



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

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Fall 2023

Jackson Heights
Beautification Group

www.JHBG.org

Jackson Heights – “A Garden in the City”

The Whole World in One Place

DIVERSE AND MULTICULTURAL JACKSON HEIGHTS



Help the JH community by volunteering at our cleanups and other events!
Go to JHBG.org or e-mail info@jhb.org to sign up!

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On the cover:

Art by Kirsten Magnani

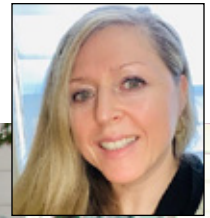
All images are from Jackson Heights, of people we meet, some during parades and events where we come out and celebrate who we are.

en español • páginas 8-9



President's Message

BY LESLIE ELLMAN



One of the changes marking the fall is the start of each new school year. This year, students will begin using a proven phonics-based reading curriculum and will celebrate the new holidays added to the calendar, Eid and Diwali.

Dear Neighbors,

I look forward to this opportunity to reflect on our neighborhood every season as I sit to write each message for *Views*. As this issue is dedicated to exploring and celebrating the diversity of Jackson Heights, I deeply appreciate how far the neighborhood has evolved from intentional exclusion to intentional inclusion. When the Queensboro Corporation first imagined this area as a garden oasis in the city, it wasn't intended for everyone. It was designed as an exclusive community originally offering the idea of a respite from Manhattan to White Anglo-Saxon Protestants only, leaving out newly arriving immigrants, African-Americans, Jewish people, and the poor.

A lot has changed over the course of the last century. Jackson Heights is now one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the most diverse borough in our city and country. The beauty of the architecture that makes Jackson Heights unique is even more stunning today because of the diverse humanity that now inhabits these historic structures. We, the current residents of Jackson Heights, are writing this next chapter in our history through lives lived fully, proudly, and in community with one another.

Leslie Ellman, President

Editor's Message From Exclusive to Inclusive BY MELISSA ZAVALA



This fall we explore one of our neighborhood's defining features, its diversity. How did Jackson Heights evolve from an exclusive planned community to a multicultural tapestry of ethnicities and traditions? Reflecting on our neighborhood's history during special anniversaries brings into focus just how much our community has changed, prompting further reflection on our multicultural present. Our Spanish language editor, Julia, pays tribute to one

of the unifying motifs of Latin American culture: corn. Anthropologist of South Asia, Dr. Hanna Lessinger, tracks the changes to that community's commercial district as new arrivals put their imprint on it in fresh ways.

Diversity takes many forms in Jackson Heights. Our neighborhood's history of acceptance in some ways begins with the early settling of the LGBTQ community, charted in this edition. Other stories include those about gardening with diverse grasses and more.

Special thanks to the neighbors who provided feedback on our last issue, and we look forward to more comments. Send us your stories and/or ideas on subjects you would like to read more about and how we can better serve you. Please share your thoughts by emailing us at info@jhb.org or writing to us by mail at JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

Melissa Zavala, Editor

FALL EVENTS IN JACKSON HEIGHTS

Save the Date: The JHBG turns 35!

Saturday, October 14

Mark your calendars for Saturday, October 14, at the Jewish Center, 37-06 77th Street. Tickets are limited. Purchase them in advance electronically on our home page for \$100 (\$150 the night of the event), or at E77, 35-57 77th Street, where physical tickets can be bought from September to October in cash or with checks. Come join us for dinner and a look back over the decades.



Annual Children's Halloween Parade

Tuesday, October 31

Get your costumes ready and join us for our annual Children's Halloween Parade on Tuesday, October 31 at 5:30pm on the corner of 89th Street and 37th Avenue. See you there!

Arts Events

EN CONSTRUCCIÓN Workshops

Mark your calendars for Saturday, September 16th at 7pm and Saturday, December 2 at 7pm for upcoming EN CONSTRUCCIÓN workshops at Barco de Papel, 40-03 80th Street, just off Roosevelt Ave. More information TBD.

JH Art Talks

JH Art Talks return this Fall! All events begin at 8pm at Espresso 77, 35-57 77th St.

September 20: Celebrating the milestone 50th talk, six artists discuss their work, and cake will be served!

October 18: An Pham with Mike Lee

November 15: Southeast Queens Artist Alliance SEQAA (Rejin Leys and Elizabeth Velazquez)

November 29: Sherwin Banfield with Kris Graves and Phil Ballman

St. Mark's Art Fair

A Centennial Celebration showcasing the neighborhood's talent will be held on Saturday, September 23, at 33-50 82nd St., on 34th Avenue. Drop by and celebrate St. Mark's and the arts!

Q77 Art Show #5

will take place September 23, 2023, on Woodside Avenue between 77th and 76th Streets. This outdoor art show celebrates art, music, and culture. It is FREE and open to all ages! Interested artist participants and performers should contact info@cityprintsny.com.

Artist participation is free. We provide easels and tables (while supplies last). The next Q77 Art Show #6 is scheduled for October, date TBC.

Free Youth Art Classes

CITYPRINTSNYC and Art Retail Therapy are collaborating to offer free introductory art classes in the Fall for youth, ages 6-10 and 11-18. Art Retail Therapy will host two sessions per age group on Friday and Sunday evenings, with classes led by Erick Teran of CPNYC. Materials will be provided, and classes are open to all skill levels. Dates and more information shared via cityprintsny.com email newsletter or visit Art Retail Therapy at 84-26 37th Ave. to learn more and register.

