



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2024 District Leader Candidate Questionnaire

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

1) Why do you seek an endorsement from CBID?

One of the reasons that actually led me to run for District Leader in 2022 is when the ballot propositions expanding voting rights failed to pass in 2021. Not only would these reforms transformed voting rights in the entire state, but especially been integral in expanding our democracy in underserved neighborhoods like mine. It is truly the fault of the Brooklyn Democratic Party for not campaigning for them. As voters we are continually let down with a lack of transparency and basic voter education by the Brooklyn Democratic Party leadership.

The real work is being done by people on the ground, and all of our Democratic clubs like CBID. I am seeking endorsement from CBID and other like minded clubs because I want to represent our interests and take what our communities want into the Brooklyn Democratic Party.

I believe that I represented the values of Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats well during my first term, and I look forward to doing even more and being more bold in my actions in my next term.

2) Will you vote for Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn to be Chair of the Kings County Democratic Party, if she seeks renomination? Please explain your answer.

I'm not planning on it. I did not vote for her last term. Currently, I have not heard of any other candidates come forward. Under her leadership, the Brooklyn Democratic Party has become even more untransparent, undemocratic, and hostile to different voices.

In my two years as District Leader, things have still been tumultuous. The first year I was glad to serve on the Judicial Committee to put on the fist Brooklyn Party sponsored judicial forum, however this year I have not heard anything else on that. Julio and I also do not have our complete poll worker power back.

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

One of the most important roles of a District Leader is to be the community's link to the democratic process and party. To be someone that engages the community in the voting process with transparency on things like information on County Committee, ballot initiatives, and poll working. Not just electing judges and assigning poll workers, but also educating your constituents about the process and role as well.

Complete transparency is something that both myself and my co-leader Julio Peña III are very focused on. We need full transparency on the judge process, poll working, and County structure. I plan on continuing the work that I was a part of in 2022 with more judicial forums, and expand the frequency and accessibility of them. Information on both the process and the judicial candidates was also listed publicly on my website and social media, email newsletters, and available to the public during office hours and events- this will continue



into my next term.

Another thing I am proud of is my advocacy and communication with our AD 51 County Committee. I have always advocated for County Committee members to be more involved and will continue to do so. The "Committees" that the party established should be open to County Committee members with full participation and transparency on what they are and what their goal is. Julio and I have engaged our County Committee members throughout our term with voter registration drives, election canvassing, and community engagement events such as our Community Baby Shower, Black History Month Resource Fair, and various Health Resource Fairs.

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?

First off, our county party not only needs to stand up for Democratic Issues but be committed to electing Democrats across the borough, no matter what the county leadership's "personal feelings" are for them. In 2023, we saw a complete exile of Democrats in Southern Brooklyn like Justin Brannan, where the County leader blatantly acted against his re-election. District Leaders like myself, Julio, Tori Kelly, Chris McCreight, Mark Hanna, and more had to take it upon ourselves and organize with the clubs in order to do the work to get him re-elected- with no help from the party.

Our county party needs a platform in order to be a real voice for working people in the borough and should enact an agenda that fights injustice and holds its electeds accountable to. Growing up in a community where voter suppression is rampant, ensuring that everyone can participate in Democracy is what drives a lot of my activism already. My co-district leader Julio Peña III have been fighting and advocating to reform the rules that govern the democratic party for the past two years of our term. In every meeting we have with our colleagues in the party, we have always stood up for rule changes and transparency measure to ensure that the party is inclusive, honest, and truly democratic.

Coming from a neighborhood that is constantly an after-thought in city government, inclusivity is extremely important to me. As everyone may remember, in 2022 Julio and I's vacancy slate got denied by the county party, allowing us to not be able to form our ADC. We still do not have our poll worker power back, which denies dozens of community members from a job they have been doing for years.

Julio and I will continue to also advocate for reducing the amount of proxy votes and re-imagining that system- which is part of the reason why we're in the situation we're in..

5) What, if any, groups or organizations will you not accept campaign contributions from?

Any real estate firms, Police Unions, lobbying firms, and big corporations.

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)?



As everyone may remember, in 2022 Julio and I's vacancy slate got denied by the county party, allowing us to not be able to form our ADC in 2023. This year, we are once again avidly working to organize our AD51 constituents to run for county committee with Rep Your Block as I have already done in previous years.

In 2021 and before, we used to have a very active ADC in Assembly District 51, which I was very supportive of. As a county committee member, I had been very involved in the past few years, and in 2021 I was elected to Vice Chair for the Committee on County Organization for our ADC 51. ADC's were a great way to engage local county committee members in issues within the party and the community. Our ADC had registered thousands of voters within our Assembly district and constantly kept our community informed. I fully supported active County Committee members.

As District Leader I work to get our most marginalized neighbors involved in our democracy so that the party can be reflective of what our district actually looks like. A big tool for this is an active ADC.

7) What County Committee proxy reforms do you support?

