 state senators, and 3 Council
2 people.

3 We would like very much for Park West
4 Village to be included in the district 6.

5 And I refer to the testimony of my
6 colleagues Curtis Arluck, Marc Landis, Nick Prego
7 and others in saying that please stop slicing and
8 dicing politically.

9 Do not punish us, because we are very
10 outspoken, and we are fighting various
11 development in our neighborhood and I just hope
12 that the slicing and dicing politically is not to
13 silence us.

14 Thank you.

15 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: The next speaker is
16 Isaac Gluck.

17 Our next speaker will be Sandra Morales de
18 Leon to be followed by April Tyler.

19 A SPEAKER: Good evening.

20 My name is Saundra Morales de Leon, and I am
21 a life long resident of East Harlem.

22 And I am also deputy director of the East
23 Harlem Business Capital Corporation, whose
24 mission is to significantly enhance the economy
25 and commerce of East Harlem, create jobs and help

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1 entrepreneurs and small businesses become
2 successful.

3 I am here tonight to speak in opposition to
4 the proposed 8 council district plan, whose lines
5 disproportionately traverse two counties, the
6 Bronx and Manhattan, disenfranchise a particular
7 community of interest and eliminates historical
8 landmarks that are critical to the culture of El
9 Barrio.

10 Please note the following:

11 The Districting Commission is required under
12 The Charter to preserve communities of interest.
13 The part of East Harlem, including district 8 is
14 overwhelmingly Latino and constitutes a community
15 of interest. To move pieces of the neighborhood
16 like proverbial chess pieces on a board to a
17 neighboring Council district that does not share
18 the same cultural identity is to split up this
19 important community of interest.

20 Secondly, all residents of the East Harlem
21 community need to be fairly represented on the
22 City Council, keeping as much as possible to the
23 lines that are currently drawn and which
24 currently represent the majority concentration of
25 Latinos and specifically Puerto Ricans.

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1 Third, the proposed redistricting would
2 seize 49 percent of the population of the new
3 district from another county, the Bronx.
4 This action will completely decimate El Barrio's
5 escalating political power and influence as a
6 community.

7 Fourth, the blocks being cut from East
8 Harlem and moved to council district 9 and
9 Central Harlem --

10 Some of the individual blocks go as high as
11 55 to 65 percent Latino. The Non-Partisan
12 Organization and Common Cause have said publicly
13 that there is no demographic reason for the way
14 East Harlem is being split up.

15 La Marqueta and other historic and cultural
16 landmarks for the Puerto Rican community
17 currently reside in Council district 8.

18 In order for these to be fully preserved and
19 to receive proper and warranted attention, they
20 should continue to be represented completely
21 within the East Harlem council district.

22 Removing La Marqueta from the heart of the
23 Latino community is akin to placing the Apollo
24 Theatre in a district representing Chelsea or
25 Chinatown.

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1 The cultural relevance would be diluted.
2 Moreover, La Marqueta is also an economic
3 development engine for our East Harlem community
4 and we need to reserve the jobs and the economic
5 opportunities that will continue to offer.

6 Finally, we are asking that the District
7 Commission review our proposed new map, the East
8 Harlem South Bronx map for district 8 -- and I
9 have it attached and have copies for the
10 Commission -- which is sensitive to the need for
11 fair representation, maintains the community of
12 interest and preserves historical landmarks where
13 they have the most cultural relevance.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you. We will
15 accept that from you.

16 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will
17 be April Tyler, to be followed by Wellington
18 Chen.

19 A SPEAKER: Good evening.

20 My name is April Tyler, and I am long time
21 resident of West Harlem, a long time community
22 activist and a former district leader in West
23 Harlem.

24 I initially agreed with Council Member
25 Jackson, when he stated at the last hearing that

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1 the 7 councilmanic district should remain the
2 same, but in review the census data I realized
3 that because of the dramatically low census count
4 in district 10, that the district did have to be
5 changed, and there has to be dramatic adjustments
6 in all of upper Manhattan.

7 But the preliminary lines that are with
8 proposed by the Commission are, to put it simply,
9 just wrong.

10 In councilmanic district 7, the northwest
11 boundary of the 7 district as drawn by the
12 Commission would cut across 142nd Street from
13 Amsterdam Avenue to Riverside Drive.