El Mercado

Visit El Mercado, a monthly pop-up market in Jackson Heights hosted by CITYPRINTSNYC and The Worlds Borough Bookshop at the Community United Methodist Church. Featuring local vendors, artists, and makers and free entry! For more info, or to learn how to participate, email elmercado.jh@gmail.com.

A Growing Little India in JH is Changing

BY HANNA LESSINGER



On a recent hot weekend, Jackson Heights' Diversity Plaza, off 74th Street, throbbled with Indian and Bangladeshi movie music. Teams of brightly dressed young women danced for an enthusiastic crowd. Shoppers lugging bags of vegetables gathered to watch. Proud families took the dancers' photos. Local dignitaries made speeches. Clothing vendors showcased their decorative *salwar kameez* sets, *kurtas* and *dupattas* (South Asian traditional clothing) on portable racks. A line of patrons waited outside a truck selling steamed momos, or meat-filled dumplings traditional to Nepal and Tibet. A young man passed out ads for spiritual astrological readings. Jackson Heights' Little India was in full, vibrant action, showcasing a South Asian community event, providing weekend entertainment and a steady supply of food, clothing, jewelry, music, and religious support to the area's increasingly diverse South Asian population. For more than 40

years the area of 74th Street and 37th Avenue in Jackson Heights has been the beating commercial heart of a South Asian immigrant population which began to arrive in the US in large numbers after passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. The area is still in flux as it grows to absorb ever-arriving streams of newer South Asian immigrants.

From the mid-1970s, this area in Jackson Heights has been dominated by immigrants from India, its earliest commercial pioneers. Today, both its shoppers and merchants are a more diverse group of South Asians. Bangladeshi businesses have proliferated in new structures along the recently renamed "Bangladesh Street", or 73rd Street. Renamed under the auspices of Mayor Eric Adams this past spring on the day of Independence of Bangladesh, March 26, the new street name reflects what local Council Member, Shekar Krishnan, calls the growing power of the Bangladeshi community around the city. Less

numerous but decisively present are Nepali and Tibetan immigrants. Restaurants now feature momos and other

Tibetan food alongside standard Indian fare. Some big jewelry stores, still Indian-owned, now display small silver statues of Buddha alongside images of Hindu deities, and medallions with Koranic inscriptions—acknowledging the tastes and needs of Buddhist Nepalis and predominantly Moslem Bangladeshis. But there is nothing new in this—50 years ago the resident Irish and Italian businesses of 74th Street were gradually replaced by Indian newcomers. New York City is not only the city that never sleeps; it is also the city that never stands still.



Rats With Wings? The Vermin We Make

BY GAIL SIEGEL

New York is filled with millions of people, some of whom feel isolated, as if they lived alone on a remote island. Their solace leads them to feed vermin populating the city. Feeding squirrels and songbirds food that may not be appropriate could do more for rats and pigeons than for the intended animals. This causes millions of dollars of destruction to buildings and automobiles, spreading germs and waste.

In New York City, the rat population is about 25% the size of the human population—that's about two million rats! Just a few years ago, Mayor de Blasio spent \$32 million on a direct attack against rats to little avail. Brown rats live for about one year. They begin mating at two or three months old and produce litters of about a dozen pups every two months. Some rats get under car hoods, store food, and try to raise young there, chewing wires and causing a lot of damage.

Recently, the rat infestation has grown even faster than before due to budget reductions and wasteful food disposal.

Pigeons, known to many New Yorkers as "rats with wings", cause millions of dollars of damage to city storefronts every year with their extremely acidic excrement. If shops or other businesses



Also called rock doves (*Columba livia*), pigeons may be the first domesticated birds. Now feral, they take advantage of human environments in new ways.



don't make efforts to prevent pigeons from perching, they'll ruin building facades, causing shopkeepers to constantly replace, repair, and repaint.

How about instead of trying to stop people from sneaking around spreading bread,

kitchen scraps, and bags of bird seed, if there is a way to divert this loving, costly, generosity onto a different path? There may be shelters in need of help. People who are housebound or too poor to eat well themselves, let alone feed pets adequately, could be better served by the care "pigeon mothers" offer. What kind of campaign will

effectively transmit information that might bring about a change that would be a win-win for the city, our neighborhood and the people involved? The clandestine feeders could be heroes who add to the quality of life instead of aggravating a nuisance. Can readers offer suggestions for ways to motivate change by spreading the word, bringing in our local council's office, schools, and the business owners as partners to educate and foster change? Write to us at info@jhb.org. Let's find outlets for everyone to feel more connected and help sustain our neighborhood and the people and wildlife around us.

Celebrating Another Centennial: PS69 Turns 100!



Constructed one hundred years ago to serve the growing population of families moving to Jackson Heights, PS69 (77-02 37th Avenue), called the School of Cultural and Performing Arts, is now a magnet school for the arts. Students can take guitar or violin lessons, along with other arts-centered courses like dance, theater, and visual arts, at times in 16-week programs leading to residencies with some of the city's excellent arts institutions like Jazz at Lincoln Center, City Lore, and others. Academically, it now ranks in the 78th percentile city-wide.

