

## **Councilman Charles Barron – (42<sup>nd</sup> Council District)**

### **Redistricting or Redistribution of Power**

On Tuesday, US Magistrate Roanne Mann completed the task of drawing new Congressional District lines in New York and the results are suspect. Judge Mann was appointed by a three-judge panel to draw up new district lines after the State Legislatures failed in their responsibility to do so. However, we must be extremely vigilant and pay close attention to Judge Mann's proposed new lines. Irrespective of the impact these new district lines may have on individual races, we must not be shaded from the larger picture – Black and Latino electoral empowerment. Historically, we have fought long and hard for Black and Latino political empowerment. All across the country there are attempts to disenfranchise Black & Latino voters through schemes like the requirement of Voter ID or drawing lines that politically divide our communities.

After thorough review of these plans, I also noticed that racially, the white Congressional Districts would be more solidified with an overwhelming majority population, thereby making it almost impossible for them to lose any power. For example, the new 27<sup>th</sup> District is 92.7% white, the 21<sup>st</sup> District - 91.6% white, the 23<sup>rd</sup> District - 90% white, the 19<sup>th</sup> District - 86% white, the 20<sup>th</sup> District – 79% white, the 24<sup>th</sup> District – 83% white, the 1<sup>st</sup> District – 77.9% white, and the beat goes on. The whites are secured in their power base.

When it comes to the Black districts, the highest percentage of Blacks in a District under this plan is in the new 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District (formerly the 10<sup>th</sup> Congressional District – currently headed by Congressman Ed Towns) with 58% Blacks. Congresswoman Yvette Clark's district was 55% Black but was changed so dramatically that it now includes neighborhoods in Brooklyn that are non-black making her position vulnerable. Congressman Greg Meeks' District is 55% Black but still 45% other. Congressman Charlie Rangel's Harlem District under this new plan is majority Latino and a little over 30% Black and over 20% White. This is the District of former Congressman Adam Clayton Powell who fought to have a Black Congressional District in Harlem and now that will no longer exist.

So we must be aware of redistricting plans that redistribute power and thus disempowers the Black and Latino communities. This plan is not final - the State Legislature still has an opportunity to make changes. I am calling on all of our leaders in the Senate and the Assembly not to gloat about new lines that may individually favor them but keep the bigger picture in mind or else we will drastically lose many of the gains that so many died for in the 60s.

There have been attempts in the past by whites to secure seats in majority black districts. Remember David Yassky's attempt to take the Congressional seat formerly held by Shirley Chisholm and Major Owens in Brooklyn. Yvette Clarke who is now the Congressional Representative of that district won that election in 2006. Blacks and Latinos must not let them divide and conquer us. We must stay united and prioritize our people over personal and political interests. Remember our struggle is long but the victory is certain.