14 This is right in the middle of a residential
15 block, a brownstone block, mainly homeowners and
16 a block with residents who go to the same subway
17 stop, go to the same markets, use a local park --
18 the same people, and also, are mostly members of
19 the Hamilton Heights Homeowners Association.

20 And I think that cutting across that very
21 unnatural boundary just doesn't make sense, to me
22 or to community residents.

23 There are other examples, but in the
24 interest of time I won't go over them.

25 But I will point out that I did go down to

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1 the Commission and redrew a councilmanic map for
2 district 7, and because it did not meet the
3 population requirements, um, I redrew that
4 district as well as the district and made
5 alterations in all of upper Manhattan.

6 I would encourage residents of the community
7 to take a look at the map, it is online, and make
8 comments and make adjustments.

9 And I think that what is clear in this
10 hearing and in this room is that we the community
11 know how our community line should look and you
12 should listen to us and not make arbitrary
13 decisions -- (Applause) -- about how our district
14 lines should look.

15 And then lastly, and I realize I am a little
16 over time, I would echo -- and this is a very
17 important point -- the fact that the way that the
18 lines are drawn now, um, we will potentially lose
19 minority representation in possibly 3 districts.

20 So we are now in Manhattan, and we have 6
21 representatives of color and important voices on
22 the City Council, and we might be reduced to 3.
23 And that will be a dramatic change for our
24 community, for the resources that we get, for the
25 local organizations that get resources from

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1 Council Members.

2 And I think that that is just wrong and you
3 should listen to us and you should draw the maps
4 the way we want them drawn, not some arbitrary
5 statistician who is putting them together.

6 I thank you for your time and attention.

7 (Applause)

8 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you very much.

9 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
10 Wellington Chen, to be followed by Elsie
11 Encarnacion.

12 A SPEAKER: Commission members, ladies and
13 gentlemen, good evening.

14 I am executive director of the Chinatown
15 Partnership, a local non-profit.

16 I am also here tonight on behalf of a number
17 of Chinatown organizations, many of them cannot
18 be here tonight. I also have a copy of a letter
19 from another community group, which I believe had
20 been delivered online, but I will deliver a
21 physical copy here.

22 I am here to talk about Council district
23 number 1, and why the current configurations for
24 Chinatown, Little, Battery Park City, Tribeca
25 Soho and Lower Manhattan, and why they should

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1 remain intact.

2 For several hundred years, Chinatown has
3 yearned to have its own representative and to
4 have a voice, at the table. And the same goes
5 for our neighbor to the east, the lower east side
6 in the Latino community. That dream finally came
7 into fruition three years ago, when after two
8 decades hard work and perseverance -- one of our
9 own, Council Member Margaret Chin was finally
10 elected to represent Chinatown and Little Italy.

11 (Applause)

12 Imagine the first settlers arriving in
13 Manhattan that ever since the beginning of time
14 we have waited for this moment. Most of you can
15 understand our pride and joy when we see the
16 outstanding results that our Council district
17 member and the team has produced and delivered.

18 The task before you is not an easy one, as
19 any decision you make will have profound
20 implications and I wish you much wisdom.

21 It is a little analogous to the wise King
22 Solomon, when he asked, by the two mothers to
23 protect their child, when it is wise to split up
24 that proverbial baby.

25 As good intention as the unity plan is, we

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1 would like to point out that it makes no sense to
2 split up Battery Park City and Tribeca from the
3 financial district and to mess up the current
4 Lower Manhattan configuration.

5 It makes no sense to divide this historic
6 district, as the whole world knows, that this is
7 an integral part of the origination point.

8 The Chinatown Partnership was created out of
9 the ashes of Nine Eleven. We are integrally tied
10 to lower Manhattan as the history will judge.

11 The current district 1 allows for two
12 representatives from the Lower East Side and
13 Chinatown to both have a seated at the Council,
14 one being Rosie Mendez and from Chinatown
15 Margaret Chin.

16 Please preserve this configuration as a
17 whole, and as the lady who testified before,
18 before me, if it ain't broken, don't fix it.