Built between 1922–1924 and designed by the school district architect at the time, C. B. J. Snyder, the original building was five-stories, with a two-story rear wing facing 37th Avenue and set in a neo-Tudor style. This was a common design for schools during Snyder's tenure between 1898–1923. The building was extended in 1993 to accommodate an expanding school population from PreK to fifth grade totaling 861 students today. Located in one of the nation's most diverse neighborhoods, its arts curriculum lends special focus to traditions

mainly from the African, Asian, and American continents. The school is transforming its lawn into a wildflower garden that will serve as a teaching tool and an enhancement to local habitats. Known for its successful PTA-run Flea Markets which raise money for various programs, the school is also a neighborhood hub. From Super Kickers offering after-school and summer programs, to the JHBG staging annual Halloween parades there, civic groups also use it as a gathering place to build community because it is a school in service to the neighborhood.

NEWSLETTERS: Snapshots of History

St. Mark's newsletter, *The Mark*, provides a perspective on politics from 1966 to reflect upon today.



As St. Mark's Episcopal Church (33-50 82nd Street) celebrates 100 Years in Jackson Heights, *Views from the Heights* mines its archives and shares an excerpt of one of *The Mark's* commentaries on the politics of the day, when Lyndon Baines Johnson was President, the country was at war in Vietnam, race riots enveloped different American cities, Penn Station was fully demolished, and the Beatles visited NYC. Now discontinued, St. Mark's newsletter provided thoughtful commentary on church history and local life. What follows was written by the married couple Bea and Peter Crumbine, civic leaders in the city and beyond. Their message illustrates the thoughtful and engaged spirit of that congregation which endures today. Here is what the Crumbines had to say in June of 1966:

"Perhaps the much-maligned politician deserves better ..., but one point is clear:

politics is too important to be left to the politician. Whether it be Viet Nam, civil rights, or a 15¢ subway fare, politics affects the lives and welfare of human beings, and Christians should be involved.

If you are like the majority of people, you have never been inside a political clubhouse, and in fact, may even feel that those who do frequent such establishments are a little suspect. ... A typical [Assembly District] in this area has the following statistics:

Population	100,000
Registered voters	40,000
Registered Democrats	30,000
Democrats voting on Primary Day	5,000
Active campaign workers (per candidate)	25-100
District Leaders	2

These figures lead to some basic political facts of life for Jackson Heights:

- 1. Few Republicans win elections on the local level.**
- 2. Since Democrats generally win on election day, any choice between individuals is settled by the Democratic Primary.**

- 3. Voting on Primary Day tends to be light and disinterested; results can definitely be influenced by a small number of active workers.**
- 4. If there is no primary contest, the candidate designated by the regular party machine becomes the nominee. For State Assemblyman, this is usually at the discretion of the two district leaders in the given assembly district.**

In effect, a man who represents 100,000 people is selected by no more than 5000 [sic] people and by as few as 2 individuals. (Question: Does the majority rule?) To elect local candidates, therefore, a club generally has to a) be Democratic and b) elect a district leader and/or win the primary. This of course does not preclude activity in a Republican Club, but successful campaigns are generally for the higher offices. New York's Republican Governor [Rockefeller], Senator [Javits], and Mayor [Lindsay] provide obvious examples of this."

The more things change, the more they stay the same ... ?

JACKSON HEIGHTS NOTABLES

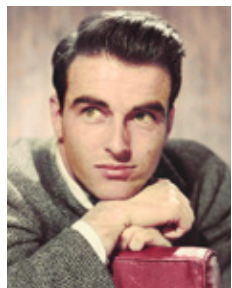
Highlighting former Jackson Heights residents of notable interest for the ways in which they represent our neighborhood.

Montgomery Clift Moody, Sensitive Young Character

BY DANIEL KARATZAS

He was one of the most famous rising film stars of the late 1940s through the early 1960s. Nominated for four Academy Awards, he is best remembered for his sensitive portrayals of characters in such films as *From Here to Eternity* (1953), *Red River* (1948), *A Place in the Sun* (1951), and *The Misfits* (1961).

Born Edward Montgomery Clift on October 17, 1920, in Omaha, Nebraska, he was to later spend a portion of his adolescence and young adulthood right here in Jackson Heights. During the 1920s, his prosperous parents saw to it that the family traveled extensively, to Europe and the Caribbean. The three Clift children had private tutors and were multilingual. However, their grand lifestyle came to an end with the advent of the Great



The Chateau Apartments were built in 1923, consist of 12 buildings along 80th and 81st Streets between 34th and 35th Avenues, enclosing a private garden.

Depression. The Clifts first moved to Chicago, then on to Sarasota, Florida, where Montgomery began acting at a local theatre company. Another move to Massachusetts preceded the family's move to New York City, where Clift began his Broadway career.

Sometime in the early 1930s the Clift family moved into the Chateau Apartments in Jackson Heights. It is unclear whether they purchased

their apartment or rented it, owing to the very weak market for cooperative apartments during the 1930s. Articles and biographies on Montgomery Clift typically describe their Jackson Heights apartment as "small and dark", which it certainly was not. Montgomery lived here when making his Broadway debut in 1934, and likely until the early 1940s while his career in both the theatre and radio took off. It was not until 1945 when he agreed to head to Hollywood to make his first film, Howard Hawks' *Red River*. Clift's career soared until

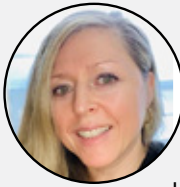
1956, when he suffered serious injuries from an automobile accident.

