

## The New Multicultural Geography of Elmhurst-Corona

A Belizean raised in Elmhurst once told me, "I'm from two places that no one would believe!" The population of Belize includes Creoles of African descent, Mestizos of Spanish and Native American ancestry, Mayan Indians, Garifuna (black speakers of a Native American language), German Mennonites, Asian Indians, and Chinese. Like Belize, Elmhurst-Corona is, in Louis Winnick's phrase, "an ethnic cross section of the planet."<sup>1</sup> In 1990 its 28,000 whites were a mix of European ancestries (see Chapter 11). Its Asian residents included 16,300 Chinese, 8,900 Koreans, 7,600 Indians, 4,000 Filipinos, and smaller numbers of Thais, Vietnamese, Pakistanis, and Guyanese of Indian ancestry. The Latin American population comprised 13,600 Colombians, 12,000 Dominicans, 6,800 Ecuadorians, 6,500 Puerto Ricans, 2,900 Cubans, 2,700 Mexicans, 2,700 Peruvians, and other South and Central Americans. Black immigrants included 3,900 West Indians (among them at least 1,200 Haitians) and 1,850 Africans.<sup>2</sup>

### Rituals of Ethnic Celebration

A variety of new public rituals arose in Elmhurst-Corona during the 1980s. Some of these rituals celebrated particular ethnic identities: Colombian, Ecuadorian, Korean, African American, and Italian. With one exception, they took place not in the midst of CD4's ethnically diverse neighborhood terrain but rather in nonresidential locations. And whatever their celebratory purposes, they attracted multiethnic audiences and dignitaries; indeed, such participation was a testament to their success.<sup>3</sup>

## Colombian Independence Festival

In 1984 the Centro Civico Colombiano sponsored its first Colombian Independence Day celebration in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. By the 1990s this was the park's largest event, attracting crowds in the hundreds of thousands. Located in Elmhurst, the Centro had been formed in 1978; a president was elected annually from among its business and professional membership. In addition to the festival, the Centro offered classes in English, U.S. citizenship, Spanish (for U.S.-born youth), and Colombian history. It also collected relief funds from Colombian New Yorkers after a 1985 volcano eruption and landslides in their homeland, and it organized a blood drive following the 1990 crash on Long Island of a Colombian airplane in which seventy-three persons died.

After riding an IRT subway packed with festivalgoers, I arrived in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park on a sweltering July Sunday in 1987. An enormous crowd, with many dancing in place, flowed outward from a large stage where a succession of *cumbia* bands and folkloric troupes performed, amplified by a pulsating sound system. Yellow, blue, and red balloons, the colors of Colombia's flag, were everywhere. Beneath a large "Festival Independencia de Colombia" banner were logos of commercial sponsors: Banco de Bogotá, Goya food products, Juvenia watches, and Aguardiente Taba Rojo, a liquor company. On stage, representatives of Governor Mario Cuomo and Mayor Edward Koch read proclamations honoring the event.

In rows of wooden kiosks with striped roofs, Queens restaurants sold *empanadas*, *arepas* (Colombia's corncake staple), roast pig, *chorizo* (sausage), fruit juices and ices, and *obleas* (round wafers with sweet condensed milk spread between); the lines were long. Ecuadorian food carts present each weekend near the park's soccer fields were also doing business, and unlicensed vendors sold beer from plastic bags and baby carriages. A few picnickers on the outskirts had brought grills and home-prepared dishes. In the shade of some trees two men played a flute and a drum in Colombian folk style; couples danced, and a small audience encouraged them with laughter and comments.

Elena Acosta, a Colombian raised in Queens, said the crowd looked "very Colombian" to her, and one saw white, black, and Indian faces and every combination of mixed background. In addition to "Cali," "Cartagena," and "Medellín" T-shirts, however, others read "Puerto Rico" and "José Martí" (a Cuban national hero). Spanish-language television Channel 41, broadcasting live, interviewed persons from Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Ecuador. There was also a fund-raising table for a Nicaraguan group.

