



SOUTH QUEENS WOMEN'S MARCH
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Good afternoon. Thank you to the NYC Districting Commission for answering our calls for a public hearing and for hearing us out today. My name is Amanda Deebrah and I am an active member and the vaccine outreach coordinator of South Queens Women's March (SQWM), a local grassroots gender justice organization. I am also a resident in the Richmond Hill area. Founded right before the pandemic hit, and inspired by global and national women's rights movements, SQWM amplifies the voices of South Queens' diverse women and gender-expansive people. We are an all-volunteer multi-generational, intersectional platform working to foster women's empowerment. We take our sisterhood to the streets to unify women and gender non-conforming individuals and connect them to the tools and resources necessary to empower their own lives and thrive. That includes fighting food insecurity and period poverty through pantries and essential distributions, tackling gender based violence via healthy relationships and art healing workshops, promoting empowerment through youth and professional development particularly among our community's large immigrant population, and finally promoting civic engagement and building political power through street canvassing and outreach, all while meeting people where they are, which is what brought us to become a proud member of the APA VOICE Redistricting Task Force.

Much of our work has been based in the Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park neighborhoods of South Queens, home to a vibrant and sprawling Asian American population - specifically South Asians, mainly Punjabi, and Indo-Caribbeans that Census data unfortunately does not fully account for. For clarification's sake, Indo-Caribbeans are those who migrated from India to the Caribbean as indentured servants in the early 1800s - to places like Guyana, Trinidad and Suriname. These communities have been gerrymandered for far too long. We have advocated and will continue to advocate for AALDEF's Asian American Community of Interest (COI) Maps.

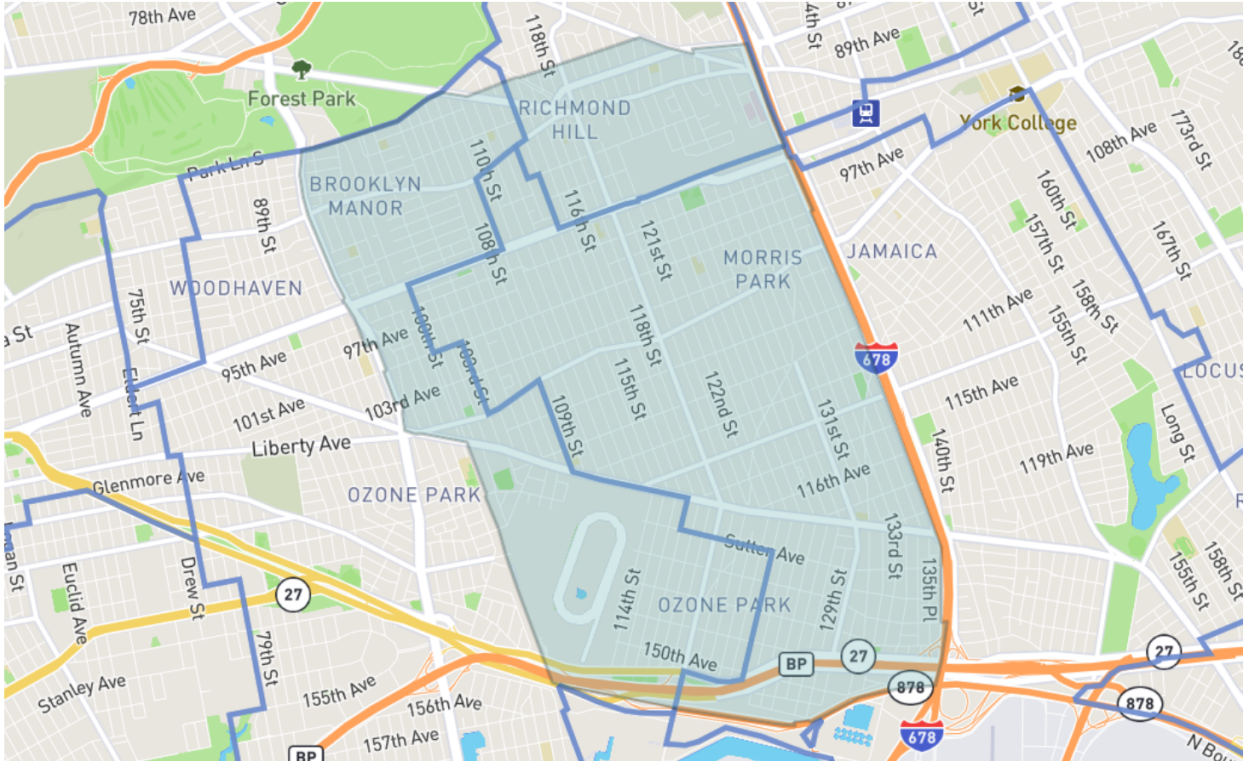
As a community of interest, we take the same mass transit, we go to the same schools, we worship in the same faith based institutions, we eat the same types of cuisines, we share similar socioeconomic statuses, YET we have been among the most egregiously divided at every single level of government. At the City Council level, we are divided into three Council districts - Districts 28, 29 and 32. If you take a look at the overlay of the AALDEF Community of Interest Map with the existing Council maps for District 28, 29 and 32, you'll see how we are divided, even at the very nucleus of our community of interest.

