



## **STATEMENT OF OCA-NY**

### **Written Statement for the Districting Commission of the City Council**

**By Dr. Wah Lee**

**October 11, 2012**

My name is Dr. Wah Lee. I had testified on behalf of OCA-NY at the Commission's Brooklyn hearing on August 11, 2012. I have been a Board Member of OCA-NY since 2010. OCA-NY is a founding member of ACCORD. Founded in 1976, OCA-NY, formerly known as Organization for Chinese Americans, is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the political, economic, social, and cultural rights of Asian Americans. OCA-NY represents the five boroughs of New York City. Our work in Brooklyn includes voter registration at citizenship swearing in ceremonies at the Federal Courthouse and in Sunset Park, accompanying victims of hate crimes to the Kings County District Attorney's office, and participating in Asian American heritage festivals in McKinley Park. In 2010, we co-sponsored a successful census event at Sunset Park Recreation Center. We've partnered with United Puerto Rican Organization of Sunset Park, Brooklyn's Chinese American Planning Council, Brooklyn Chinese Association, and United Chinese Association of Brooklyn on OCA-NY's hate crimes prevention art project and the 2010 census. OCA-NY has served on the Brooklyn Borough President's Committee to celebrate Asian American Heritage Month and has received awards from Kings County District Attorney Charles Hynes, the Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, and Brooklyn State Senator Eric Adams.

My statement focuses on the communities of Sunset Park, Bensonhurst, and the neighborhood between those communities. Support for my statement is based on other OCA-NY Brooklyn members, data from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, 2010 Census, and my personal and work experience. I am 40 years old. I grew up and still have a home in Bensonhurst. In Bensonhurst, I had worked in my parents' dry cleaner and attended PS 247. In Sunset Park, I completed my medical internship in Lutheran Medical Center, where I am still affiliated as a physician.

OCA-NY previously testified to the enormous population growth of the Asian population in Brooklyn, which forms at least three Asian communities of common interest in Brooklyn. They are the large Asian population in Sunset Park, the Asian plurality community approximately between 60th and 71st Streets between Sunset Park and Bensonhurst, and the large Asian population in Bensonhurst. These three localities are geographically contiguous, and have shared economic ties, resources, and social networks.

### **WE SUPPORT PROPOSED CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 38**

With respect to proposed City Council District 38, OCA-NY appreciates that this commission recognizes the importance of keeping both sides of 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. together in Sunset Park, and that it has also incorporated the community of common interest approximately between 60th and 71st Streets, which extends east towards Bensonhurst.



## **WE DO NOT SUPPORT PROPOSED CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 47**

With respect to proposed City Council District 47, we are very surprised that very little of its district boundaries have changed when compared to the current map. Does the Districting Commission feel that population demographics have not changed between 2000 and 2010 in this district? By proposing to keep District 47 essentially the same over 10 years, is this commission suggesting that the Asian community of common interest has not grown in Bensonhurst between the census of 2000 and 2010?

OCA-NY will re-iterate. The 2010 Census revealed Asian Americans now comprise 13% of New York City's population. The number of Asian Americans has reached over a quarter million in Brooklyn, having grown by 41% since 2000. 2010 census data shows Sunset Park is 35% Asian and Bensonhurst is 37% Asian. How and why is it that the Asian community of common interest can be kept intact in proposed District 38 which encompasses Sunset Park, and be divided in proposed District 47 which includes Bensonhurst? OCA-NY supports the Unity Map proposed by ACCORD which preserves large Asian American communities of interest together in accordance with the principles of redistricting. The Asian American community of common interest in District 47 can be kept intact by extending its western border further west to 15th Ave. This can be accomplished by moving its eastern border westward from Coney Island Ave. and Ocean Parkway, to McDonald Ave.

Following the D and N train lines, an Asian plurality community has developed in this western part of Bensonhurst. The core of this western part of Bensonhurst is 18th Ave. This 18th Ave. commercial strip caters to the Asians in its surrounding vicinity westward, northward, and eastward. On the 18th Ave. commercial strip, particularly beginning at 86th Street and stretching northward to the 60s, there has been many noticeable changes in local community centers, restaurants, grocery and other storefronts within the past decade which serves the particular needs of the Asian community. For example, the 4th oldest church in Brooklyn on 18th Ave. and 84th Street, now caters to Asian language speakers.

In addition, this western part of Bensonhurst, the Asian community of which is obviously contiguous with the Asian community of eastern Bensonhurst, would be divided under the currently proposed District 47. There are two High Schools in this western part of Bensonhurst: New Utrecht High School is about 1/4 Asian, and Franklin D. Roosevelt High School is over 1/3 Asian. Data is from <http://high-schools.com>, a resource of Public and Private U.S high school data. Be mindful that absent from this Asian High School population count are the Asian High School students from this neighborhood who form part of the Asian majority student populations at the three Specialized High Schools of Brooklyn Tech, Bronx Science, and Stuyvesant.

While OCA-NY supports the currently proposed City Council District 38, we do not support the currently proposed City Council District 47. The western part of Bensonhurst, with an Asian community strongly connected with Asian community of eastern Bensonhurst, is divided under the currently proposed District 47. We support District 47 as drawn in the Unity Map.