The injuries left him dependent on alcohol and pills, his acting career plateaued, and then declined, with *Freud: The Secret Passion* (1962) being his last major film. Saddled with numerous health problems, Clift died of a heart attack in his Manhattan townhouse in July 1966. He was only 45.

Mensaje de la presidenta

POR LESLIE ELLMAN

Cada vez que me siento a escribir mi mensaje para Views, me entusiasma la oportunidad de reflexionar sobre nuestro vecindario. Como este número está dedicado a celebrar la diversidad de Jackson Heights, reconozco cuánto hemos avanzado de la exclusión a la inclusión. Hoy en día Jackson Heights es uno de los distritos más diversos en nuestra ciudad y en nuestro país. La belleza de su arquitectura lo hace aún más imponente, en especial por la humanidad tan diversa que hoy habita sus estructuras. Nosotros, los actuales residentes de Jackson Heights, escribimos el siguiente capítulo de nuestra historia con vidas plenas, orgullosas y en comunidad.



Mensaje de la editora: de lo exclusivo a lo inclusivo

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

Este otoño celebramos uno de los rasgos distintivos de nuestro vecindario: su diversidad. ¿Cómo Jackson Heights, una comunidad planeada como exclusiva, se ha transformado en un tapiz multicultural de etnias y tradiciones? La reflexión sobre la historia de nuestra localidad durante los aniversarios especiales destaca los cambios y da pie a la reflexión sobre el presente multicultural. Nuestra historia de inclusión comienza, de alguna manera, con el establecimiento temprano de la comunidad LGBTQ, como se describe en este número. Un agradecimiento especial a



los vecinos que nos hicieron llegar sus comentarios sobre el último número del boletín; esperamos seguir recibiendo los. Envíanos tus historias o ideas sobre lo que te gustaría que escribiéramos por email a info@jhbg.org o a nuestra dirección postal JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

Los notables de Jackson Heights. Montgomery Clift: un personaje joven, malhumorado y sensible

POR DAN KARATZAS

Edward Montgomery Clift nació el 17 de octubre de 1920 en Omaha, Nebraska, y vivió parte de su adolescencia y juventud, justo aquí, en Jackson Heights. Fue una de las estrellas de cine más famosas y prometedoras de finales de la década de 1940 hasta principios de la década de 1960. Nominado cuatro veces a los premios Oscar, es reconocido por sus cautivadores personajes en películas como *De aquí a la eternidad* (1953), *Río Rojo* (1948), *Un lugar en el sol* (1951) y *Vidas rebeldes* (1961). A principios de los treinta, la familia Clift se mudó al edificio de apartamentos Chateau en Jackson Heights, donde Montgomery vivía cuando hizo su debut en Broadway en 1934 y hasta los primeros años de 1940 mientras despegaba su carrera en el teatro y la radio. No fue sino hasta 1940 cuando decidió irse a Hollywood para hacer su primera película: *Río Rojo*. La carrera de Clift ascendió hasta que, en 1956, tuvo un accidente automovilístico que lo dejó seriamente lesionado y después del cual su vida y su carrera irían en picada. Su última película exitosa fue



¡Unanse al desfile de Halloween en octubre y disfruten de esta larga tradición en JH!

Freud, pasión secreta (1962). Murió de un infarto en su casa en Manhattan en julio de 1966 a los 45 años.

Little India: una comunidad en crecimiento en Jackson Heights

POR HANNA LESSINGER

Hace poco, en un fin de semana caluroso, Diversity Plaza, en Jackson Heights, vibraba con música, danza y comida de la India y Bangladesh, además de puestos de ropa, joyería, decoraciones y otros artículos. Little India, como también se la conoce, celebraba un evento de la comunidad sudasiática. Por más de cuarenta años, el área entre la calle 74 y la Avenida 37 ha sido el corazón de la población sudasiática inmigrante que comenzó a llegar a los Estados Unidos en grandes cantidades después de la aprobación de la Ley de Inmigración y Nacionalidad

de 1965. Desde mediados de la década de 1970, esta área ha sido habitada por inmigrantes de la India, y hoy en día proliferan también los negocios de Bangladesh en una parte de la calle 73, que ha recibido el nombre de "Bangladesh Street". También hay una presencia, menos numerosa, de inmigrantes de Nepal y Tíbet. Una muestra más de que Nueva York no es solo la ciudad que nunca duerme, sino la ciudad que siempre cambia.

En contacto con los animales de la ciudad.

¿Ratas con alas? Las plagas que creamos

POR GAIL SIEGEL

Nueva York es una ciudad con millones de personas; algunas se sienten aisladas, como si vivieran en una isla remota. Su soledad los empuja a alimentar plagas que abundan en la ciudad. Dar comida que

