



Terror and Response

September 20, 2001

The Problem With Funerals

By Jennifer Brevorka

After a long day as an executive at Fiduciary Trust, in the World Trade Center, Tariq Amanullah, would commute home to Metuchen, N.J., eager to spend time with his six-year-old son, Talha, and ten-year-old daughter, Hiba.

No matter how demanding Mr. Amanullah's job was, recalled his father, Mohammed Muakkamed, "He used to come back home in the evenings to work with the children on their homework." Although Mr. Amanullah's children are only in grammar school, Mr. Muakkamed said his son already had plans for them to excel in school and attend a good college.

Mr. Amanullah, at age 40 an assistant vice president in Fiduciary Trust's information-technology department, worked on the 97th floor of tower two of the World Trade Center. He is now one of over 5,500 people declared missing or dead after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. And he is among what several imams in the New York metropolitan area estimate to be hundreds of Muslims who perished in the disaster.

Yet, to add sorrow to tragedy, few if any of those Muslim victims will receive funerals and burials, according to Islamic funeral directors, such as Erhan Yildirim. Unless rescue workers locate intact corpses, not simply an arm, or a finger, Muslim religious practice, would forbid him from holding a traditional burial service.

After seeing the first reports of the plane crashes on TV, Mr. Yildirim had prepared for the possible onslaught of customers by ordering extra coffins. But weeks later, the caskets remained in the well-stocked supply room in his mosque on 8th Avenue in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn.

"Islam, unlike Christianity, believes in the idea of corporeal resurrection, that it is not simply one's spirit entering into paradise, but that the body itself will be resurrected," explained Frank Griffel, assistant professor of Islamic Studies at Yale University. "Muslims, traditionally, never burn, or cremate corpses. One needs to bury the entire corpse, making certain that the body faces Mecca."

When a corpse is missing, or severely dismembered, salaatul janaazah, the traditional Islamic funeral ritual, is not conducted. Prayers may be offered for the missing by members of the mosque; additional prayers for the deceased are also offered during the fast of Ramadan. Neither series of prayers, however, have the same religious tenor as the traditional Muslim funeral service.

"Christians get over the lack of a corpse by having a memorial service as a funeral," noted Francis Peters, professor of Middle Eastern Studies at New York University, "but in our particular Muslim culture which, in certain ways, has assimilated to American customs, the lack of a corpse can represent a real problem."

Imam Hamad Ahmad Chebli of the Islamic Society of Central Jersey agreed in part with Professor Franks. He, like several other imams interviewed, said a traditional funeral could not take place with a missing corpse, however, deceased Muslims, such as those missing from the World Trade Center attack, could still enter paradise.

The imams emphasized the Quran's teaching that the body is simply material, a vessel for the soul. The

deciding factor on Judgment Day, when one is called to enter Paradise, is one's actions on earth, not necessarily the existence of a corpse.

However, Mr. Chebli pointed out another way the grieving process of Muslim families is affected by the lack of a corpse. Participation in an Islamic funeral includes the ritual of al ghusul, washing of the dead according to Islamic rites. When a Muslim dies, it is the responsibility of the family to prepare the body. After emptying fluids from body cavities, family members wash the body; starting on the right side the deceased is bathed three, five, or any more odd number of times if necessary, with water and soap. Female corpses, in addition to this, have their hair washed and braided in three braids, placed behind their backs. After the family completes al ghusul the deceased is dried, embalmed in musk or perfume, and shrouded in a simple white cloth.

Grieving without a corpse, and subsequently without many of the traditional Muslim rituals, is, "100 percent more difficult," Imam Chebli said. He continued: "Involvement in this rite, seeing and touching the body, fulfills people both spiritually and psychologically."

More than a month after the collapse of the World Trade Center, Tariq Amanullah's family is still waiting, according to his father, waiting for him to return. While the mosque in the Muslim Center of Middlesex County, which includes Metuchen, has offered up prayers for Mr. Amanullah, his father said the family has not organized nor requested formal prayers to be offered.