19 Please keep Lower Manhattan whole --
20 (Applause) -- integrated and leave well enough
21 alone.

22 Thank you for listening.

23 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
24 Elsie Encarnacion to be followed by Christopher
25 Kui.

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1 A SPEAKER: Good evening.

2 I am a life long resident of East Harlem. I
3 am here this evening to voice my concerns with
4 the proposed lines of council district 8.
5 As a voter and active community member I
6 understand and appreciate all of the work put
7 into drafting the lines.

8 I also understand that our neighbors in the
9 Bronx have a tremendous growth in population and
10 are in need of representation.

11 However, I do not believe that the lines, as
12 they are currently being proposed, best meets the
13 needs of my community.

14 As Commission members, you all have a
15 responsibility to provide voters with fair and
16 effective representation. By squeezing in East
17 Harlem's lines and pushing our Bronx portion out
18 into the Cross Bronx Expressway, we stand to face
19 many hardships like limited funding and resources
20 for our schools, housing developments and senior
21 centers.

22 In addition, this proposal makes East Harlem
23 only 49 percent of the district, leaving 51
24 percent in the Bronx.

25 This action will dilute our political power

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1 and influence as a community.

2 Looking at the map I see broken-up community
3 after broken-up community with High Bridge being
4 cut into three Council districts, East Harlem
5 divided by two, Manhattan Valley split into three
6 and no one kept whole.

7 I ask the Commission members to look at
8 alternative possibilities, like the Unity Map
9 which I support. The Unity Map still takes into
10 account the growth in the Bronx, and keeps
11 communities like East Harlem, Manhattan Valley
12 and Mott Haven united.

13 Allow us as voters a real opportunity to
14 have our voices counted and redraw the lines to
15 fit our needs. In addition to the Unity Map
16 lines, I ask the Commission that they allow for
17 another round of public comment on the final
18 draft of lines before they are voted on.

19 Thank you.

20 (Applause).

21 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Do we have Christopher
22 Kui? Okay.

23 Moving on to Cheryl Pahaham, followed by
24 Jamaal Nelson.

25 A SPEAKER: My name is Cheryl Pahaham.

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1 I am a candidate for City Council in
2 district 7, which is located on western side of
3 northern Manhattan, and my ability to run for
4 office is directly affected by the outcome of
5 this redistricting.

6 The New York City districting process is
7 fundamentally undemocratic because it privileges
8 politicians and their allies over the public.

9 The New York City Charter lets politicians
10 decide how to redraw the boundaries of Council
11 districts and gives them excessive influence in
12 selecting candidates to run in the next election,
13 long before the public is given the opportunity
14 to voice its concerns and preferences in
15 redistricting.

16 New York City's districting process is
17 deeply flawed and must be reformed through a
18 Charter revision. It is not fair to residents,
19 voters and candidates that redistricting starts
20 so late and ends just before the next municipal
21 primary election.

22 This timing only benefits politician in
23 office and their associates.

24 New York City has the resources and the know
25 how to do better and to treat its residents with

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1 much more respect by starting much earlier,
2 opening up the process and enabling more
3 meaningful participation by the public.
4 Otherwise, politicians in office will have too
5 much sway in future elections and in the people's
6 choices of candidates.

7 Knowing that the process is politically
8 charged and time sensitive, the Commission should
9 have prepared several options of redrawn
10 districts for the public to consider, instead of
11 just one proposal.

12 Offering just a single preliminary plan has
13 caused many people to believe that redistricting
14 is finished. The Commission has an obligation to
15 help the public understand that there is not one
16 way to redraw the boundaries of Council
17 districts.

18 For instance, the Commission could have also
19 offered a plan that kept Council district 7
20 largely intact.

21 I am attaching to my testimony a petition
22 signed by northern Manhattan residents and others
23 that asked the Mayor and the Council to revise
24 the City Charter before 2020 to deal with this
25 problem and enable the public to effectively

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1 participate in this process.

2 The petition also asks that the boundaries
3 of district 7 be kept largely intact, and the
4 Commission's provide new drafts of maps with this
5 option.

6 Finally, I am very concerned that the
7 Commission's preliminary plan will adversely
8 impact the ability of African-Americans in New
9 York county to elect candidates of their choice,
10 because it reduces the number of Council
11 districts in the county where an African-American
12 can get elected.