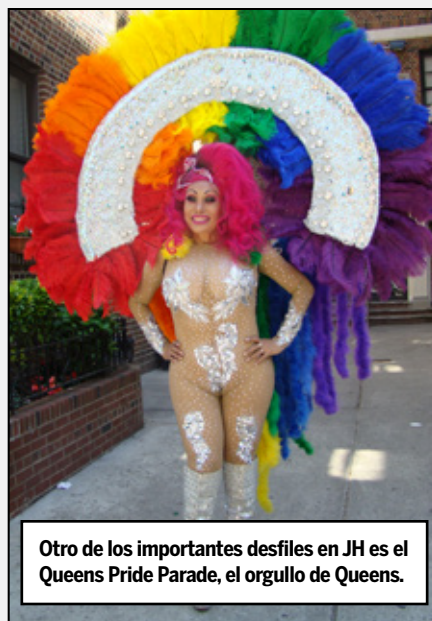
no es apropiada a las ardillas y a las aves puede hacer más por las ratas y las palomas que por los animales a los que se pretendía alimentar. Esto causa millones de dólares en destrucción de edificios y vehículos, y propaga gérmenes y suciedad. ¿Y si en lugar de intentar hacer que las personas dejen de repartir migas de pan y semillas a los animales, buscamos la manera de dirigir su generosidad hacia algo diferente? ¿Qué campaña podría transmitir información para llevar ese cambio a la ciudad, al vecindario y las personas involucradas? Nuestros lectores pueden ofrecer sugerencias para motivar este cambio. Escríbenos a info@jhb.org.

Plantas y pastos perennes en Jackson Heights

POR DAVE WATSON
Las plantas perennes son plantas herbáceas (no leñosas) de tallos y hojas que, por lo general, mueren en el invierno, pero cuyo sistema de raíces queda intacto y vuelven a crecer en la primavera. La mayoría de los pastos de ornamento son perennes. Los arbustos, a su vez, son plantas leñosas. Además de estos dos tipos, en Jackson Heights, los jardineros cultivan plantas nativas, que crecen de manera silvestre en Nueva York y en estados vecinos. Puedes aprender más de acerca de las plantas nativas en: dropseednativelandscapesli.com/nursery; prairienursery.com; y catskillnativenursery.com.

¡Qué viva la Heights! Donde el orgullo gay empieza con los amigos en las tabernas y continúa su evolución

POR MELISSA ZAVALA
Este artículo rinde homenaje a la excepcional vida nocturna de los bares gay en Jackson Heights por su importante papel en el desarrollo de la comunidad LGBTQ+ de la zona. Estos bares complementan la conocida Christopher Street de Manhattan, porque combinan la diversidad étnica y los lazos de familia íntimos, esos que los antropólogos denominan "parentesco ficticio" o relaciones de tipo familiar con individuos que, sin tener un nexo biológico, dan amor y apoyo. Lorena Borjas, una transgénero que murió de COVID durante la pandemia, es un ejemplo de estas relaciones. Conocida como la madre de la comunidad transgénero latina, su familia de inmigrantes y personas rechazadas se extendió más allá de Jackson Heights. Además de la red de apoyo que han creado los bares, Jackson Heights es la casa del Desfile del Orgullo Gay de Queens,



Otro de los importantes desfiles en JH es el Queens Pride Parade, el orgullo de Queens.

que tuvo como origen la brutal golpiza que recibió Julio Rivera en julio de 1990 a manos de un grupo racista antigay. Este año, en su 31 aniversario, la asistencia alcanzó los 50 000 espectadores y cerca de 15 000 participantes, según los reportes de la prensa. Pero el desfile es solo la expresión más visible de la comunidad LGBTQ en Jackson Heights. La creciente homofobia de principios de los noventa dio origen al Club de Lesbianas y Homosexuales de Queens, hoy Club Democrático Línea Lavanda (Lavender Line Democratic Club), al que han seguido otros grupos, como el Centro para Homosexuales de la Tercera Edad de Queens (Queens Center for Gay Seniors), la Casa del Orgullo Gay de Queens (Queens Pride House) y el grupo de jóvenes PRYDE de Make the Road New York, que sirve a jóvenes inmigrantes recién llegados y de escasos recursos, además del programa Drag Story Hour, que busca involucrar a los niños mediante historias que fomentan el respeto hacia quienes son diferentes. A pesar de los retos, la construcción de

lazos comunitarios alrededor de mensajes de aceptación y amor prevalece, y Jackson Heights continúa acogiendo la diversidad de grupos que se congregan en un vecindario.

La comida del mundo en Jackson Heights

POR MELISSA ZAVALA
¿Has notado a algunas personas bebiendo de unos vasos de plástico sellados y con un

popote extragrande para sacar del fondo una especie de gomitas? Llamado boba o bubble tea, este té con leche proveniente de Taiwán se vierte sobre hielo y bolitas de tapioca que deben tener la consistencia perfecta antes de servirlos. Las opciones de esta bebida popular entre los jóvenes asiáticos por su frescura, sabores y colores llamativos se han extendido en Jackson Heights. Visita CoCo Fresh Tea & Juice, Kung Fu Tea o Gong Cha Jackson Heights, ubicados en la calle 82 cerca de la estación del metro. ¿Postre o bebida? Pruébalo y decide. ¿Sobre qué comidas o culturas te gustaría leer? Envíanos tus historias o comentarios a info@jhb.org o a nuestra dirección postal JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

Celebración de otro centenario: ¡la escuela pública PS69 cumple 100 años!

Fundada hace cien años para servir al creciente número de familias que llegaban a Jackson Heights, la escuela PS69 (77-02 Avenida 37), conocida como School of Cultural and Performing Arts, ofrece clases de guitarra, violín, danza, teatro y artes plásticas. El edificio original de cinco pisos fue construido entre 1922 y 1924 por el arquitecto del distrito escolar de entonces, C. B. J. Snyder. Ubicada en una de las áreas más diversas del país, su currículo enfocado en las artes destaca las tradiciones de África, Asia y América. La escuela no sólo ofrece programas extraescolares y de verano, sino que es el sitio donde el JHBG prepara el desfile infantil de Halloween y otros grupos civiles se reúnen para construir comunidad.