The current proxy process is not transparent nor democratic. This results in the county leadership picking their candidates and not giving a fair chance to other democratic candidates. I am fully supportive of eliminating or greatly reducing proxy voting for the nomination and have several mandatory public forums that are properly advertised so that county committee members and community members know who is running.

8) Do you support a party platform for the Brooklyn Democratic Party? If so, what two or three principal goals should be included in that platform?

The Brooklyn Democratic Party is one of the biggest in the country with 1.2 million registered democrats. Our county party has an untapped potential to be the leader of progress and social justice in the entire country. It is unbelievable that a party organization of this magnitude would have no party platform and not stand for anything. This has to change. One of the reasons that actually led me to run for District Leader is when the ballot propositions expanding voting rights failed to pass this year. This is something I organized with local clubs like NKD, LID, and BYD in years past. Not only would these reforms transformed voting rights in the entire state, but especially been integral in expanding our democracy in underserved neighborhoods like mine. It is truly the fault of the Brooklyn Democratic Party for not campaigning for them. Brooklyn Democrats should be fighters for voting rights in Brooklyn just as much as they are for Georgia.

Another issue would be housing. As a borough home to one of the highest numbers of tenants, housing is consistently one of the biggest issues our fellow Brooklynites face. AD 51 is home to a large number of Section 8 housing, and Brooklyn's largest NYCHA, the Red Hook Houses. I firmly believe housing is a human right and the party should mobilize to ensure families don't get evicted from their homes and seniors thrown to the streets for the profit of the greedy real estate industry.

The Democratic Party has a huge opportunity right now to fight for immigrant rights with the passing of Intro 1867, a bill for non-citizen immigrants to vote in municipal elections and register as members of political parties. This was a huge victory for both voting rights and immigrant rights, bringing around 800,000 new eligible voters. The Brooklyn Democratic party must work to register and engage these new voters to ensure this hard earned right is exercised and a new immigrant electorate is fully represented in our elections. This should be the first step for the party to continue to fight for immigrant issues that matter to voters.



9) How do you engage in your community now? How do you foresee engaging in your community as District Leader?

Growing up in Red Hook I have a strong connection to the community and am a very involved organizer and community leader here in South Brooklyn. Over the past several years I have developed close relationships with community leaders and stakeholders as we worked together to improve the conditions of the neighborhood, especially in matters of climate and housing justice.

I currently work as Artistic Director at a Red Hook non-profit, the Red Hook Art Project, and previously I worked at the NYCHA Red Hook Senior Center. In 2020 I started Red Hook Relief, the mutual aid organization for the neighborhood. In my daily work I partner with existing community based organizations in its work, like the Red Hook Initiative, Red Hook Justice Center, Red Hook Art Project, Pioneerworks, New York Immigrant Coalition, and the RETI Center.

I am also a member of Sunset Park Assembly; the Industry City No-Rezoning Coalition where I helped organize rallies, press conferences, and community testimonies. I was also a member of Sunset Park ICE Watch, where we respond to threats to immigrant families in the community and provide much needed relief, action, and support. I volunteer with the Chinese-American Planning Council, Vision Futuro, Red Hook Farms, and the Sunset Park Academy of Medical & Public Health Services, Inc (AMPHS).

I'm very active on social media and my district email list of 5,000 registered democrats. In 2024 and beyond, I am looking to step it up starting with a goal of making one informative video per month about party issues and how it all works. This was a goal I had during my first term, but it didn't get fully realized yet. I am also the Vice President of Lambda Independent Democrats of Brooklyn, a member of Independent Neighborhood Democrats, Brooklyn Young Democrats, Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats, Stonewall Democratic Club, and New Kings Democrats. I am always at the events and meetings and plan to continue doing so!

In 2022-2023, Julio and I organized over 50 voter registration drives, election and issues canvasses, and several community engagement events such as our Community Baby Shower, Black History Month Resource Fair, and various Health Resource Fairs.

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

The ULURP process and land use process as it currently stands has greatly affected my district. Our communities in AD51 are suffering from the effects of rapid gentrification, disaster capitalism, and over development in a zoning process that is not transparent and does not center the voice of the communities. As-of-right zoning is deeply problematic in our district as we grapple with the last mile trucking facilities that will bring thousands of polluting trucks into our streets.

These Amazon and UPS facilities were built without any community input and will have long lasting impacts to thousands of lives. Most of the last mile warehouses are all located on the Southern Brooklyn Waterfront of Red Hook and Sunset Park in our district. This is a historically racist land use issue that has been plaguing our frontline communities for decades. I firmly believe we need a community centered approach to the land use and zoning process.

11) 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?

For too long the current process for choosing BOE commissioners, staff, and poll workers has been based on patronage and that has to end. Julio and I are and AD 51 is living proof of this. Our coordinator is the son of our former Assembly Member Felix Ortiz.

So far, Julio and I have not had any influence or sway in this matter. Whenever we bring up the subject, we get shut down. The only way through this is to elect more like-minded reform centered District Leaders. We can't have corruption or incompetence in the Board of Elections, and the reforms I will implement will create greater transparency and fairness in the election process.