13 In the existing configuration of Council
14 districts there are two districts in New York
15 County that have elected African-American
16 candidates, 7 and 9.

17 The Commission proposed district 7 increases
18 the number of white residents and white voters
19 and moves district 7 into neighborhoods that
20 could experience increases in high income white
21 residents due to Columbia University's planned
22 development, rising rents and current home prices
23 that are out of reach for most minorities.

24 These trends could make it less likely that
25 African-Americans will be able to elect

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1 African-American candidates in the proposed
2 district 7. This outcome could be avoided by
3 leaving district 7 intact.

4 As part of its work the Commission should
5 analyze and make public its assessment of the
6 impact of its preliminary plan and any revised
7 maps on the ability of African-Americans and
8 others in New York county that are protected
9 under the Voting Rights Act to elect candidates
10 of their choosing.

11 (Applause)

12 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you. Next
13 speaker.

14 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Just another reminder,
15 if you go over time you are depriving other
16 people from being able to speak tonight.

17 Our next speaker is Jamaal Nelson, to be
18 followed by Leah Hotzel.

19 A SPEAKER: The New York City Redistricting
20 Commission's of proposed lines of 7, 9 and 10
21 councilmanic districts reveal a stunning
22 insensitivity to the historic and contemporary
23 community, and contemporary community identity.

24 In the age of voter suppression an insidious
25 attempt to crack and clash minority communities.

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1 When the underserved and underrepresented
2 communities of upper Manhattan examine the
3 Commission's lines, we can't help but hear the
4 silent thunder on Langston Hughes words: I swear
5 to the Lord I cannot see why democracy means
6 everybody but me.

7 (Appause).

8 The implication of the Commission's lines
9 would result in the unnecessary cracking and
10 clashing of already underserved and
11 underrepresented minority communities that have
12 been far too long pitted against one another, and
13 it will not happen now.

14 No one needs to look any further than how
15 the Commission's lines seek to diminish the
16 dominant Dominican community of Washington
17 Heights and Inwood. One of our city's most
18 dynamic emerging demographics have voted as one
19 block with one voice as one community.

20 The Commission's line seeks to crack this
21 magnificent monument of a community into two with
22 a rusty jagged chisel of blatant insensitivity.

23 (Appause)

24 Community cracking is a wanton abuse of the
25 districting process, and we stand in solidarity

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1 with our Dominican brothers and sisters and we
2 say No.

3 (Applause)

4 Here in northern Manhattan, we have news for
5 the Commission, the Latino community is no
6 monolith, but a mosaic of cultural expressions,
7 each of which with their own distinctive hews of
8 varying idioms, cuisines and proud distinctions.

9 Central Harlem is not exempt from the
10 Commission's wanton insensitivity to community
11 lines, and we will fight any attempt to crack the
12 foundation of the 7th councilmanic district,
13 Central Harlem.

14 Attempts have been made to attempt to crack
15 Central Harlem in the past.

16 We remember being pummeled by the
17 sledgehammer of voter suppression in the '60s;
18 the eruption of social unrest in the '70s; the
19 rumblings of the urban blight of the '80s and
20 '90s: And we survived them all and we will
21 survive this attempt to crack.

22 (Applause)

23 In closing, I urge the Commission to take a
24 balanced approach and for God's sake keep La
25 Marqueta in East Harlem.

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1 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you very much.

2 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
3 Leah Hotzel.

4 Okay. Felix Campos.

5 A SPEAKER: Good evening and thank you for
6 this opportunity.

7 My name is Felix Campos, and I am born, bred
8 and buttered in Spanish Harlem.

9 I have lived in Washington Heights and also,
10 and Harlem and the South Bronx and I am back.

11 (Applause)

12 The points that I want to make are not new.
13 They have been said by many before me, and I will
14 just reiterate them, not as eloquently as our
15 brother over here with the red tie and the nice
16 shirt, WEB Junior.

17 But in any event, what I would like for this
18 Commission to acknowledge and to recognize, are
19 the natural boundaries that have been spoken
20 about that have defined neighborhoods for, if not
21 tens of years, hundreds of years in East Harlem,
22 it has always been the East River on one side,
23 Central Park and Fifth Avenue on the other and I
24 think they should remain that way.