Que Viva the Heights!

BY MELISSA ZAVALA

Where Queens Pride Began with Friends in Taverns and Continues its Evolution



Half of the founding team of the Queens Pride Parade and former Council Member for our district, Danny Dromm, led this year's thousands of parade participants before tens of thousands of spectators!

Using a play on just a few of the names of gay bars in Jackson Heights, the title of this article pays homage to the exceptional nightlife in our neighborhood for its important role in the development of the area's LGBTQIA+ community. The local gay bars are a type of foil to Manhattan's renowned Christopher Street scene: they combine ethnic diversity and intimate family ties. These ties are what anthropologists call fictive kin, or family-styled relationships with biologically unrelated individuals who provide love and support. Lorena Borjas, transgender leader who died from COVID-19 as the pandemic unfolded, exemplified these relationships. Known as the mother of the transgender Latin community, her family extended across boroughs, consisting of immigrants with families living in distant home



Lorena Borjas, Mexican-American heroine to immigrants and the transgender community, is honored with a co-named corner at Baxter Street, on the other side of Roosevelt Avenue.



countries, and of individuals rejected by their kin. Ties of love and camaraderie continue to nurture the LGBT community in Jackson Heights, home to the biggest transgender population in the city, and a leading gayborhood outside the historically important communities in Manhattan.

Bars have been more than entertainment venues and places to socialize for a community discriminated against. They have been resources before key

assistance networks were in place to combat discrimination. Bill Meehan, former priest, past teacher, LGBTQ advocate and community activist sums up the value of bars, saying about their role for vulnerable people at risk of discrimination in every sector, exposed to police harassment, and violence: "The bars were welcoming and safe. They enabled friendships, provided important information on housing, health, legal issues, and jobs. Bars provided entertainment but also were helpful in forming a community where it was safe to be, a place where you could be yourself, a place that offered needed resources that were usually offered by alumni groups, churches and sadly, family ... too many of whom walked away from their Gay sons, daughters, and siblings".

Dating back to the establishment of the neighborhood in the 1920s, direct access to the Broadway Theatre District offered by the new elevated rail line made Jackson Heights a convenient home to artists. The theatre sector in particular has always offered opportunities for exploration, with open-mindedness built into the industry.





The second oldest and second largest in the city, the Queens Pride Parade and Multicultural Festival celebrates previously stigmatized and marginalized sexual diversity and creates community.

A small entertainment sector grew along 37th Avenue, later also serving flight attendants and gay travelers on layovers at LaGuardia Airport. As immigration laws changed in the 1970s and 80s, the area quickly became home to a growing LGBT community from Latin America who found the infrastructure already in place to build their own community.

Demographic changes around the city throughout the 1980s and early 1990s spurred some educators to propose what was dubbed the Rainbow Curriculum, or lesson plans based on multicultural songs and activities promoting inclusion and respect towards all ethnicities, as well as gays and lesbians. This curriculum sparked a hostile backlash.

On the heels of the brutal beating in a playground known as a cruising area near 37th Avenue of Julio Rivera in July of 1990 by gay-biased skinheads, the Queens Pride Parade came into being. Attacks on gay men were common, as Edgar Garzon's murder just before the attacks on 9/11, also demonstrates. Former Council Member Danny Dromm, along with Maritza Martinez, co-founded the Queens Pride Parade, the pride of Queens as a whole and of Jackson Heights in particular. Already fighting homophobia as a public-school teacher, Dromm was actively responding to prejudice. Struggles against bigotry prompted active responses from a large but mostly then invisible LGBT community, setting off what has become a powerful movement and voting bloc—in no small part thanks to the backing of the gay bars and the Drag Queen entertainers



"In the huddled masses of the festival, there are some young people taking a first step in dealing with who they are."

who threw their support behind a parade denouncing discrimination and violence. Passing around a coffee can decorated with homemade wrapping paper among drinking patrons, fundraising for the parade had begun. Support from bar owners followed, leading to what has grown into the second largest parade in the city founded to recognize that LGBTQIA people are our family members, friends, and neighbors, in this way promoting acceptance. The parade was an instant success. The

Community Board in Jackson Heights was the only one willing to grant a permit for the proposed parade with the stipulation that it be styled as a community block party. Now in its 31st year, attendance this summer was at an all-time high at 50,000 spectators, with about 15,000 participants according to press reports.

The parade continues to be a resource, bringing together organizations like ACQC which provides health services, the District Attorney's Office with legal advice on rights and additional resources, as well as shelters, community groups, and other social service providers. Meehan says of these critical services, "In the huddled masses of the festival, there are some young people taking a first step in dealing with who they are. Often they come from recently arrived families where being Gay is considered sinful, not tolerated, a cause for being turned out of the family". The parade represents a lifeline.