The 1992 festival crowd was even larger, extending beyond visual or aural range of the stage. The colorful El Ballet de Sonia Osorio performed, bands played, and the Colombian consul read a message from his country's president. Colombia's official colors appeared on paper flags, streamers, and hats, and

when a group on stage shouted "Que viva Colombia!" and "Viva Latinoamerica!" flags waved throughout the crowd. Corporate sponsors that year included American Airlines, Pepsi-Cola, *El Diario* (a New York Spanish-language daily newspaper), and Ria Envía (a money-transfer firm with offices in Queens).

More picnickers than in 1987 arrived with loaded shopping carts, beach chairs, umbrellas, and even hammocks. More kiosks offered food, and more vendors worked the crowd with beer, *obleas*, fruit ices, green mangoes, and plates of *chorizo*. Peddlers sold toys, hats, baby clothes, and jewelry; dozens of Ecuadorian Otavaleños offered distinctive woven bags, garments, and wristlets; and four West Africans sold gold-plated knickknacks. Musical performers beyond the range of the sound system—an Andean panpipe, drum, and guitar ensemble; a keyboardist and singer; an alto saxophonist—passed the hat and sold cassette tapes.

The political significance of this festival grew yearly. In 1993 Mayor David Dinkins, running for reelection, greeted the crowd; so did U.S. Congress member Nydia Velazquez, who represented Elmhurst-Corona, and Roberto Ramirez of the Bronx, a state assembly member and candidate for city comptroller—both Puerto Rican. In 1994 Queens borough president Claire Shulman declared July "Colombian Heritage Month"; in 1995 Mayor Rudolph Giuliani attended the Centro Civico Colombiano Independence Day dinner.

Each August an Ecuadorian Independence Day Festival was also held in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, organized by the Comité Civico de la Colonia Ecuatoriana. Crowds were smaller than at the Colombian event, but other aspects were similar.

## Korean Harvest and Folklore Festival

In 1982 the Korean Produce Association held its first celebration of the centuries-old *ch'usok* festival in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. Organized in 1974 to represent the interests of Korean greengrocers, the KPA maintained an office in the Hunts Point produce market, regulated competition and mediated disputes among its members, and negotiated with the city over sanitation inspections and fines. By the early 1980s the KPA was the dominant organization in the city's Korean community.<sup>4</sup>

In Korea, *ch'usok* is a family-oriented harvest celebration during which ancestors are honored. In New York it has become an occasion for the city's Koreans to gather on a September Sunday and be entertained. Tradition was not slighted; an ancestor-worship ceremony, a *song-pyon* pine-cake-making contest, and a closing *kang-gang-su-wol-lae* circle dance all recalled *ch'usok* in Korea. Folk dance groups performed, and Korean games were played; a fashion contest was held for women in traditional *chogori* blouses and long, high-waisted *chima* skirts. Particular crowd-pleasers were a folksong contest for senior citizens, and male *ssirum*

wrestling matches. By late afternoon and evening the major draw was movie stars and entertainers flown in from Korea, among them three hip-hop dancers in 1993. Raffle prizes included airline tickets, televisions, and automobiles.<sup>5</sup>

Attendance in 1986 and 1987 was estimated at 20,000 to 30,000, but the 1991 crowd was several times that size. That year the KPA joined other organizations to celebrate the admission of both South and North Korea to the United Nations. The audience filled thousands of chairs in front of the stage, including a reserved section for senior citizens. Larger numbers milled through tents selling Korean food; around promotional displays of Korean packaged foods, cosmetics, and children's books; and in and out of the corporate booths of Citibank, AT&T, American Express, Pepsi-Cola, the *Daily News*, and Metropolitan Life Insurance, where a costumed Snoopy was available for pictures with children. Still more people sat on mats around grills in three-generation family groups. Korean was spoken by announcers, handbill canvassers, and nearly everyone except groups of teenagers. (I also heard English spoken by youth at the Colombian festival.) By 7:30 P.M. some in the dwindling crowd were drunk, and they sang and danced along with the stage performers until 9:30, when the festival broke up.

At this largest gathering of Koreans outside Korea, the *ch'usok* audience was itself a resource for Korean organizations. Groups that rented booths to distribute literature and raise funds included Elmhurst's Association for Korean American Education and Culture and several churches. In 1984 Korean American Women for Action registered voters; in 1991 Rutgers students petitioned and raised funds for Korean language classes at their university; in 1993 flyers circulated from a group seeking an apology and redress from Japan for its use of Korean "comfort women" during World War II.