When asked how the family planned to memorialize his son, Mr. Muakkamed gave a simple response: "Without a body there is no funeral." He paused, went silent for a moment, then concluded, "That is our problem."

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Copts Caught in the Middle After World Trade Center Attacks

By Amy Miller

Ossama Latif Metias, 27, was looking for an apartment in Astoria the day Islamic terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center, killings thousands of innocent people. When he arrived at the realtor's office that afternoon, the agent looked at him and burst into tears.

"She said she couldn't rent an apartment to me because I was one of them, and she said she had friends who worked in the Trade Towers," Metias said. "I told her I was a Copt, a Christian, and I pulled out my cross. She calmed down a little, but I didn't get an apartment. I'll be wearing my cross on the outside of my shirt from now on."

Many Egyptian Copts, or Christians, at St. George Coptic Orthodox Church in Astoria are wearing their crosses prominently to show that they are not Muslim. Across the country, people who appear of Middle Eastern descent, regardless of their religion, have been attacked and killed in a wave of violence fueled by American outrage, and Copts are no exception. In San Gabriel, California, the F.B.I. is investigating the Sept. 22 shooting death of Adel Karas, a Coptic grocer.

"I want all Americans to know that there is a big, big difference between Egyptian Muslims and Egyptian Copts," said Joseph Youssef, a 51-year-old member of St. George. "They have no idea."

For some Copts in Astoria, fear of misplaced American anger is only part of the uncertainty they face after the World Trade Center's collapse. They also worry about harassment from Muslims. In recent years, official discrimination and vigilante violence by Islamic fundamentalists have driven many Copts from their home. Now, some Copts say that the fear they hoped to leave behind could follow them here.

In the first century, Jesus' apostle Mark brought Christianity to Egypt and founded the Coptic Church, whose influence quickly spread throughout the region. For Copts, the problems began in the seventh century when Muslim conquerors swept across the Middle East, forcing many Copts to convert to Islam. Those who refused either paid a hefty tax or faced execution.

Today, Egypt's government excludes Copts from top government and academic positions, and an ancient law strictly limits the construction and repair of Christian churches. While Christians can convert to Islam, Muslim conversion to Christianity is forbidden. There is even dispute about how many Copts live in Egypt. The government claims that 6 percent of Egypt's 68 million people are Copt, while independent observers say that 10 to 15 percent of Egyptians are Copt.

But many Copts believe that suffering through random terrorist attacks by Islamic fundamentalists was worse than any discrimination they faced. Joseph Youssef was celebrating Easter in the Shobra district of Cairo in 1979 when Muslims armed with machine guns burned down his church. Months later, Muslims bombed another church where he was attending a wedding.

"Almost everyone in the church was killed. It was terrible to see," Youssef said. "Luckily, I was outside by the door smoking a cigarette when it happened. After that, we decided to come here to escape the troubles."

On New Year's Eve in 1999, a three-day clash began between Muslims and Copts in the largely Christian village of El-Kosheh. When the violence ended, 20 Christians were dead and hundreds of Christian homes and business destroyed.

In recent years, thousands of Copts have fled to the United States seeking religious freedom and economic opportunities. Now some Copts in Astoria worry that the safety they found here is in danger. "We are caught in the middle," said Violet Farag, a member of the St. George Social Committee. "We're scared Americans will think we're Muslims, and if the Muslims attack us, we'll have nowhere to go."

Father Rewais Magar of St. George Coptic Orthodox Church in Astoria has asked his congregation of over 600 people to hold their meetings in private homes, not in public, and for good reason. Many Astoria residents believe that there could be violence against Arabs in their neighborhood.

"There's going to be hostility," said Ebalise Fernandez, a Hunter College student. "Especially seeing them on the news rejoicing and laughing. And you see them here, and it's not their fault, but it takes a strong person not to have hostility towards them."

Jerry Divanzo, a bartender, said he has heard about several attacks against Arabs in Jackson Heights. "Around here it could happen," he said. "It would be innocent people, too."