25 Taking La Marqueta out of El Barrio Spanish

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1 Harlem is as it has been said before, like taking
2 the Apollo Theatre out of Harlem, the pyramids
3 out of Egypt or the Eiffel Tower out of France.

4 (Applause)

5 It just does not make any sense. In doing
6 that, you remove one of the economic hubs at
7 116th Street has, which is one of the four major
8 economic hubs of Spanish Harlem and is a tourist
9 attraction that can be developed, that can be
10 utilized to bring in new revenues through
11 cultural tourism, among other things that East
12 Harlem has always represented.

13 And that is a first home for immigrant
14 communities that have always naturally
15 revitalized the neighborhood, economically and
16 culturally through the presence of once other
17 previous groups have decided to move on.

18 The proposed district line also threatens
19 ethnic and cultural uniqueness of Spanish Harem
20 and other neighborhoods in the city, not just the
21 Spanish Harlem and ah -- sorry -- that cultural
22 uniqueness that have always been identified as
23 stimulus for cultural tourism in El Barrio that
24 help to stymie a community that is defined as a
25 solid, where everyone is recognized and seen, and

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1 not as a melting plot.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

4 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: We have now completed
5 our list of pre-registered speakers and we are
6 moving on to those that have registered at the
7 door.

8 First we have Arafa Speaks to be followed by
9 Rev. G. Morgan Thomas.

10 We have Arafa Speaks or the Rev. Morgan
11 Thomas? We will move on for the moment.

12 A SPEAKER: Reverend Morgan Thomas who is
13 the chair of Community Board 9, she is no longer
14 here. She was here almost 45 minutes before you
15 began, and she was not able to remain.

16 Community Board 9, which is 110th Street to
17 155th Street, the park line, Morningside, St.
18 Nichlaus, and Jackie Robinson Park to the Hudson
19 River is not in support of the preliminary
20 drawing and favors the Commission to be able to
21 take strong attention to the testimony of City
22 Councilwoman Dickens and the Upper Manhattan
23 empowerment development plan that has been
24 presented to you this evening.

25 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

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1 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

2 (Applause).

3 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker will
4 be Serehta Patterson to be followed by Dr. Vicki
5 Gholsoh.

6 (Pause).

7 A SPEAKER: All right. Okay.

8 Good evening, my name is Serehta Patterson
9 and I represent the Rangel Houses in West Harlem,
10 and I wanted to talk tonight because I wanted to
11 make a point that sometimes you have to go back
12 in history to find out where we are right now,
13 and today.

14 So, I am going back a little.

15 Because back in time, towards the beginning,
16 before the 19th Century, we had --

17 Oh, my God, my phone is ringing now. Please
18 excuse me.

19 Okay. But, back then, we had Irish who
20 first settled in Harlem, when they first came to
21 New York, Harlem was the first place that they
22 settled down in.

23 Okay. And as the century went on, we had
24 the Jews and they settled in Harlem as well
25 during the beginning of the 19th Century.

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1 After that came the blacks. We were the
2 renaissance, we came and helped build up Harlem
3 and tried to make it as best for everyone along
4 with the Jews and the Irish.

5 So I wanted to say that because after that
6 came the Puerto Ricans, who settled on the East
7 side of Harlem, which became Spanish Harlem.

8 So, in saying that, I am saying that at the
9 time people were here, we all had this place,
10 this was Harlem, when they all got here.

11 And then people, then when we came and one
12 behind the other, people started to leave.

13 So, as they left, yes, we settled, we stayed
14 here but we did not never say, this was just our
15 home. This was for everyone, any and everyone
16 who came before, because we are all God's people.

17 So, I am just saying that everyone should
18 live in Harlem and be happy, because this is
19 God's land and we all should be here but we
20 shouldn't have to give up Harlem and Harlem's
21 name or its heritage.

22 We are district 9 and we should stay
23 district 9. We are upper Harlem and it should
24 stay that way.

25 (Applause)

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1 And anyone that wants to live in Harlem more
2 power to you, you are more than welcome because
3 we are here to live together, not to be
4 separated, not on the east side nor the west
5 side.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you very much.