A handful of whites, blacks, and Latin Americans was visible each year, some attending with Korean wives or friends. Several white American parents brought their adopted Korean children for exposure to Korean culture; in 1993 the KPA reserved seating for adoptees and parents, and also for American Korean War veterans and for African American students returned from visits to Korea. By 1991 many Central American employees were visible working in Korean restaurant tents. A platoon of white, black, Asian, and Latin American canners scoured the festival grounds for refundable containers, and a few Indian balloon sellers and Latin American beverage and cigarette vendors circulated through the crowd.

The number of American politicians making appearances or sending representatives and telegrams escalated over the years. Manhattan borough president Ruth Messinger, who championed a commercial rent regulation bill supported by Korean merchants during the 1980s, appeared several times. In 1991 the director of the Justice Department's Community Relations Office addressed the audience, and the program included a message from President George Bush on White House stationery. In 1993 mayoral candidates Dinkins and Giuliani both spoke to the crowd.

### Black Heritage Book Fair

In 1988 flyers appeared in the Lefrak City area announcing a "Multicultural Book Fair Specializing in Black Heritage Children's Books," to be held in front of the Queens Center mall. It was sponsored by Concerned Community Adults (CCA), an organization founded by Edna Baskin, an African American Lefrak City resident. After Baskin had mentioned to CB4 district manager Rose Rothschild that she was seeking support from local merchants for her summer youth activities, Rothschild spoke to Queens Center mall director Lorraine O'Neill, who offered to help, and Baskin requested space for a book sale. "This is the first event from Lefrak City outside the Lefrak area in the nine years I have been living here," Baskin said.

When I arrived at the Saturday event, three folding tables on the sidewalk in front of the mall were covered with books. They included *Black Indians*, *Poems* by Nikki Giovanni, biographies of Marcus Garvey, Richard Pryor, Jesse Jackson, Oprah Winfrey, and Paul Robeson, *Black English* by J. L. Dillard, *The Africa News Cookbook*, *Traditional African Musical Instruments*, *What Color Was Jesus?* and many children's books on black heritage themes. The stock came from black-owned Nkiru Books in Brooklyn, which split the profits with the CCA. Baskin wanted to raise enough to spend \$50 per month on additions to the Lefrak City Branch Library's holdings. "I know what a Black Heritage collection should be, and I was disappointed to see what's there. They also need books on Chinese and Indian cultures." By the end of the day she had taken in more than \$500.

Edna Baskin had planned to hold the sale at the library, but the location in front of the mall "gives us a bigger population. People can see who we are, and learn about our position." Black, white, Latin American, and Indian passersby stopped to browse or to talk with Baskin and her helpers. One Indian man said nothing but studied the tables and then bought \$23 worth of books. Several Lefrak City parents Baskin knew arrived during the day. One African American woman bought a Martin Luther King board game as a graduation present. It turned out she lived in Baskin's building, and Baskin proceeded to recruit her as a chaperon for a CCA bus trip.

Other CCA members who helped with the book sale included two African American couples and a single woman; Toyin Chukwuogu, a Nigerian woman who had arrived in the United States just three months earlier and worked with Edna Baskin throughout the summer; an Indian Lefrak City Branch librarian; the white CD4 youth coordinator; and Elena Acosta, a Colombian Queens College student.

During 1988-1990 Baskin held ten more Black Heritage book fairs to raise funds and recruit support for CCA. These occurred at Lefrak City, however, in the lobby of her own building or in front of the branch library, and publicity for them was directed to Lefrak residents through flyers and CCA's newsletter.

## Corona Heights Fourth of July

Posters for a "100th Birthday of Corona" on July 4, 1985, listed the Corona Community Development Corporation and the Corona Heights Businessmen's Association as sponsors. At 6:00 P.M. the street on the north side of triangular William Moore Park was closed off by police barriers and flooded with people, many of them lined up between wooden sawhorses to receive free hot dogs and beer or soda. These were available at tables in front of the Park Side restaurant's parking lot, where men and teenage boys were cooking on portable grills. Behind them in the lot were a dozen tables topped with umbrellas and bearing reservation cards; at one of them I recognized city council member Joseph Lisa Jr., who represented Corona Heights.