As you go to the drawing board and consider these maps, we ask that you please don't divide us. Please keep Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park whole.

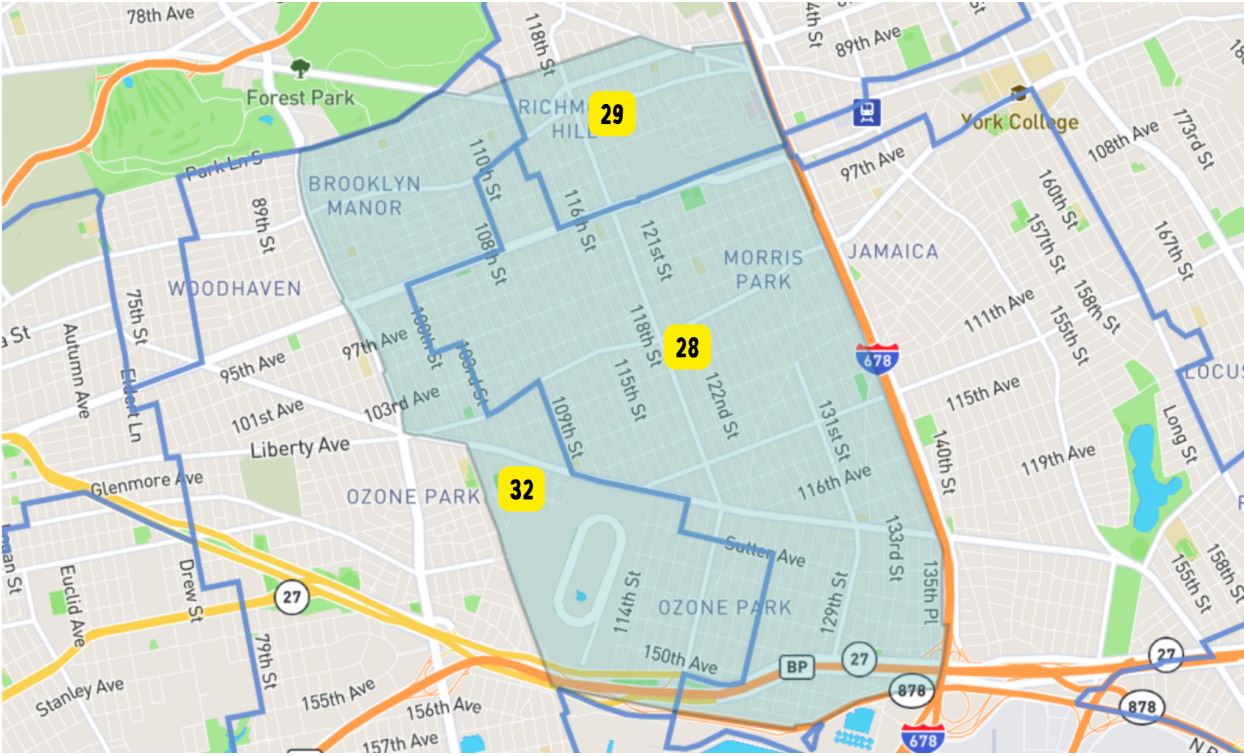
There are many in my community who have been fighting for this, for equitable lines for 30 years. I can recall several elections where many of my family members and friends, all who live nearby in our same community of interest, want to corral behind a candidate of our choice only to find that they live outside of that candidate's district - becoming deeply disappointed and frustrated by a political system that many of us already feel wasn't designed to uplift the voices of Black and Brown people.

This conversation isn't about identity politics for us. It's about equity for an Asian population in Queens that has grown larger than any other racial group per the last Census - by 29% - an increase many local CBOs including ours put so much energy into capturing, most of us doing so without a single dollar of funding or staff. All Asian American Communities Of Interests (COI) in Queens should be kept whole to the extent possible at all levels.

Thank you for listening. As we always say at South Queens Women's March, OUR VOICE IS OUR POWER.



AALDEF Community of Interest Map for Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park



City Council Districts overlaid with AALDEF's Community of Interest Map for Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park