7 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
8 Dr. Vicky Gholsoh, to be followed by Tiena
9 Traversa.

10 A SPEAKER: I am hoping that these of us in
11 the room are now prepared to do two things: As
12 commissioners, you have to be as active and as
13 passionate as my neighbors have been, in changing
14 what other commissioners behind you will have to
15 go through.

16 There is no reason from this point forward
17 that we should repeat the same process. People
18 perpetuate these mistakes.

19 The intellect that is up on that stage as
20 commissioners should never ever have allowed the
21 first draft to come out to the public, because it
22 does two things.

23 (Applause).

24 It engages us in conversations and arguments
25 against each other, which is a waste of time. If

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1 the homework had been done correctly, that first
2 preliminary draft would never have been a public
3 document.

4 It was, it has been said this evening by
5 several people that (1), there are other
6 recommendations that have come forward, (2),
7 those recommendations should result in another
8 document, if not the final document, and (3),
9 there should be participation to discuss that
10 document, and not have that document go directly
11 for a vote to anyone.

12 And the reason now, more so than ever, is
13 because this City and it is known by the
14 neighbors, especially in the poorer
15 neighborhoods, is under the influence of economic
16 determinations.

17 If you have seven of you have been appointed
18 and another five of you that have been appointed,
19 and that first draft is what we got, then those
20 "statements" that have been made this evening in
21 terms of who is manipulating our communities, and
22 the political process and the power going
23 forward, is absolutely correct.

24 Participatory democracy as demonstrated by
25 these young kids that stood up here today, we

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1 have a responsibility to two groups, one are the
2 elders, they have paid their dues, and they can
3 tell you with common sense that what is being
4 done is incorrect.

5 And two are the children.

6 (Applause)

7 Because if we don't get it correct this time
8 around, if we illustrate to them that adults can
9 manipulate systems so that certain outcomes come
10 about, then all of us are engaged in evil and all
11 of us are engaged in criminal activity.

12 And I won't talk about the morality of it.

13 So, I hope that every single commissioner
14 you put your professional credibility on the
15 line, and you demand of the people who appointed
16 you to this Commission, that there are changes
17 that need to be made in the process. There has
18 to be other engagement than hearings. If I speak
19 to you, this is not a discourse. If I go to a
20 computer, if I go to an office and draw
21 additional lines, that is not intellectual
22 interaction.

23 And we can only grow and fine-tune a
24 democracy when we work, sit down and meet
25 together.

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1 (Applause)

2 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

3 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
4 Tiena Traversa, to be followed by Pat Sherwood.

5 A SPEAKER: My name is Tiena Traversa, and I
6 am a resident of East Harlem. And in the
7 interest of time, I am in alliance with the
8 previous speakers who are advocating for the
9 Unity Map, so I am going to move ahead and go
10 straight to La Marqueta.

11 What I want to share with everyone was --
12 what a gentleman was alluding to who mentioned
13 that there was a project coming down the pipes,
14 at La Marqueta. That is called Marqueta Mile.

15 Marqueta Mile is the brain child of Irwin
16 Cohen, who actually was responsible for Chelsea
17 market, which is very successful.

18 And what is supposed to happen at La
19 Marqueta Mile is supposed to extend from La
20 Marqueta straight down to 132nd Street, and there
21 are supposed to be kiosks built to make sure --
22 and also open space, to make sure that there is
23 some economic development and also develop some
24 jobs of over, I believe my record states over
25 4,000 jobs, to make sure that this happens.

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1 So, 900 kiosks are supposed to be built for
2 this along with open space.

3 We already had some groups here that are
4 construction workers, and I am pretty sure that
5 they will see that job when it comes down the
6 pipe. So, therefore we don't want to lose the
7 political, cultural and especially the economic
8 benefits that is coming down the pipe,
9 particularly the Marqueta Mile, remember the
10 name, Marqueta Miles, and ensure that it stays in
11 El Barrio, East Harlem, Spanish Harlem, my home,
12 everyone's home who is here, and I want to make
13 sure that everyone who is educated to that and we
14 are fighting more than you realize.

15 This is the heart of who we are. Thank you
16 for listening.

17 (Applause)

18 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

19 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Do we have Pat
20 Sherwood?