Father Rewais Magar said that when he came here to establish the St. George Coptic Orthodox Church in 1997, most Americans were welcoming. Now that acceptance has turned to suspicion.

"With my long beard and black robe, I stand out," he said. "People come up to me now and ask me where I am from. In K-mart, a man asked me, 'Are you a priest?' I said 'Yes, I'm from Egypt.' Then he asked, 'Are you Muslim?' When I explained to a man at a bank who I am, he said, 'Father, do me a favor. Please wear your cross so everyone can see it.' "

Elizabeth Girgis, a Columbia University student, refuses to call herself an Arab. "When I told people I'm from Egypt before the World Trade Center attack, they thought it was exotic, some far-away beautiful place," she said. "Now when I tell people, I can tell by their facial expression that they automatically think I'm Muslim. I have to explain what a Copt is."

For many members of St. George, it isn't just American ignorance of Eastern Orthodox religion that frightens them. "I'm not worried about Americans," said Joseph Youssef. "They will be fine once they know you're Christian. But the Muslims, they will stab us from the back like they do in Egypt."

Some Muslim Egyptians in Astoria say such fears are exaggerated. "What does Copt mean?" said Duri Dar, an Egyptian Muslim who works at the Arab Community Center on Steinway Street. "Copt means Egyptian. We are all Egyptians."

Raghab Aliah, an Egyptian Muslim from Luxor, said that Copts and Muslims lived together peacefully in his hometown. "There were plenty of Christians in my town," he said, "and when there was a wedding or funeral we would go to celebrate with them."

But few members of St. George Coptic Orthodox Church would agree. Father Magar said that St. George is planning to buy an adjacent lot to their church so the building can be expanded to meet the needs of a rapidly growing congregation. Now they have learned that a group of Muslims from Afghanistan are trying to buy the same property.

"We're scared to death," Violet Farag said. "They will destroy the church. They do this to us in Egypt all the time. They build their mosques right next to our churches. They want us to be afraid." Now, she said, the number-one priority of St. George's congregation is to raise enough money to buy the adjacent lot.

Rumors are also swirling that a headless statue of St. Anthony, the founder of monasticism in Egypt, was left in a box at another Coptic church in Ridgewood, Queens. Some suspect it was the work of Muslims in

the area trying to send them a message after the World Trade Center attacks. "Who else would do this but Muslims?" said Elizabeth Girgis.

Father Magar, however, is urging his congregation to simply pray. "In every country there are fanatics," he said. "But I tell everyone to love their enemies and pray for them. I ask them to pray for peace in America and in all countries all over the world."

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Despite Grief and Stress, Queens Firefighters Fight On

By Stephanie Martin

Robert Serra worked outside the Grand Avenue firehouse in Elmhurst, rearranging dried-out flowers and scraping red, white and blue candle wax off the sidewalk. "I've never been to a fire," said Serra, 21, who was let out of the firefighter's training academy two days early to spend a "horrible" first day on the job last Tuesday digging through the rubble of the World Trade Center. Eight days after the attacks, Serra said he is still determined to fight fires. However, he said "it makes you realize more what you're getting into, you know. You can't learn that in the academy."

Until rescue operations at the World Trade Center are officially canceled, Serra remains among the thousands of New York City firefighters struggling to stay focused. At the firehouse, Serra yesterday worked yet another 24-hour shift while about thirty of his firefighter brothers waded through the wreckage in lower Manhattan.

The Elmhurst firehouse, built in 1913, is home to two companies and one battalion, about 60 men in all. As of yesterday, two of those men, Chris Pickford and Mike Cawley, both 32, remained missing. And according to Battalion Commander John Acerno, "trying to keep everybody on an even keel" was proving to be the station's toughest challenge. "It's just the magnitude of the whole operation," Acerno said. "There are so many people that each individual knows. I myself know about 50 people who are missing."

