

Emily Bookstein  
4/10/2021  
RE: Redistricting

Dear Co-Chairs Taylor, and Salinas, Vice-Chairs, Knopp, and Boshart-Davis, and members of the redistricting committee,

For the record my name is Emily Bookstein, my pronouns are they/them and I live in District 3, in Multnomah County, in the Concordia neighborhood.

I moved to Portland 6 years ago and work for a local nonprofit. I'm also a white gentrifier living in inner Northeast, in a historically Black neighborhood.

I'm new to the Concordia neighborhood but it's very clear how gentrification and displacement are affecting it. There are Black Lives Matter signs everywhere, including my yard, but demographically this area has changed a lot. According to the Concordia Neighborhood Association, between 2000 and 2010 the number of white people living in Concordia went up 13% - while the number of Black residents went down 13%. That trend has continued.

I moved to this neighborhood in order to build my queer community. But longtime BIPOC residents of Portland have been losing parts of their communities as neighbors, friends and businesses are pushed out. Last year I phone banked as a canvasser doing census outreach with Forward Together. One day I talked to a man and mentioned how important it was for the Black community to be counted. He said, "What Black community? My community doesn't exist anymore, it got destroyed." It was heartbreaking to hear that. Having community around me is one of the things I care about the most for myself, and that's why I am also fighting for people who want to keep their communities together.

We need to keep communities together in the redistricting process as well. It shouldn't be so hard for Black, Indigenous and people of color, queer folks, renters and immigrants to elect leaders who look like them, who truly represent them, and who will fight for their interests.

I want to know that the redistricting committee will fight to prioritize keeping communities together. Please do everything possible to engage communities of interest in the process, and account for how displacement has disrupted communities already. That process will set a foundation where BIPOC communities, the LGBTQ community, and other folks who have historically been disenfranchised can exercise their full political power. I want that for my neighbors, for the queer and trans people of color in my life, and for myself because I know I will benefit when under-represented communities have the representation and power they deserve.

Thank you so much for all of your time and work on this issue.

-Emily Bookstein