

**Testimony presented by Kathleen Benson at the January 7, 2013
Manhattan Districting Commission Hearing at Hunter College**

I am here to address the proposed new boundaries for District 8. I have worked in East Harlem/District 8 all my adult life and currently serve on the boards of two East Harlem nonprofit organizations—East Harlem Preservation and Hope Community—as well as on the East Harlem Holiday Tree Committee.

I am pleased that the commission has restored La Marqueta, in its entirety, to District 8, but more work should be done. I will use the balance of my time to discuss two of several additional needed changes.

The first change is to the proposed southern boundary of District 8, which fails to recognize 96th Street as the gateway to East Harlem. The redrawn lines either split or cut off entirely two large NYCHA developments—Lexington and Carver Houses—and site parts of them in District 4. These developments are communities of interest in and of themselves. Moreover, since East Harlem has the highest concentration of public housing in New York City, the tenants in those two developments would be best served if represented by a councilperson whose constituency is so heavily weighted to residents of public housing.

I also ask the commission to rethink the jagged nature of the proposed western portion of the district between East 118th and 125th Streets between Park and Lexington Avenues—and in one case all the way over to Third Avenue! The cutouts on the current proposed map remind me of teeth carved in a Halloween jack-o-lantern! Please restore the integrity of *that* portion of District 8—at least—so that people on the north side of these streets will be represented by the same council person as the people on the south side.

And on the issue of integrity, the proposed new lines are an assault on this community. It may be impoverished, but it is rich in spirit. You have decimated East Harlem.

Thank you.