Fifteen more tables in the closed-off street were occupied by elderly white neighborhood residents, for whom a man was barbecuing chicken on the park's brick grill. American and Italian flags were strung across the barricaded street, and smaller paper flags hung throughout the park. Near the Park Side a band made up of trumpet, electric keyboard, bass, and drums accompanied a man singing in Italian. The bandstand was surrounded by people enjoying the music, and a handful of older Italians danced in the street as the crowd swept back to make room.

At 7:00 P.M. council member Lisa came to the bandstand and directed everyone not registered to vote to two tables set up for that purpose in the park, and invited people to sign his reelection petition if they wished. Tony Giordano, owner of a meat store, opposite the park, greeted the crowd for the Corona Heights Businessmen's Association. Twenty minutes later a trim man in his fifties, wearing gold medallions and an open shirt, came to the microphone and sang two Italian songs, the first dedicated to "Mr. Tony of Park Side." "We're all Italian here," he asserted welcomingly—though this was hardly the case. As the crowd grew into the thousands, half the many teenagers and most of the children were Latin American. There were also two or three groups of East Asians, an Indian family, and a dozen blacks, some perhaps Latin American. Many of these non-Italians moved along the hot dog line, as I did, twice.

At 7:30 P.M. a score of young men policing the food line departed for Baldi's, an Italian bakery a block away, and returned carrying a ten-foot birthday cake decorated with an American flag. Most of the young men wore the red "100th Birthday Corona" T-shirts that were being sold near the Corona Pizzeria, another business facing the park. They cut the cake in front of the bandstand and served it to the crowd on paper plates. With the band playing, people sang "Happy Birthday" to Corona. There was also a large "Happy Birthday Corona" streamer from the park to the Northside Democratic Club, where district leaders Norma Cirino and Tony Caminiti and his wife, Josephine Andreucci—all members of Community Board 4—sat with others on beach chairs. I left at 8:30 but Ruby Danta stayed until 10:00 P.M., listening to speeches from Caminiti and

a representative of Governor Cuomo, and watching the fireworks that ended the evening.

The principal sponsor of this event was Anthony Federici, owner of the Park Side restaurant, opened when William Moore Park was renovated in 1979.<sup>6</sup> The Park Side's white-tablecloth service and Italian cuisine brought patrons from all over Queens and Long Island. I discovered its notoriety at a Corona playground opening when borough president Donald Manes spoke about his midnight dinner at the Park Side with U.S. Senator Alphonse D'Amato: after the meal they strolled into William Moore Park, and "Senator D'Amato challenged me to a game of bocce," Manes recounted. "Maybe because I'm not Italian, he thought he could beat me. I beat him 5 to 1."

William Moore Park was clean, safe, and used round the clock. "You never see even a candy wrapper on the ground here," council member Lisa told me. The park and its impressive flowers and shrubbery were maintained by an employee of Anthony Federici, and both these men were often thanked during public events there. Federici also used the brick grill and kept cooking gear in the park, and in 1989 *Newsday* restaurant reviewer Cara De Silva, invited to eat there, reported: "He led us, astonished, to an open-air kitchen, complete with refrigerator, a sink for dishwashing, a large grill, and a picnic table. There, Ralphie, Frankie, and Figgy—among a number of others who do their wining and dining here—were helping put together a late-afternoon barbecue."<sup>7</sup> "Much of it is illegal," a Parks Department employee told me. "Electricity lines are run in, and other things. But they keep it very well, so we don't bother them."

Anthony Federici continued to sponsor Fourth of July celebrations in William Moore Park during the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1988 at 6:30 P.M. firecrackers were being set off by young Latin American boys on the edges of the park, as they were throughout Corona Heights, and Italian and American flags again appeared. But fewer elderly Italians sat at tables than in 1985, and there was no food line. Free steak sandwiches and beer were available near the brick grill only to those who asked.

