



**New York City Districting Commission Public Hearing  
Testimony of Shivana Jorawar, Esq., Co-Director of Jahajee Sisters**

**May 25, 2022**

My name is Shivana Jorawar and I am a Co-Director of Jahajee Sisters, an organization with over one thousand members founded in 2007. Jahajee Sisters is a healing and political home for Indo-Caribbeans who have survived or are at risk for experiencing gender-based violence, and we organize with them to achieve gender justice. Our community of support guides survivors to heal, recover, and thrive. Through leadership development, grassroots organizing, and arts activism, we amplify community voices to transform culture -- including the systems that hold us back. Our Indo-Caribbean community is a large *and* marginalized Asian American population.

**Our members primarily reside in the Richmond Hill, South Ozone, and Ozone Park areas of Queens. We ask you to keep these neighborhoods together in the redistricting process.**

Our members are immigrant and first-generation survivors, child witnesses, and working class women vulnerable to abuse at home and on the job. In 2013, the New York City Department of City Planning issued a report showing that Guyanese are the 2nd largest immigrant group in Queens and the fifth largest in New York City. This is despite the data not including Guyanese born here or Indians from Trinidad, Suriname, or Jamaica. Despite our large population, our struggles go unaddressed. We experience domestic violence at alarming rates, and the areas we live in are resource deserts. In fact "Little

Guyana" has been one of the most impacted by COVID infections and also one of the last to receive testing or vaccine sites.

We are testifying today because the survivors we serve need for Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park, and Ozone Park to remain whole. Right now, political lines split our community apart -- which makes more work for organizers and advocates like us who are fighting for better conditions. Why should we have to make demands of three different city council offices? Why should we stretch the valuable time and energy of our working class members who are struggling to make ends meet but yet put in the work to share their stories with elected officials?

Our communities in this area are mostly immigrant. They share the same needs for job opportunities, affordable housing, transportation improvement, and health care. They speak the same languages. They go to the same schools. They worship at the same temples, churches, and masjids. Yet they are broken up.

We want to make sure redistricting is done fairly and with justice as the guiding force.  
**We need to keep Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park, and Ozone Park together.**

Thank you.