Like others around the city, Elmhurst firefighters spent what little spare time they had attending wakes and funerals. They loaded their cars with bags of food to take to mourning families. Each day, firehouse supervisors dispatched a group of about thirty men to Manhattan to sift through the smoldering heap of debris. And, somehow, those who were left behind at the station continued their everyday duties, such as cleaning the trucks, fixing broken equipment and waiting for the next alarm bell to sound.

"This is all new to us, too," said John Acerno, who yesterday said he had no idea how long the rescue operation at the World Trade Center site would continue. "To have 350 people missing, it's indescribable." To help his men cope with their loss and their fears, Acerno said he holds private staff meetings every morning. "We joke around, and we cry," he said. "We hug, and we endure."

The firefighters working at the station yesterday greeted one another with hugs and pats on the back. Many appeared weary and stressed. "Am I tired?" John Weber paused and pondered the question. "I think tired, right now, is a relative term." The 40-year-old firefighter had spent four of the last eight nights digging for survivors under the rubble of the World Trade Center. "Can I keep going?" Weber said, his eyes filling with tears. "Yes, I can. Yes, I will. When it's over, I'll rest."

In the days following the attacks, the sidewalk outside this firehouse became a makeshift shrine to missing and dead firefighters, and yesterday residents continued to bring cards, candles and flowers. Inside, bags of towels, socks, sheets, candy bars and bottled water sat in large stacks while the firemen continued to receive donations. "The response from the community has been overwhelming and outstanding--100 percent supportive," said Battalion Chief Jay Fischler. "It helps tremendously."

While they waited for the next stove fire or false alarm, the firefighters found release in games of foosball in

the garage, and upbeat classic rock anthems blared over loud speakers. In the kitchen adorned with newspaper clippings about the World Trade Center and a "Wanted: Dead or Alive" poster of Osama bin Laden, men gathered around the table, drinking coffee and talking about the tragedy.

Lieutenant Anthony Catalanotto, 44, a 13-year veteran of the Elmhurst fire house said that, during difficult times, the firemen comfort each other with a gentle sort of gallows humor. Of the continued rescue operation, Catalanotto said, "Maybe they'll find five guys down on, like, the fourth or fifth level, you know, in some sort of a void which happens to be a smoke shop and a restaurant side by side. And they've probably breached a wall to get into the restaurant. And they're sitting there, having a couple of beers, smoking some cigarettes, reading some magazines, like, 'Where the hell were all you guys? We've been waiting since last Tuesday.'"

"And that's what we're hoping for," Catalanotto added sadly, reminded of the desperate efforts taking place. Many of these firefighters, like John Kearns, 35, had been working at the site, digging and finding bodies—but nothing else. But for Kearns and many others, as long as pockets of air and space lay beneath the twisted steel, hope endured. "If we could get one person out of this, I think, you know, we would feel a lot better about ourselves," Kearns said. "They say there are miracles. So we're hoping for that miracle."

However, as the days and hours passed, John Weber said he was beginning to face a harsher possibility. "There are a lot of guys that want to be optimistic," he said, his voice quivering. "I would love to be optimistic. From what I've seen, I can't." Weber expressed frustration that he and his coworkers were not trained to remove heavy steel and operate cranes. "All we can do is to move earth and try to dig out what we can," he

said. "Unfortunately, you know, there are no fires down there to be put out. There's nobody to be rescued. And, in that respect, I feel kind of-helpless."

Since 1949 the Elmhurst fire department has lost three men, and firefighters here were bracing to add two new plaques to their memorial wall. In the meantime, the men taped pictures of Chris Pickford and Mike Cawley on walls outside and inside the station and talked about the two as if they were their brothers.

"A big goofy kid," was how John Acerno described Pickford, a single young man who played the guitar and worked with the Elmhurst department for almost a year. "A real funny guy," John Weber said. "Had to make you laugh."

Mike Cawley, also young and single, worked at the station for six years and was a good friend to many of the firefighters and their families. "When I lay my head down at night, I'm thinking about him," said John Kearns. Kearns' 5-year-old son recently was diagnosed with cancer. "Mike was the first to help," he said. Under Cawley's picture, someone posted this quotation: "And in the end it's not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years."