21 (Pause)

22 Moving on to John Ruiz.

23 (Pause)

24 Okay. Maritta Dunn.

25 A SPEAKER: She is here.

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1 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: To be followed by
2 Laura Gonzalez.

3 A SPEAKER: Good evening. I did not put
4 this information on my printed text, but I am the
5 former chair of Community Board 9, which
6 represents West Harlem.

7 I am the former vice-president of the
8 Manhattanville Tenant Association, and I am
9 currently on the board of directors for the West
10 Harlem Local Development Corporation, which
11 negotiated the community benefits agreement with
12 Columbia University on their Manhattanville
13 campus. Just some background.

14 Changes to a councilmanic district should
15 never restrict or compromise the interests and
16 concerns of the majority of people residing
17 there. Changes to a councilmanic district should
18 never pit one group of citizens against another,
19 or result in creating a divide, based on color,
20 heritage or nationality.

21 What you should do is avoid gerrymandering,
22 protect important community boundaries, unify
23 districts that is currently split into three, and
24 ensure that historic institutions are contained
25 in a single district.

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1 As a voting resident of upper Manhattan, for
2 well over 50 years, I have had the privilege of
3 living through and being involved in many of its
4 changes and accomplishments.

5 It is with this experience that I fully ask
6 that you drop this plan and if you must do
7 something, then recognize the upper Manhattan
8 empowerment district plan.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause).

11 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Laura Gonzalez?

12 Um, the name is illegible.

13 I believe that it is Mr. or Ms. Rivera
14 Consale?

15 Wanito Thomas McClausa?

16 (Pause)

17 A SPEAKER: I am Judy Iason, and live in
18 River View Towers across from the pollution
19 plant/state park.

20 What we went through almost 40 years ago to
21 negotiate with the state and we had to surrender
22 and give in about having the pollution plant.

23 From then on it was the nightmare of the
24 crack addictions, the gangs, the corrupt police,
25 as well as our own share of rats and various

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1 other urban, urban agony.

2 In the meantime, since so many of us did not
3 speak one another's language there was a core of
4 people of different nationalities and ethnicity
5 who knew how to speak in a language that had to
6 do with for the good of all of the people.

7 That is how we talked: On the elevator, on
8 the line at the supermarket, waiting for the bus,
9 wherever we were, we talked about what can we do
10 to make it all right for all of us.

11 Do you know what it took to do everything
12 including drawing pictures sometimes, you have a
13 person in your house that is going to help you
14 fix the leak, because the super cannot. He has
15 not had a contract in five years; why should he
16 work?

17 But someone who can't speak English and
18 happens to not read in his own language or anyone
19 else's but knew how to fix anything that had to
20 do with plumbing.

21 So there you are explaining that it can't be
22 between 1:00 and 3:00 o'clock because I have to
23 go and get my kids.

24 But he is also willing to stand outside
25 because you don't know each other, you don't want

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1 to leave him in the house and he doesn't want to
2 stay in the house, he had someplace to go for his
3 lunch.

4 We had to do so much negotiating and
5 exchanging of cultures and having patience with
6 one another and building the community. Why is
7 it? I don't want to sound like Paul Mooney.

8 But how come as soon as we make it whole and
9 useful for ourselves, somebody wants to come to
10 take it apart and reap the benefits.

11 (Applause.)

12 You just can't do it like that. It is not
13 an erector set.

14 What ever happened to just happened to just
15 tweaking a little bit there and there, and not
16 slashing and gashing.

17 What in the world are you doing? It took us
18 so long just to get to this point. Now we have
19 brand new voters, as the other speakers said,
20 Dr. Gholsoh told us, the youth are watching us.

21 We have to do this a certain way, from the
22 White House down to Manhattan, to the five
23 boroughs, right down to the State of New York, we
24 have to demonstrate a good example. We are what
25 we have been waiting for.

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1 Thank you for listening.

2 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: Thank you.

3 (Applause)

4 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Our next speaker is
5 Walter Edwards, to be followed by Carlos Torres.

6 Walter Edwards. Carlo Torres.

7 It is now --

8 CHAIRPERSON ROMANO: There is someone.

9 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: We are required by our
10 host to vacate the premises by 9 a.m. and if you
11 are registered to speak tonight and did not have
12 the ability to speak tonight because of the time,
13 please contact our office and we will prioritize
14 you at a hearing next week.

