

**City Council Redistricting Commission**  
**August 13, 2012**  
**David Galarza**  
**La Casita Comunal de Sunset Park**

Good evening, my name is David Galarza. I'm a coordinator a La Casita Comunal de Sunset Park, a Project of Trinity Lutheran Church. On August 4, 2012, we joined members of Asian Americans for Equality and Common Cause for a workshop on this process. A process, I might add that occurs every ten years, but that seems to be rushed through in what feels like 10 minutes leaving the general public mostly unaware.

The men and women who participated in this forum were engaged and very aware of the importance of this process. As I had stressed at a press conference prior to forum, for us at least, this exercise was less about who was going to be in office and more about holding whoever that person was accountable to our respective communities.

The maps created from this exercise seem on the surface fair and indeed set a framework from where we can begin a conversation. Both the Asian American and the Latino communities have grown substantially and there is a real need to ensure that both communities are respected, counted and consulted in all matter of civic affairs. Obviously, we are also not homogenous groups and the sensitivities and nuances of our ethnic roots need to be taken into account.

As a Latino, I would be remiss if I didn't express my dissatisfaction with the lack of fair representation of Latinos on this Commission. Latinos have had the same number of members on this body since 1990 even though the Latino community in the city has grown by 31 percent. We should have five members.

I must also express my dissatisfaction with the timing of this process. If your stated goal is to make sure that there is little to no real public participation, then by all means continue to schedule these meetings in the middle of summer when most people are on vacation or generally aren't paying attention to these issues. But in fact, if you really care about the democratic process and really want to engage and involve and include the myriad of voices that exist and should be heard in this metropolis, then you should change the calendar and this process and devise a better system to include and honor those voices.

I want to thank Common Cause for reaching out to La Casita and coordinating the forum we had and to our brothers and sisters in the Asian American community for breaking bread with us and discussing the many ways our communities can and will work together. Sadly, it seems like the kind of exercise that some government bureaucrats are more apt to despise than to appreciate.

As this bullet train moves toward adopting new lines, I will repeat what our friends at the National Institute for Latino Policy have offered: How independent will this process be (from the parties, the Mayor, the Council, etc.); how transparent will the process be?; Will there be meaningful public participation, especially among Latino and other communities of color?; Will mapping and related technologies be made available to all communities?; Will the reallocation of state prisoners to their original New York City addresses be implemented?

We'll have more questions and we hope to get as many answers in the weeks and months ahead. And we will continue to work with groups like Common Cause, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, AALDEF and others to insure that the voices, desires and the democratic rights of all New Yorkers are respected, considered and implemented in this process.