"It hurts," said Acerno. "It hurts. You can see how close we are. We're more than just employees and employers. We're brothers. We really are."

But early yesterday afternoon, the firefighters temporarily abandoned their heartbreak. The alarm bell rang, and they changed from exhausted to energized in a matter of seconds. Truck lights flashed, sirens screamed and the suddenly spirited firefighters donned their dusty suits. As they leaped onto the trucks, one yelled "Let's go, baby!"

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Minority Businesses Galvanize to Give Back

By Kerry Sheridan

On the morning of September 11, Bill Howell started making phone calls to his friends and business associates. He was reminding them to get out and vote in that day's primary, in particular for city comptroller candidate William Thompson. Howell had spent the few months previous helping Thompson's campaign effort.

Then, shortly before 9 a.m., Howell's own phone rang. It was Carlos Jaime, the boyfriend of Howell's secretary, calling to say he was inside the World Trade Center and a plane had just hit.

Howell stepped to the window of his office in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, just across New York Harbor from the Battery, and saw the North Tower in flames. Seconds later, another plane crashed into the South Tower before his eyes.

An African-American who owns a construction company, Howell immediately began calling his contacts to find out if they were okay. Many of them were prominent figures in the minority business community. Howell knew people who worked at the Port Authority's Office of Business and Job Opportunity, which assists minority and women-owned businesses and was on the 63rd floor of One World Trade Center, as well as those employed at the Regional Alliance of Small Contractors on the 21st floor.

After a restless night, Howell returned to the office at 6 a.m. and called his longtime friend Frank Fraley, the chief financial officer of Motown Records. Howell is a deacon at Cornerstone Baptist Church, one of the renowned African-American churches in New York, where Fraley serves as vice chair of the deacon's board. Together, they'd campaigned for Thompson. Often on Saturday mornings, they meet for a game of golf.

Howell told Fraley he wanted to form a network to try and help those affected. Fraley said count him in. Drawing from contacts he knew through the Thompson campaign, through his church, and through years of serving on advisory boards that dealt with minority business initiatives, Howell began to assemble a list. By 10 a.m. Wednesday, Howell had 15 people on a conference call -- community leaders, small business owners, business contacts and church representatives from the African American and Caribbean American communities -- who wanted to help.

They formed a coalition called the Minority Business Relief Task Force. Members included Roy Hastick, president of the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce & Industry; James Heyliger, president of the Association of Minority Enterprises of NY; Timothy Marshall, president of Jamaica Business Resource Center; and Len Britton, managing director of the New York State Association of Minority Contractors. Several African-American pastors also became involved, including Reverend David Cousin, Bridge St. AME Church; Dr. Wyatt T. Walker, Canaan Baptist Church; Dr. Harry S. Wright, Cornerstone Baptist Church; as well as Howard Golden and the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President.

Members turned to their businesses, their churches and their own pockets to help in the relief effort. By Thursday, they had 37 members. By the start of the next week, they had raised \$20,000 and accumulated truckloads of donated goods and food.

"This happened in our city, to our people, regardless of color or creed," said Howell. "We've got resources, so I said, 'Let's go do this.' No one said no."

By daybreak, Howell arranged to provide needed fuel for the equipment that was doing the digging. The task force took donations of boots, goggles, T-shirts, Band-Aids and non-perishable food and delivered them to firehouses and churches, where they could be given directly to those in need. Later that day, Howell put three of his trucks on the road to deliver relief supplies and donations to the Red Cross and Salvation Army, he said. As the week progressed, Howell delivered a number of five-gallon buckets to fire departments to assist in the debris removal efforts.

Fraley said Motown's parent company, Vivendi Universal, was coordinating a September 11th relief effort within the company and was providing counseling for all employees.

"At Motown, we want to be supportive wherever our name can add credibility to a cause," said Fraley. But he acknowledged his own involvement in the task force was more on a personal level.