15 There are hearings in Staten Island, Queens,
16 and Brooklyn, and you can contact us by telephone
17 at 212.442.0256, or by e-mailing hearings at
18 districting dot NYC dot Gov.

19 A SPEAKER: Excuse me.

20 That is absolutely unacceptable. You laid
21 out a process, I preregistered and I do not plan
22 on taking more than my two minutes, but I plan on
23 taking my two minutes if it will please the
24 Commission.

25 Thank you. My name is Elizabeth Lorris

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1 Ritter, and I am the president of the Hudson
2 Heights Owner Coalition, and I have way more than
3 two minutes of testimony which I will submit to
4 you in writing.

5 This is not the first time that you have
6 seen me, and I guess it won't be the last.

7 But my basic issue with this plan is that in
8 northern Manhattan we have been pretty
9 consistently shortchanged by the City budgeting
10 process, and one of the ways that we get made
11 whole for our parks, our schools --

12 Excuse me. I know you have been here a
13 really long time, and I am grateful for that, but
14 I would also really appreciate your listening to
15 me, sir.

16 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: We are required to
17 leave premises.

18 A SPEAKER: I hear that.

19 A SPEAKER: Finish speaking, girl.

20 A SPEAKER: Our roads, our schools, our
21 housing -- so many things depend on discretionary
22 funding from our Council Members and what we get
23 now because we have two Council Members, is upper
24 Manhattan has 20 percent of the representation in
25 the Manhattan borough delegation.

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1 We have 20 percent of the Manhattan borough
2 board.

3 By reducing, by going with this map, and
4 putting all of Inwood and most of Washington
5 Heights together under one councilmanic district
6 -- and I have no issue with -- (Inaudible) I will
7 be happy to be represented by him -- but you
8 reduce our seat at the table, our seats at the
9 table, to one seat.

10 That is not fair. It is not fair and it is
11 not right and it is not reasonable.

12 I will submit the rest of this to you in
13 writing and defer to the people who also have
14 been waiting.

15 Thank you.

16 (Applause)

17 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: This hearing was
18 noticed until 9 p.m. and we informed the
19 Schomberg Center that we would be complete at
20 that point.

21 A SPEAKER: You guys took about three
22 minutes before the nine o'clock hour to let us
23 know that it is over, but I will take 10 seconds.

24 My name is Adiane Mack and I live in East
25 Harlem on 117th between First and Second, I am a

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1 community member. I want to invite all of you as
2 well as the commissioners up here to come to the
3 East Harlem Harvest Festival, which is October
4 27, on a Saturday from 12 to 6 p.m., and it is
5 going to be in La Marqueta in the placita, and it
6 is an opportunity to support La Marqueta and
7 support the placita and support the small
8 businesses in East Harlem that are constantly
9 being ignored.

10 October 27, Saturday from 12 to 6. Come
11 with your children. It is a fantastic event,
12 supporting East Harlem. Thank you.

13 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you all for
14 coming, and thank you to our host, the Schomburg
15 Center.

16 A SPEAKER: It is 8:59, and I will speak
17 quickly.

18 My name is Alex Luis Castex-Porter and I
19 live in district 10.

20 It should be noted that Washington Heights
21 and Inwood, the connections in these
22 neighborhoods are a north-south connection and
23 the geographical features are a north-south
24 connection.

25 I encourage you all to take a walking tour

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1 of Washington Heights and Inwood this weekend
2 because the current map clearly shows that you do
3 not know these neighborhoods and how they are
4 divided both geographically and via ethnicity.
5 And again these are north-south divisions and the
6 maps don't reflect it.

7 THE GENERAL COUNSEL: We stand adjourned.
8 We thank you very much for coming here tonight.

9 We no longer need microphones.

10 Thank you.

11 (Time noted: 9:00 p.m.)

12

13

14 I, ROBERT X. SHAW, CSR, a Notary Public for
15 and within the State of New York, do hereby
16 certify that the above is a correct transcription
17 of my stenographic notes.

18

19



ROBERT X. SHAW, CSR

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