But the parade is only the most visible expression of the LGBTQ community in Jackson Heights. The amplified homophobia of the early 1990s led to the founding of the only independent Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club of Queens, now the Lavender Line Democratic Club, an intentionally more inclusive title. This organization also helped to increase the visibility of the LGBT community and protect the district as a cohesive voting bloc. Other groups followed, including the Queens Center for Gay Seniors and the Queens Pride House, two other beacons in the neighborhood. These organizations provide residents with various services, from hot meals to fitness programs, educational workshops, and much more, building and strengthening community ties. Finally, Make the Road New York also has a PRYDE youth group that serves low-income and newly arrived LGBTQ immigrant youth. More recently, Drag Story Hour has expanded on this tradition, engaging children in stories encouraging respect for those who are different, fostering empathy, and promoting understanding. And yet, despite advancements made over time, this program has become a lightning rod for controversy. Nevertheless, community-building around messages of acceptance and love prevail and Jackson Heights continues to embrace the varied groups that come together in one neighborhood.

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The Dish on World Foods in The Heights!

Highlighting traditional dishes from the rich global cuisines found right here in Jackson Heights.

Boba: Refreshing Drink, or Delightful Dessert?

BY MELISSA ZAVALA

Have you noticed people drinking from pliable to-go cups with sealed-in plastic lids and oversized colorful straws for sucking gummy stuff settled at the bottom? Whether called Boba or Bubble Tea, this Taiwanese milk tea is poured over ice and tapioca balls that must be of the perfect consistency before serving. They should not be either mushy or too hard to chew, which happens if overcooked or left out too long. Boiled and browned, tapioca pearls are colored in caramelized brown sugar syrup (tapioca itself is a pale color). Made from starch from the cassava root, the versatile potato-like root of a shrub native to Brazil, yuca is a common food eaten throughout Latin America.

Tapioca products have become popular gluten-free alternatives, hailed for their health benefits, like their digestibility for people with celiac disease, as well as for a lack of fat and higher calcium than that found in wheat. On the other hand, these tend to have a high glycemic index, which causes spikes in sugar and insulin. Tapioca is also rumored to be poisonous given the plant's high cyanide content,



but this chemical is eliminated in the cooking process. Alleged to contain carcinogens, no scientific studies identify direct connections between tapioca and cancer. Rich in carbohydrates, tapioca pearls are high in calories, so drink in moderation or select healthier choices, of which there are several.

Boba comes in various flavors considering the numerous options

in tea types as well as bubbles. Jellies are available in different flavors, and instead of tapioca, make for tasty options along with adzuki beans, fresh fruit, custard pudding, ice cream, and other options. Not a fan of oolong, green tea, chai, Earl Grey, or jasmine? No problem! Bubble tea comes in coffee and floral flavors, as well as fruity matcha. A sensation among young Asian-Americans for its trendy associations with fresh, playful flavors and colors, boba options are spreading around Jackson Heights. Walk down 82nd Street and visit **CoCo Fresh Tea & Juice** (37-01 82nd St.), or **Kung Fu Tea** (82-02 Roosevelt Ave.), one block away. And for less standardized chain store options,

try **Gong Cha Jackson Heights** (40-14 82nd St.). Drink or dessert? You decide!

Do you have any favorite noshes you would like to share? What foods and cultures do you want to read about? Send us your stories and comments by emailing us at info@jhbg.org or by writing to us by mail at JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.



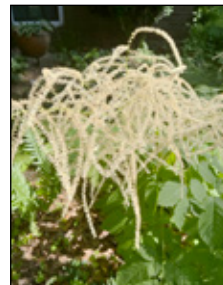
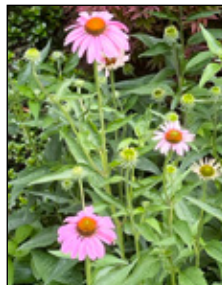
Perennial Plants and Grasses in Jackson Heights

BY MELISSA ZAVALA

What are perennials? They are herbaceous (non-woody) plants. Their stems and leaves usually die back when winter sets in. Moreover, the root systems remain intact, typically growing new, above-ground stems and fresh leaves in the springtime. Shrubs, on the other hand, are not perennial plants; they are woody plants.

Most ornamental grasses are perennials, but there are some annuals. The above-ground grass, leaves, and stems from December and January sometimes die out and even stand while dead throughout the winter. Gardeners may want to leave this old grass, which can be interesting. It should be cut back come February or March, however. Like other perennials, the grasses produce new, green leaves in the springtime. Grasses can also add a soft texture when planted next to native perennials or may be placed next to shrubs in the spring.

What are native plants? These plants grow in the wild in New York and nearby states. Be aware that people and sales outlets cannot dig up native plants



Native herbaceous plants from switchgrasses, to coneflowers, and others are built to withstand droughts thanks to their deep root systems.

from open or wild areas. Native plants are propagated by nurseries which plant seeds or make divisions at their farms or greenhouses. These native plants are sold at higher prices because of the specialized nature of the work (see some nurseries below).

In Jackson Heights, gardeners grow native plants because they are beautiful, interesting, and help enhance the local ecosystem. Gardeners can propagate native plants like coneflowers. Non-native perennial cultivars, on the other hand, are grown at non-native nurseries and even laboratories. Locally, some native plants and shrubs are often grown

alongside non-natives though some gardeners in JH grow only native plants.

Native grasses in Jackson Heights include northern sea oats, big bluestem, prairie dropseed, and switchgrass.

Some useful native plants resources:

1. Dropseed Native Landscapes

discusses native grasses and other regional plants with Anthony Marinello in Long Island on Saturday morning from 9am to 1pm, offering

great plants, especially from nearby Long Island: dropseednativelandscapesli.com/nursery

2. Prairie Nursery sends potted plants from their headquarters at Westfield, WI. Everything is packaged well. Sign up to get their catalog if you do not have one and check out their website at prairienursery.com.