"Very often when we give money to the American Red Cross, we know that those people who know how to access those channels first are the ones who get access first," said Fraley. "Many minorities don't know that they are eligible to receive aid. So we try to get the word out to people in the local communities."

For task force member Pat Williams, director of the Brooklyn-Queens Minority Business Opportunity Committee, a program funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce, it meant steering already-existing projects toward the relief effort. When the attack occurred, she had been organizing a "Minority Business Bus Tour" to visit minority-owned businesses in Manhattan that had grown and were flourishing. On Sept. 26, she turned that into the "Back to Broadway" tour, a joint venture with the New York City Convention and Visitors Bureau to take busloads of minority professionals to struggling Broadway shows in the month of October.

"If I'm going to do a bus tour, it should have an impact on what's happening now," said Williams. "There are a lot of minority businesses in the theatre district. We can help build patronage."

Though Williams started out by planning three busses, her contacts within the task force expressed their interest, and it turned into 10.

Williams also approached Microsoft, a company she has been working with as the sponsor of this year's Minority Economic Development week, and began to coordinate a relief package that will soon be released, she said. "The mission of my program is to enhance minorities' ability to participate in all sectors and play a role in the New York economy," said Williams. "If the New York economy falters, it knocks us in half."

Adele Flateau, outreach coordinator at Brookdale University Hospital, also found herself changing gears when she became involved with the task force. She had spent weeks prior to the attack helping to coordinate the first-ever Caribbean-American Leadership Summit, organized by the Caribbean-American Chamber of Commerce. More than 70 people businesspeople, educators, physicians and politicians attended the summit. The theme of the day emphasized networking within the Caribbean community and the African American community to spur economic development. While writing out the initiatives and agreements reached in that conference, Tuesday's terrorist attack happened.

Five Caribbean organizations that took part in the summit have become part of the new task force. Flateau said the coalition could focus its relief efforts on minorities and minority businesses and people of color.

"A lot of Caribbean nationals were killed that day," Flateau said. "A lot of support workers from our community, kitchen staff at Windows on the World, hotel staff for Marriott, people in the Port Authority. We're trying to get concrete assistance to people in our communities."

Flateau said she was not surprised at how quickly the coalition was formed, or how much it had been able to accomplish.

"So many of us have known each other for years," said Flateau. "We've lived here and worked here. We're usually linked to each other in various ways, from a professional, personal, political standpoint. It becomes a very interesting sort of family. You just know that you can count on each other."

"It was a matter of pulling together people who were linked already," she said.

As the weeks have passed since the attack, the coalition has changed its focus. Now it's looking at how to service the long-term needs of the minority community. Flateau has begun to compile a resource directory so that businesses or individuals that need to relocate will be able to find organizations that can help. Howell said they plan to store the extra food and clothing donations that aren't needed yet, but that may be of help in the weeks to come. And there is a continuing need to help family members who lost loved ones in the attack, such as the Vulcan Society of black firefighters, which lost 12 of their firefighters when the towers collapsed.

"We'll be helping establish a fund specifically for the widows and children of the firefighters who were lost," said Flateau.

Paul Washington, head of the Vulcan Society, said that such help would also help the society put into action projects that had been begun before the disaster. One project is founding a charter school in Brooklyn, a project that Vernon Richards, one of the firefighters who died on Sept. 11, had been closely involved with for the past year.

"We want to make his dream a reality," said Washington.

Flateau said that in the days ahead, the task force's mission would be best served by staying as close as possible to the way it began, as an informal network.

"At first when you're in crisis mode, you're very emotional and you want to take on the world," said Flateau. "But we didn't want to do something and not be able to sustain it. Each of us will be providing different levels of assistance. (The task force's) role would be better served by linking people to services that are already existing."

Williams said she plans to be active for as long as it takes to rebuild the towers. She said she has been energized by the response she has seen in the minority business community, and she looks forward to the role that minority business will play in the reconstruction.

