

Good evening members of the NYS Independent Redistricting Commission and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Valeria Sowell, and I am speaking on behalf of the homeowners in the East New York and part of the Nehemiah Homeowners Association in the section of Brooklyn and I am also a member of the NAACP and the Public Advocate of The Cleveland Street Block Association between Sutter and Blakes Avenues, being a resident on the perimeters of borderline Queens.

Things are very different now, since Congressman Ed Towns and Congressman Owens led the Brooklyn community almost twenty years ago, together. According to the 2020 Census Results for NYC-Key Population and Housing Characteristics, printed in August 2021, under our current Mayor Bill DeBlasio, Brooklyn did not have the masses of numbers living across ALL corners of the borough of Brooklyn years ago, like we do now.

1. There are more immigrants here in Brooklyn today, then in the last ten years, which is why ICEs was created, and,
2. Brooklyn is the largest borough with the largest white population creating gentrification throughout; causing displacement, housing and food insecurity alike, and
3. Bed-Stuyvesant, Fort Greene and Crown Heights has increased in population to at least 21,000 residents occupying Brooklyn spaces; with downtown Brooklyn at 67% increase, Williamsburg at 41%, Ocean Hill at 19% and Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill and Gowans-Red Hook at 100% population capacity, and, although East New York is looked at as a gold mine, we lack adequate and affordable housing and jobs for the working poor and seniors, and,
4. Not in so many words; but the above are real reasons why, now is the time to have two Congressional seats in Congressional Electoral District 008, NOW more than ever, that is.

Commissioners, I urge you to rethink, revisit and realized that the population growth in Brooklyn is the largest of all the other boroughs alone; with the masses of the people living below poverty, facing joblessness, more homelessness and violence is at an all-time high. Housing and businesses are not being built fast enough to cater to the impoverished and underserved. It sounds cruel and sad, but imagine, if the pandemic had not killed thousands, what would Brooklyn look like today? With more people, comes more problems, which should come with more congressional seats for and in Brooklyn. Humbly submitted.

Thank you, Valeria Sowell