By 9:00 P.M., though, the crowd was in the thousands. It was more than half Latin American, with smaller numbers of whites, blacks, and Asians, and included many visitors whose parked cars filled the surrounding streets. Suddenly about thirty men in their late teens, twenties, and thirties walked onto the stretch of Corona Avenue next to the park and moved police barriers to block traffic at both ends. Most were Italian, and those in charge included "Figgy," who supervised valet parking at the Park Side; I also noted some youth from St. Leo's teen club (see Chapter 12), who were skipping a party there, and a young Latin American who worked at Army's, a second Italian restaurant facing William Moore Park. Although surrounded by throngs of sidewalk spectators standing behind wooden sawhorses, the men on the street joked with each other as if no one else were there. Most wore running shoes, white socks, sweat pants, and colored T-shirts. They strutted with feet splayed outward and elbows bent back, and sev-

eral puffed on cigars. At this point half a dozen cannonlike metal pipes, ten inches across and two feet high, were placed on the center line along Corona Avenue. Then Anthony Federici arrived from the Park Side. Boxes of fireworks came next; they were put in the pipe cannons and lit with cigars. From 9:30 P.M. onward one after another of the cannons exploded. The noise was very loud; sparks caused the crowd to push back; and only a third of the fireworks rose into the air. People grew restless and by 10:30 P.M. were beginning to drift away. On a bus the next day, however, I heard an African American teenager from Lefrak City say he remained at "the party at Corona Heights" until midnight.<sup>8</sup>

No Corona civic leaders addressed the crowd at this Fourth of July celebration; indeed, nobody spoke.<sup>9</sup> As I was leaving, I saw many Italian Corona Heights families out in front of their homes watching smaller fireworks displays on nearly every corner, or observing the spectacular show visible in the sky over Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.

### *Ethnic Particularity at the Community's Margins*

In September 1984 ten members of the Gleane Street Block Association arrived at CB4 to protest events at a Colombian festival held near their Elmhurst homes the previous July. These white, Latin American, Indian, and Filipino neighbors were upset that drugs and alcohol were consumed on their streets; men urinated openly, and residents were harassed. Ed DeCordova, an Argentinian CB4 member and Gleane Street resident, said that no police were present. "It is okay for each group to have their affairs, but it must be orderly." Another Latin American man who complained at the 110th Precinct stated, "We take care of our homes and street. It was just a bunch of hooligans, and people trying to sell stuff." District manager John Rowan explained that the festival's sponsors had a permit for one commercial block but that turnout exceeded expectations; the crowd spilled over onto residential Gleane Street, and police protection was insufficient. The event had not created problems in the past, but no permit would be issued for it again.

In that same year Centro Civico Colombiano began its Colombian Independence Day festival in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park and, like the Ecuadorian and Korean festivals, attracted a metropolitan-area-wide audience, one that would have overwhelmed a residential neighborhood. These rituals, like Puerto Rican, Cuban, Indian, and Pakistani parades in Manhattan, were spatially removed from the residential terrain of CD4. Posters and flyers advertised them, but multiethnic neighborhood public space was not utilized for these particularistic events. Similarly, the first Black Heritage book fair was held at a central location in front of the Queens Center mall. Its purpose, however, was not to celebrate African American culture before a black audience from the whole metropolitan area but to raise funds for youth programs within CCA's immediate local arena; it relocated to Lefrak City in order to solidify support.

The Fourth of July celebration of Italianness, held in a neighborhood that had become half Latin American and half white, was exceptional in its assertion of ethnicity in the midst of a mixed residential setting, albeit one that still had a strong Italian presence. The Italian men who occupied Corona Avenue did so only one night a year, sufficient to mark their presence symbolically, but the event remained marginal to most Corona Heights Italians; their attendance waned after the 1985 celebration, and Italian neighborhood leaders thereafter made neither speeches nor appearances.

The Colombian, Ecuadorian, Korean, African American, and Italian rituals of ethnic celebration were the only ones held in CD4 during my fieldwork. Though memorable for those who attended, they were tangential to Elmhurst-Corona neighborhood politics, which focused on issues other than particularistic ethnic assertion.

### *Local Color*

As in Belize, cultural juxtaposition characterized Elmhurst-Corona, and peoples and languages ran into each other in a mix never seen before. Their businesses, whether ethnically distinctive or not, were interspersed, and many depended on a mixed clientele. On a heavily Latin American block of Roosevelt Avenue in Elmhurst, an Indian, a Chinese, and a Korean store coexisted with seven Colombian, Dominican, and Argentinian firms; and facing William Moore Park in Corona, one Jewish, one Korean, two Greek, and two Dominican stores were scattered among fourteen Italian businesses.

