



The People Are the Experts of Their Own Neighborhoods

One of the most significant powers that the people of California have is to elect their representatives to conduct the business of their government. The redrawing of voting district maps is currently underway in California. Redistricting is the second-largest shift of power in the United States next to the Presidential election. We have an opportunity to shape California and California's communities in a way that protects our neighborhoods from being broken apart, and protects our voting power from being diluted. How district boundaries are configured can make the difference between empowering and maximizing the voters' voices or minimizing and muting those voices.

To maximize our electoral power, Community Coalition believes it is essential to build out a multiracial, intersectional, and regional approach to the redistricting process using a racial equity lens. Accordingly, we have convened 34 organizations, known as the People's Bloc, to conduct grassroots community engagement in this redistricting cycle. Through storytelling, education, and targeted messaging that centers community voices in the redistricting process, we have created "Solidarity Maps" which elevate racial solidarity as we draw new lines of representation.

All of this work is in the interest of ensuring the maps created—by the state, Los Angeles County, City of Los Angeles, and Los Angeles Unified School District Redistricting Commissions—provide protection and political power to underrepresented communities and do not result in minimizing our political voice, representation, and access to resources for years to come. But like other redistricting cycles, the 2021 City of Los Angeles Redistricting effort is inherently flawed—starting with the 2020 Census undercount. The U.S. Census Bureau provides **the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico with population counts to use in the redrawing of legislative district boundaries**. Based on comparisons between the 2020 Census data and the most recent [American Community Survey](#) estimates, a UCLA study found that in Los Angeles County:

- Predominantly Latinx neighborhoods are most likely to have the largest undercounts in the Census.
- Neighborhoods with the most significant percentage of people living below the poverty line were most likely to have undercounts.
- Communities of mainly renters, rather than homeowners, were more likely to have undercounts.

- Census tracts where more U.S.-born residents live are more likely to be accurately counted than immigrant neighborhoods.

We are the experts on our neighborhoods and what makes them special, distinct, and unique. We are the best suited to define our own “communities of interest” with common priorities and concerns. We also know what makes them most like other communities and why they should not be broken up. Lincoln Heights should be kept in the same district as Boyle Heights and El Sereno, to which they are most similar.

For decades, Koreatown residents have had to figure which one of four council districts--District 1, 4, 10, or 13--they should turn to when trying to solve their community's problems. This is unacceptable, and the residents of Koreatown deserve to be unified so their collective power can be enhanced.

Economic engines and cultural assets—such as USC, Exposition Park, and the Coliseum—should be returned to Council District 8. CD8 is going to be a solidly Black district for the foreseeable future, and its residents need and deserve improved opportunity and access. Return the assets and economic drivers stripped from this predominantly African American district during the 2011-12 redistricting process. Lastly, keep Destination Crenshaw—the 1.3-mile stretch of Crenshaw Boulevard being transformed into a thriving commercial corridor due to long-deserved economic investment—in the 8th Council District.

Redistricting is about power—voting, economic and political. But, it is clear that our strength has been undermined by a historic undercount. We call on the City of Los Angeles Redistricting Commission to stay steadfast in its commitment to transparency, community involvement, and equity. They must follow through on placing power in the hands of people so we can move in a direction to make LA whole. Returning assets lost by communities like South LA 10 years ago, and drawing lines that honor the political, cultural, and the future of key neighborhoods, is the first step.

Leslie Johnson, Vice President of Organizational Development, joined Community Coalition in 2007. Johnson has coordinated fundraising strategies that have helped the organization raise more than \$25 million in funding from government, foundations, corporations, and individual donors. Additionally, she has played significant roles in building the capacity of other local non-profit organizations through training and coaching. In her current role, she is charged with leading strategies to grow the organization's resources, both human and financial.