3. Catskill Native Nursery: I have traveled there to examine their plants on display. They provide perennial plants, shrubs, and small trees: catskillnativenursery.com

Latin-American Gold

BY JULIA NEGRETE

El oro de América Latina

POR JULIA NEGRETE

As the Colombian group passed me by dancing to cumbia during the Queens Hispanic Parade in Jackson Heights last September, the image of a steaming arepa filled with cheese came to mind, perhaps because it was lunchtime and hunger was setting in. Suddenly, the imaginary arepa transformed into a tortilla with carne al pastor seasoned with cilantro, onion, salsa verde, and drops of lime. Before the taco turned into a pupusa, I decided to walk down Roosevelt Avenue in search of lunch. One thing was clear: the dish would have to contain corn. My whole being longed for what has always been at the center of the family table in Mexico, though now reflects new tastes. In its most varied textures, colors, and flavors, corn is a key ingredient in Latin America's culinary richness, feeding about half of Jackson Heights residents, considering that more than 50% of them are Latinos.

In Colombia, Venezuela, or Bolivia, arepas stuffed with cheese, beans, or meat are a staple. El Salvador and Honduras extol their pupusas, which are round like arepas, but a little thinner. In Peru, *choclo* is a must, and humitas make the perfect end to a good meal. In Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Mexico tortillas are always on hand at meal time. Corn is in our blood, because, as Paula E. Morton says in her book *Tortillas*: "The Mesoamericans prayed to gods and goddesses of rain and corn, talked to the



Versatile corn is the key ingredient in pupusas (top), arepas, and other delicious foods from Latin America!



tender shoots of corn, touched the moisture of the soil, and harvested the ears to nourish their bodies and souls. And some believe the first human beings were created from corn dough".

To mitigate nostalgia or simply delight in other flavors, walk along Northern Boulevard, 37th or Roosevelt Avenues, where you will surely find your sought after taco, arepa, tamale or pupusa, like I did that day, finally settling on a gordita, that Mexican creation, between arepa and pupusa, a perfect combination of both ... The first bite took me back to my mother's kitchen in Mexico, and I thought "this is why I feel at home in Jackson Heights".

y colores, el maíz es un ingrediente clave de la riqueza culinaria de América Latina, que alimenta casi a la mitad de los habitantes en Jackson Heights si consideramos que más del 50% son latinos.

En Colombia, Venezuela o Bolivia, las arepas rellenas de queso, carne o frijoles son el pan de cada día. El Salvador y Honduras presumen de las pupusas, redondas como las arepas, aunque un poco más delgadas. En Perú el choclo es

un acompañamiento que no falta y las humitas cierran con broche de oro una buena comida. En Nicaragua, Guatemala y México las tortillas están siempre listas sobre la mesa. Llevamos el maíz en la sangre, porque, como dice Paula E. Morton en su libro *Tortillas*: "los

mesoamericanos rezaban a los dioses y diosas de la lluvia y el maíz, hablaban con los brotes tiernos del maíz, tocaban la humedad del suelo y cosechaban las mazorcas para nutrir el cuerpo y el alma. Y algunos creen que los primeros seres humanos fueron creados con la masa de maíz".

Para mitigar la nostalgia o simplemente deleitarse con otros sabores basta con darse una vuelta por Northern, la 37 o Roosevelt, donde seguramente encontrarás el taco, la arepa, el tamal o la pupusa que estabas buscando, como yo ese día, cuando me decidí finalmente por una gordita, esa creación mexicana, entre arepa y pupusa, o una combinación perfecta de ambas... La primera mordida me llevó enseguida a la cocina de mi madre en México, y pensé "por eso en Jackson Heights me siento como en casa".



Mientras el grupo de Colombia pasaba bailando cumbia durante el desfile hispano de Queens en Jackson Heights en septiembre del año pasado, me vino a la mente la imagen de una arepa humeante rellena de queso, quizás porque era la hora del almuerzo y el hambre empezaba a atacarme. La arepa imaginaria se transformó en una delgada tortilla con carne al pastor aderezada con cilantro, cebolla, salsa verde y unas gotas de limón. Y antes de que el taco se convirtiera en pupusa, decidí recorrer la Avenida Roosevelt en busca del almuerzo. Una cosa era segura: el platillo tendría que contener maíz. Todo mi ser pedía el alimento que siempre ha estado en el centro de la mesa familiar en México, aunque ahora adquiriría otros sabores. En sus más variadas texturas



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VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS – Fall 2023

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69th St. & 35th Ave.

For info on what is compostable,
contact info@JHBG.org

Most Saturdays, 10 am

Tree LC

Meets at the NE corner of
80th St. & 37th Ave.

Schedule may vary and include
some Sundays. Check the
[JHBG Facebook page](#)
for complete information.

Saturdays 10 am

Clean and Green

For complete details,
go to info@JHBG.org.

Daily

JH-CREW dog run

69th St. between 34th & 35th Aves.

To join, go to info@JHBG.org
for application. Suggested
donation, \$25/year.

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Please join us or renew your membership (there are 2 ways):

Go to www.JHBG.org/membership and pay by credit card.

It's quick and easy! Mail a check with this form
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