Neither in Belize (which I visited in 1991) nor in Elmhurst-Corona were people perpetually in awe of the multicultural complexity around them. As anthropologist Ulf Hannerz points out, places like these are not just "mosaics" composed of "pieces of more or less the same kind and size, each of a single color, and . . . distinctly bounded toward one another." Rather, their diverse residents fashion connections within "a single field of persistent interaction and exchange [where] each [person] comes into some, if only fleeting, contact with a larger part of it." Like it or not, people were caught up in countless scenes and encounters where cultures flowed into one another.<sup>10</sup>

### *Neighborhood Vignettes*

In 1989 the Transit Authority flooded Elmhurst-Corona IRT stations with a flyer printed in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean hailing the return of express service. Nearly everywhere in CD4 during the 1980s one could see a poster of a middle-aged Indian woman with the heading, "Sahaja Yoga, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi—La Yoga de la Grande Madre." It listed the rented PS69

location where instruction was offered on Wednesday evenings and explained: "You cannot know the meaning of your life until you are connected to the power that created you. . . . Tu no puedes conocer el significado de su vida hasta que te conectes al poder que te creo."

On a Sunday afternoon in the playground opposite Elmhurst Hospital, a group of six Chinese men did flowing *tai ch'i* exercises. Two Thai sisters in their twenties practiced tennis against the wall of a handball court. Latin American and Indian mothers with young children filled benches near the swings and slides. A group of four junior high school girls stood watching the scene; they were "Irish and Scottish," Dominican, Dutch-Filipino, and "from Iowa." Two elderly men with shopping carts, one white and one East Asian, methodically worked through the park collecting soda cans and bottles.

On a July evening a dozen men, several speaking Italian, played cards at the cement chess tables in William Moore Park. About sixty people, mainly middle-aged and elderly white men, many in undershirts, were gathered at the bocce court. A handful of Park Side's and Army's customers in summer dresses and white pants and white shoes strolled through the park to the Lemon Ice King of Corona with its twenty-eight flavors. A group of white male teenagers, a few older Italian women (one in house slippers), and white and Latin American girls minding toddlers chatted by the park entrances or sat awhile. On one park bench two Punjabi men contentedly drank a sixpack of Heineken's.

In 1993 an unemployed garment worker, Wu Da Pei, killed his wife and two children at their South Elmhurst apartment after hearing voices ordering him to do so. The murder was discovered when neighbors noticed that the children's shoes were not outside the door, something they were used to seeing among Chinese families. That same year a male family friend obsessed with twenty-year-old Hema Sakhrani murdered her fiancé at his Long Island home. Hema then killed herself by jumping sixteen stories from her Queens apartment. A joint funeral service with a Brahman priest officiating was attended by hundreds at Elmhurst's Gerard J. Neufeld funeral home, established in 1936 and now a regular location for Hindu funeral rites in Queens.<sup>11</sup>

During the 1980s attendance at the Elmhurst Senior Center grew, and by the 1990s its 2,000 registered members were 20 percent white, 35 percent Asian, and 35 percent Latin American. Irish, Germans, Italians, and Poles—many of them long-settled immigrants—joined Argentinians, Colombians, Cubans, Ecuadorians, Puerto Ricans, Spaniards, Chinese, Filipinos, Indians, and Koreans at breakfast and lunch, each group speaking a different language. The center was run by the Spanish-, English-, Chinese-, and Korean-speaking staff of the Institute for Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly. For years the landlord, the Chinese Christian Testimony Church, objected to Friday dancing, card and domino playing, and most of all to Chinese mahjong, and finally refused to renew the lease. In 1997 the center moved to new quarters.<sup>12</sup>

### Inside Restaurants

In 1984 I had dinner at Shamiana, an Indian restaurant in Elmhurst. The manager, a Sikh from New Delhi with a magnificent beard, told me 75 percent of his customers were Indian, but Chinese and Koreans also ate there. From a stack of credit card receipts he pulled out one for Yee Fuk Shin, who had eaten there four times; the manager was not sure whether he was Chinese or Korean. Shamiana occupied a building that had previously housed an Irish bar and before that a German restaurant; it was itself later replaced by a Chinese restaurant, and then a mini-mall of Asian and Latin American stores and offices.

