



Testimony of Christina Chang, MinKwon Center for Community Action, to the City of New York 2012-2013 Redistricting Commission

January 14th, 2013
New York City 2012-2013 Redistricting Commission, 3rd Round Public Hearing
LaGuardia Community College (Little Theater)
31-10 Thomson Ave
Long Island City, NY 11101

Good afternoon. My name is Christina Chang, and I am the Advocacy & Organizing Associate at the MinKwon Center for Community Action. I'm here to comment on the proposed City Council districts that this Commission has offered, as well as the process which we have seen play out.

The MinKwon Center was established in 1984 to meet the needs of the Korean American community. We have built a presence since then in the Korean American, Asian American, and local communities through grassroots organizing, education, and advocacy initiatives.

1. The MinKwon Center's Efforts on Redistricting

As a founding member of ACCORD, the Asian American Community Coalition On Redistricting and Democracy, the MinKwon Center has been active because we believe that fair and equitable redistricting is absolutely critical to engaging our communities civically. Our communities' voters have historically been disempowered and disenfranchised - by complicated procedures, the lack of translated materials, and by intimidation and harassment. The MinKwon Center has sought to overcome this by registering new voters, educating them, mobilizing them to vote, and then protecting them at the polls.

If districts are drawn properly – in ways that respect natural communities of interest and that uphold the Voting Rights Act – then we are rewarded with competitive elections, politicians who are accountable to their communities, and empowered and engaged minorities. This is critical for the Asian American community, which has grown by more than 30% since 2000 and is by far the fastest-growing major racial group in New York. Yet many City Councilmembers continue to be unaware of our needs and concerns.

2. Comments on Proposed City Council Districts

We are extremely disappointed and angered by the activities of this Commission and your proposed maps. We have spoken at every hearing, together with dozens of other community members to support fair districts that reflect true communities of interest through the Unity Maps. These Unity Maps were submitted shortly after the Commission's 1st round of hearings in August, and there have been few if any dissenting voices to these suggestions. And yet our Unity Maps have been completely ignored when this Commission have drawn their districts.

The growing South Asian communities in Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park are