

CORDELL CLEARE
30TH SENATE DISTRICT

ALBANY OFFICE
ROOM 504
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
PHONE: 518-455-2441

DISTRICT OFFICE
Harlem State Office Building
163 West 125th Street
Suite 912
New York, New York 10027
PHONE: 212-222-7315
EMAIL: CLEARE@NYSenate.GOV



THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIR
WOMEN'S ISSUES

COMMITTEES:
CITIES 1
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & SMALL BUSINESS
CONSUMER PROTECTION
DISABILITIES
HEALTH

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR CORDELL CLEARE BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY
DISTRICTING COMMISSION

Good Evening; my thanks to the New York City Districting Commission for holding a hearing in Harlem.

This year, over and above any other in history, has demonstrated why the redistricting process is both imperative and important.

As we gather tonight at the Schomburg, the leading literal repository of the history of Black People in the world, it is the perfect place to accentuate the core of my testimony: it is in the interest of this Borough and this City to "Keep Harlem Whole" in one single Councilmanic District, namely the 9th.

Just as the Schomburg opened the eyes of Black People here in Harlem and all over the world, providing them with a singular collection that accurately reflected their shared and lived experiences, Harlem's 9th District—throughout my entire life—has always been a plurality Black District—the only of its kind in this Borough. To subdivide it in any way, would be like swapping the Schomburg with Madison Square Garden—unthinkable!

Since 2014, the Village of Harlem is the only area of Manhattan with Black representation in the New York City Council. Shifting the lines without recognizing the impact it will have on historically Black areas has the very real possibility of erasing Black representation at the city level at a time when more and more Black Manhattanites are being forced out of their homes due to skyrocketing housing prices and gentrification. The solution is clear—"Hands Off Harlem!"

"Hands Off Harlem!" is the theme I have used in my many communications with the Commission and I note that the latest version of the draft maps resulted in the northern inclusion within the 9th District of the Polo Grounds, Ralph J. Rangel Houses and Holcombe Rucker Playground—all of which represent quintessential Harlem.

CORDELL CLEARE
30TH SENATE DISTRICT

ALBANY OFFICE
ROOM 504
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
PHONE: 518-455-2441

DISTRICT OFFICE
Harlem State Office Building
163 West 125th Street
Suite 912
New York, New York 10027
PHONE: 212-222-7315

EMAIL: CLEARE@NYSSENATE.GOV



THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIR
WOMEN'S ISSUES

COMMITTEES:
CITIES 1
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & SMALL BUSINESS
CONSUMER PROTECTION
DISABILITIES
HEALTH

However, to ensure that Harlem is kept whole and remains a plurality Black District, the following areas to the south must be included in the final version of the 9th District: The Heritage at Schomburg Plaza, Clinton Houses, Lehman Houses, Lakeview Apartments, Duke Ellington Circle, Boys & Girls Harbor, The Africa Center and Harlem Meer—including that gate named after the Exonerated Five. Each of these areas are all a part and unique to historic Harlem and belong in the 9th Councilmanic District.

As you move from north to south, the 9th District should start with Rucker Park and rightly end by including Harlem Meer. All of the areas enumerated above have been in the 9th District for years; they have proven to meet the legal, constitutional and statutory tests such as contiguousness and fair and effective representation. New York City's Charter mandates "fair and effective representation" of racial groups protected by the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Redistricting should strengthen Black communities like Harlem that have long been marginalized, and should not result in the restriction or lessening of Black political power. Thus, Keeping Harlem Whole must be a top priority and I encourage you in the strongest possible terms to restore the following areas to District 9 in your next draft maps: The Heritage at Schomburg Plaza, Clinton Houses, Lehman Houses, Lakeview Apartments, Duke Ellington Circle, Boys & Girls Harbor, The Africa Center and Harlem Meer.

I thank you for your thoughtful consideration and urge you to act swiftly to keep the Harlem District the Harlem District.