In 1986 I saw a group of nine Korean men sharing a mixed grill of meat and sausage at El Chivito D'Oro, an Uruguayan restaurant in Jackson Heights. A year later I noted a group of construction workers, half Korean and half Latin American, sharing Korean barbecue at Chung Kiwa, an Elmhurst restaurant. Both Koreans and Uruguayans are hearty meat-eaters, and their restaurants featured their specialties of *kalbi* and *bulgogi* (grilled beef), and *parillada* (steak, short ribs, sweetbread, pork sausage, and blood sausage).

At La Gran Victoria, a Dominican Chinese restaurant in Corona Plaza, a Chinese waiter speaking fluent Spanish served four young Latin Americans who ordered Chinese dishes, and nothing from the *comidas criollos* side of the menu. In Elmhurst at the Taiwanese Broadway Noodle Shop I heard a Chinese female cashier take orders in Spanish from a table of Latin Americans. Around me sat a mix of white, black, and Asian customers.

### Soccer Madness

Soccer is the sport of passion for CD4's South Americans. In Flushing Meadows-Corona Park half a dozen simultaneous matches are played on weekends among Argentinian, Bolivian, Chilean, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Paraguayan, and Peruvian teams. During the 1980s the Elmwood movie theater in South Elmhurst showed closed-circuit broadcasts of soccer matches in South America, and tickets were sold at Delgado Travel on Roosevelt Avenue. By the 1990s satellite dish and cable transmissions were available on large-screen televisions in many of Elmhurst-Corona's Latin American restaurants and bars.

Hemispheric title games and the quadrennial World Cup matches bring special police details to CD4 to contain soccer exuberance. Following Argentina's World Cup victory in 1986, a thousand fans took to the streets around the cluster of Argentinian restaurants on the Elmhurst-Corona border known as "Esquina Diego Maradona" in honor of Argentina's star player. In 1989, 5,000 rowdy supporters waved Colombian flags and honked car horns along Roosevelt Avenue in Elmhurst to celebrate a Medellín club's defeat of a Paraguayan team for the South American championship. In 1990 after Argentina's defeat of Italy in the

World Cup semifinals, Argentinians poured into Esquina Maradona with pots and pans, firecrackers, and air horns, and chased one Italian flag waver; no celebration followed the West German victory over Argentina in the finals, and the 150 police officers on hand left Esquina Maradona quietly. In 1993 an America Cup defeat of Colombia by Argentina produced a victory foray from Esquina Maradona to Roosevelt Avenue by carloads of flag-waving Argentines; bottles, eggs, and insults were hurled, but no arrests were made.

Two months later Colombians savored their 5-to-0 defeat of Argentina, thus qualifying, as Argentina already had, for the 1994 World Cup. Neither Colombia, Argentina, Bolivia, nor Mexico—the Latin American teams among the twenty-four contenders—survived to the finals, but World Cup fever raged in CD4. The area was deluged with flags and World Cup paraphernalia, including bogus items purchased in Chinatown or distributed in Queens by a Pakistani canvasser; inspectors from Time Warner Sports, the official World Cup marketer, arrived to impound knockoff items. Some two hundred hardcore Argentine fans departed to Boston for the first-round match, in which their team defeated Greece, and others celebrated at Esquina Maradona. After the United States beat Colombia, a lone Puerto Rican honked and waved an American flag on Roosevelt Avenue until police detained him for his own safety. Bolivians consoled themselves over their team's defeat on their soccer-fan turf in Jackson Heights. And following a tie match with Italy, Mexicans demonstrated noisily along the Corona portion of Roosevelt Avenue where their restaurants were located; police arrested thirty-seven.<sup>13</sup>

### Scenes from a Mall

In 1993 the Queens Center mall celebrated its twentieth anniversary with four weekends of free entertainment. Customers were no longer solely the "middle income" whites for whom the mall was designed, and anniversary performers reflected its multiethnic clientele: They included Chinese lion dancers, Korean fan dancers, the Indian Carnatic Music Association of North America, Andean music by Tahuantinsuyo (two Peruvians and two Ecuadorians), the Latin Jazz Coalition, a flamenco dancer, "Afro-American jazz," Greek music, Irish dance, Andy Statman's Klezmer Ensemble, the country-and-western Stonewall Band, St. Benedict's Ancient Fife & Drum Corps, and a Queens Symphony Orchestra string trio.

