



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2020 District Leader Candidate Questionnaire

Name: **Julio Peña III**

Office Sought: **District Leader/State Committee, AD 51**

Email Address: **info@JulioPenaBK.com** Phone Number: **n/a**

Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability:

1) Why do you seek an endorsement from CBID?

CBID is a long-standing, respected political club in Brooklyn that seeks to reform the political landscape in Brooklyn and I am looking forward to partnering with your club and membership to continue the work of supporting progressive, reform policies at County Committee and local elected offices.

2) Will you vote for Frank Seddio to be Chair of the Kings County Democratic Party? Explain your decision.

Since Rodneyse Bichotte is the new Chair, I am hopeful she is committed to reforming and restoring the changes that were made to the party rules this past January. With that said, I would only vote for a party leader that is committed to inclusion, transparency and accountable practices.

3) What do you think are the most important responsibilities of a district leader?

I think there is the required role of District Leader and there is a broader undefined role. As a core value, I believe that, in almost any scenario, if you're not actively bringing different voices to the table, then you're not creating inclusive spaces. As District Leader, I would work with County Committee leaders and members to create more inclusive spaces, both at larger meetings and in our first of the borough formed 51st Assembly District Committee. This absolutely includes recruiting new, representative County Committee members and ending the practice of appointing members who do not know they are on County Committee simply to gain proxy votes.

4) What changes would you like to see in the operation of the county organization and its rules? What would you like to stay the same?

The Party has a mandate and role to play in the creating a platform for Democracy, for filing vacancies, for nominating judges. But the battle lies I think with the larger philosophical role of what could we do with a more engaged Party. There is a slew of engaged folks wanting to do more but are actively discouraged. Discouraged because it is becoming harder to be involved due to lackluster leadership, little transparency, and a party accountable to no one. We should be working to increase leadership, at all levels, both at County Committee, at Committee Meetings, and working to elect progressive leaders in neighboring counties (as well as in our own county!).

5) What, if any, groups or types of people will you not accept campaign contributions from? If so, please note whose money you will not accept.

I have not accepted any money from Real Estate or corporate PACs.

6) Do you support an active Assembly District Committee (ADC) in your Assembly District? Would you support an ADC that operates independently from AD leadership (Assembly member and/or District Leaders)?

ABSOLUTELY! I, along with my fellow County Committee members worked tirelessly and for over nine



months to get our District Leaders to call an ADC meeting in the 51st AD. It shouldn't take months of calling, emailing, and talking with CC leadership to form a party mandated group. We elected our own leadership independent of party leadership and I am proud to be the Chair of the Public Meetings Committee and worked to elect Katherine Walsh as our ADC Chairperson.

7) What County Committee proxy reforms do you support?

I support any reform that reduces the power of the establishment and distributes it back to that of county committee members.

9) Do you support a non-binary option for District Leaders and County Committee members? Do you support removing all designations of gender for District Leaders and County Committee members?

I support reforming the gender requirements for District Leaders and County Committee members. I consciously do not say I am running for "Male District Leader" because I do not feel there needs to be a distinction. I also believe when we talk about reforming the language, we need to look at it with a greater equity lense to provide greater representation of all genders, ethnicities, abilities, gender expression, etc... I'm open to exploring this further so that there is equitable representation that represents the fullness of Brooklyn.

10) The Census determines how critical resources and political power are distributed. NYS and NYC have historically been undercounted. What action can you take to ensure that New Yorkers, and in particular, members of immigrant communities, are counted? What outreach and educational activities do you have planned?

It's frustrating and frightening that we are in the middle of a global pandemic during the 2020 Census. Congressional District 7, which incorporates much of Sunset Park and Red Hook, right now is at a 29% response rate compared to 39% of NYS. In terms of outreach efforts, this is why ADCs are instrumental for community outreach and engagement. There are county committee members who are ready to be activated on a variety of really important community issues, Census being paramount.

11) What is your position on the current land use and zoning struggles in your district?

Sunset Park is home to the largest private rezoning application in NYC history; Industry City. The ULURP process is broken. It does not adequately provide enough opportunities for communities to give feedback and disproportionately gives power to zoning applicants over the community.

12) District Leaders and the Kings County Democratic Committee Executive Committee have the power to recommend commissioners and other staff hires to the Board of Elections. In what ways would you use your position as District Leader to increase transparency in the commissioner selection and hiring processes for the BOE, and professionalization of the BOE generally? What, if anything, would you do differently than your predecessor to ensure fairness and transparency in the hiring of poll workers?

I would ensure that the process is actually transparent, that there is notice to the public around who is being recommended, their qualifications, and why, and also push for a more independent Board of Elections. Any Election body that is appointed or recommended will inherently create conflicts of interests. I am by no means an expert in this field but I support an independent, non-partisan board of elections.

