

FILED

STATE OF MINNESOTA
SPECIAL REDISTRICTING PANEL
A21-0243
A21-0546

December 8, 2021

OFFICE OF
APPELLATE COURTS

Peter S. Wattson, Joseph Mansky, Nancy B. Greenwood, Mary E. Kupper, Douglas W. Backstrom and James E. Hougas III, individually and on behalf of all citizens and voting residents of Minnesota similarly situated, and League of Women Voters Minnesota,

Plaintiffs,

and

Paul Anderson, Ida Lano, Chuck Brusven, Karen Lane, Joel Hineman, Carol Wegner, and Daniel Schonhardt,

Plaintiff-Intervenors

**Declaration of Nelima Sitati Munene
in Support of the Corrie Plaintiffs'
Proposed Redistricting Plan**

vs.

Steve Simon, Secretary of State of Minnesota; and Kendra Olson, Carver County Elections and Licensing Manager, individually and on behalf of all Minnesota county chief election officers,

Defendants,

and

Frank Sachs, Dagny Heimisdottir, Michael Arulfo, Tanwi Prigge, Jennifer Guertin, Garrison O'Keith McMurtrey, Mara Lee Glubka, Jeffrey Strand, Danielle Main, and Wayne Grimmer,

Plaintiffs,

and

Dr. Bruce Corrie, Shelly Diaz, Alberder
Gillespie, Xiongpaoo Lee, Abdirazak
Mahboub, Aida Simon, Beatriz Winters,
Common Cause, OneMinnesota.org, and
Voices for Racial Justice,

Plaintiff-Intervenors,

vs.

Steve Simon, Secretary of State of Minnesota,

Defendant.

I, Nelima Sitati Munene, declare as follows:

1. I am the executive director of the African Career, Education, & Resource (ACER). ACER is the leading organization working with African immigrants in the northwest suburbs. An estimated 4,500 African immigrants live in the northwest suburbs, hailing primarily from Liberia, Somalia, and Nigeria. ACER has served these communities and has been an integral part of the community for almost fourteen years.
2. We support the proposed boundaries for House District 55B, 56A and 56B keeping together the West and East African communities that have been living, working, and flourishing in the Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center area for the past decade together. The West African communities in Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center want to be kept together and have unified representation along with other African communities because we constitute a distinct community in Minnesota with specific cultural ties and common issues.
3. It is important for the African community of Minnesota to have a voice in our state's politics. For Africans to receive the services that they need, they must have a representative who can speak for them in government.
4. Brooklyn Center, which along with Brooklyn Park is referred to locally as "Little Monrovia," has seen its population of Black residents increase significantly in the past 30 years. In 1990, only 5 percent of the population identified as Black; that number increased to 14 percent in 2000, and again to nearly 26 percent in 2010. As of the 2020 census, only 44.5 percent of Brooklyn Center's residents identify as White only; of the 54.5 percent that do not, 29 percent identify as Black. New African residents are drawn to Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park in large part due to the social support networks, as well as African restaurants, shops, and services.

5. Close to 40,000 Liberian Americans call Minnesota home, most living in Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center. About one-fifth of the residents of Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park trace their roots to West Africa. Other African groups with large populations are the Nigerian and Kenyan population as well as other West Africans from Guinea and Sierra Leone.
6. The first wave of Liberian immigrants arrived in Minnesota in the 1950s, when a Liberian ore company began sending workers to Minnesota for mining operations training. The second wave arrived in the mid-1980s, after political unrest caused many Liberians to seek refuge in the United States. The mid 1980s saw a continued steady flow of people of African descent with a huge growth of the population in the 1990s that has continued to grow into the 2000s.
7. Brooklyn Center's current Mayor, Mike Elliot, is Liberian-American, and emigrated to Minnesota from Liberia at age 11 with his family. Mayor Elliot was elected in 2018 and became the Twin Cities suburbs' first Black mayor. Wynfred Russell, who is also Liberian-American, joined Brooklyn Park's city council in January 2019. The African community is proud to finally have been able to elect their chosen representatives, and it is vital that the voting power of the community be preserved.
8. The African community has worked hard to create a supportive enclave with strong cultural ties. I request that you draw districts that keep the African communities in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park together. It is important for the African community to have the ability to vote for candidates that best represent their shared values, interests, and culture.

I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the United States and the State of Minnesota that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Dated: December 6, 2021

Nelima Sitati Munene
Nelima Sitati Munene (Dec 6, 2021 20:35 CST)

Nelima Sitati Munene

Sources

<https://sites.google.com/a/macalester.edu/refugees/liberians>

The Liberian refugee population in Minnesota has increased substantially over the past few years. In 2005, Minnesota resettled 6,357 total refugees, a number which has only been exceeded by California. Currently, it is estimated that 25,000 Liberians live in Minnesota, most of whom live in or near Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center. An estimated one fifth of the 100,000 residents in these communities are West Africans (Minnesota Department of Health). Many of the Liberians run small businesses such as beauty salons that are frequented by their fellow countrymen. Liberians in the community also distinguish themselves with their love and support of the game of soccer (Schmickle July 18, 2005).

<https://www.minnpost.com/new-americans/2016/09/why-arent-there-more-or-any-liberian-american-candidates-running-office-minnes/>

Liberians are among of the oldest immigrant groups in the state. The first wave arrived in Minnesota in the 1950s, when an ore company in the West African nation began sending workers to the Iron Range and the University of Minnesota for advanced training in mining operations. After the training, many never went back home. “A number of those Liberians are still around,” said Russell.

The second wave arrived in the mid-1980s, after a failed coup triggered ethnic tensions and political upheaval, prompting some Liberians to seek refuge in the United States.

Today, community leaders estimate that up to 40,000 Liberians live in Minnesota, with the largest concentrations in the Minneapolis suburbs of Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center.

“Anywhere you go in these cities, you’ll hear people speaking Liberian English,” said Abdullah Kiatamba, a Liberian-American who heads the Brooklyn Park-based African Immigrant Services. “We have changed the face of the city. We have created businesses. We are everywhere, I swear to God.”

https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1097&context=gc_etds

In contrast, the areas in which Liberians reside in Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center are ethnic communities rather than immigrant enclaves. Adjacent to one another, approximately 10 miles northwest of Minneapolis, the two suburbs are racially diverse. Brooklyn Park—the suburb with the larger Liberian population—has a population of 75,781, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, which is approximately 50 percent white, 25 percent African American, and 15 percent Asian. Liberians are drawn to the city due primarily to the cost and availability of housing and access to transportation, and secondarily to the proximity to social support networks, as well as African restaurants, shops, and services.

Although Liberians report being attracted initially to Brooklyn Park due to its affordability rather than due to a desire to live in a Liberian neighborhood, almost all Liberians interviewed reported

having benefited from social networks in the area. Most Liberians in Brooklyn Park moved there on the recommendation of friends or family and reported receiving assistance, especially rides and help finding jobs, from fellow Liberians.








Nelima Sitati Munene Declaration - Brooklyns

Final Audit Report

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