I arrived one Saturday afternoon to hear vibraphonist Bill Jacobs's septet, including alto saxophone, trombone, electric keyboard, bass, drums, and percussion. As they performed Dizzy Gillespie's "Night in Tunisia," Horace Silver's "Nica's Dream," Duke Ellington's "Satin Doll," and Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-A-Ning," I saw a large Indian family group, a Chinese couple with a young child, and some Russian adults all stop to listen. A Latin American mother and her two preteen daughters stayed longer. An African American woman

knew from Lefrak City was watching with her granddaughter. Four elderly African American men and women were the most intent listeners, beaming through the set. At the height of the performance there were a hundred persons in front of the bandstand or looking down from atrium balconies. Most shoppers went on shopping: teens, elderly people, family groups, mothers and children; U.S.-born and immigrant; black, white, Latin American, Asian.

### Race and Place

Elmhurst-Corona streets, once solidly white, were filled with Latin American and Asian residents by 1990. In most of CD4, however, the black population was 4 percent or less, and in a quarter of the census tracts blacks amounted to just 1 percent. Only in two tracts next to Lefrak City, where blacks were the majority, did black numbers rise to between 12 and 15 percent.

By 1980 Latin Americans already owned 22 percent of the 9,000 owner-occupied housing units in Elmhurst-Corona, and Asians owned 15 percent. Blacks (including black immigrants), then 17 percent of homeowners citywide, owned less than 3 percent in CD4.<sup>14</sup> African Americans had established themselves in the Lefrak vicinity but barely appeared elsewhere in Elmhurst-Corona's rental and homeowner markets. It was immigrants, not African Americans, who continued to purchase Elmhurst-Corona homes during the 1980s and 1990s, even as blacks increased to constitute one-quarter of New York City's population.

Home sales and apartment rentals were facilitated by white and immigrant-owned realties, many of which diversified their staffs but not to the point of hiring African Americans. In our 1986 survey of Elmhurst-Corona businesses, we asked about the ethnicity of owners and employees. In real estate firms that served customers who spoke only one immigrant language, their staff reflected this fact, but most of the sixty-eight employed a mix of whites, Latin Americans, and Asians. The Chinese-owned Century 21 Sunshine Realty had staff members who spoke Mandarin, Taiwanese, Cantonese, Hakka, Spanish, Italian, German, Polish, Korean, and "Indian" [*sic*]; the Colombian-owned Woodside Realty Corporation employed speakers of Spanish, Hebrew, Korean, and Mandarin. The same pattern was evident in a brochure distributed at the 1994 Queens Festival in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park by the Re/Max realty, with offices throughout Queens. Of twenty-four Re/Max agents, each with a photograph in the brochure, ten were Latin American, five white, four South Asian or Indo-Guyanese, three Chinese, one Korean, and one Filipino. None was black.

Elmhurst-raised Newtown High School teacher Thomas Tilitz observed in the early 1980s that "the one group not to come into the community in any significant numbers is North American blacks. It is a notable fact that housing discrimination has broken down in this area for every group except this one. Blacks of Hispanic, West Indian, and Haitian descent live in Elmhurst, but . . . racism in

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this country is apparently reserved for its natives of dark complexion." In 1982 a *New York Times* reporter profiled an Elmhurst apartment building inhabited by white Americans; Latin Americans from Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Uruguay; Asians from Bangladesh, India, Korea, and Vietnam; and black immigrants from Haiti and Nigeria.

By 1990 some 800 African Americans lived in Elmhurst as compared with 1,200 black immigrants; African Americans in CD4 overall, however, outnumbered black immigrants by 3 to 2. In the 1990s Elmhurst-Corona's housing market remained largely closed to African Americans. This situation was perpetuated by individual white landlords such as the building owner I overheard discussing prospective tenants with a real estate agent: "Afghanistan is okay. Anything, but not black."<sup>15</sup>