"That's what power is all about -- the joint synergy from a lot of sources," said Williams. "When all those people come under one umbrella, it's powerful."

On Thursday, Sept. 27, Williams continued to work on organizing the Broadway bus tour, when the phone rang in her office. It was Heyward Davenport, of the Minority Business Development Agency.

She told him, "You ought to get in on this."

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America's New Patriots

By Sonya V. Chawla

Two days after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, more than 500 Dominican residents of the Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights gathered outside the police station house on 183rd Street and Broadway to grieve with officers and neighbors of various races, nationalities and religions. Cops passed out candles, shook hands with adults and comforted children.

"One policeman picked up my son, who was crying, and held him in his arms," said Dominican resident Xiomara Paulino, 37. "He said, 'Don't worry. Don't be scared. We're here to protect you.'"

The scene, though superficially similar to vigils elsewhere in New York, marked a stark contrast to years of animosity between Dominicans and police in Washington Heights. The 34th Police Precinct, which organized the event, had been the source of dozens of brutality charges since 1990 that led to recurrent protests and riots in Washington Heights. In 1992, one officer choked and bruised a 16 year-old Dominican boy, and two months later, an unarmed 24 year-old man was beaten, shot and killed by another policeman.

In a neighborhood comprised of more Dominicans than nearly every city in the Dominican Republic, national pride for the motherland traditionally has run high. Yet a new sense of patriotism has swept into Washington Heights after the attacks of three weeks ago sent waves of solidarity across the country. Dominicans have put aside their differences with non-Dominican neighbors and police and united with fellow New Yorkers as Americans.

Since the September 11 attack, hundreds of stores, apartments and office buildings in Upper Manhattan have had U.S. flags hanging from their rooftops or taped in their windows. Shopkeepers in the area said they could not keep up with sales of patriotic paraphernalia, everything from U.S. flags and World Trade Center t-shirts to blue and red striped pens and ties, which vendors said Dominicans were buying in the largest quantities.

"We have an opportunity now to show that we are as American as the rest of America," said Francisco Jimenez, 27. "It's just sad that it took an event like this to bring us all together."

Jimenez and a neighbor Alex Pena, 29, raised a banner on the corner of 182nd Street and St. Nicholas Avenue that read, "In Memory of the Innocent. F- Terrorism." The two men agreed that as the nation has turned its attention to a great international enemy, domestic strife has become less important.

"I feel like there's no war between white people and Hispanics in America anymore," said Pena. "It's now a war between them and us."

Over 500 Dominicans gathered outside the precinct's vigil on September 13, where many, for the first time, held hands, looked solemnly upon an American flag and sang the national anthem with pride. Dominicans wearing t-shirts with American flags and "United We Stand" and "Proud to Be an American" messages on the front poured tears of grief for the thousands of Americans killed. Though most were not Dominican, nearly 40 Dominicans are dead or missing in the attack.

"I think everyone knows someone who has lost someone," said Officer Edwin House, who is stationed

outside the 168th Street subway station in Washington Heights. "There is no color issue anymore, this is an America issue. It took this to bring a little bit of harmony and understanding between us and the community we're in charge of."

One longtime Washington Heights resident, James Gordon, 44, lit a candle in memory of his best friend's sister, who has been missing since the attack. Gordon placed the candle next to those lit by hundreds of Dominican, black and white residents of Protestant, Christian and Jewish descent at the vigil.

"Even those young guys who always just hang around and do nothing came to light candles," said Gordon. "Before you couldn't sell Dominicans an American flag for anything. But I even heard those young guys talking about signing up for the National Guard."

Gordon recalled his best friend and the victim, Dorita Santiago, a 41-year-old executive secretary who worked for Cantor Fitzgerald Securities. She was last heard from when she called her brother from the 101st floor of One World Trade Center, 15 minutes before the first hijacked plane struck the tower.

Gordon spent the nights following the attack with the grieving Santiago family, surrounded in their living room with American flags and posters saying "God Bless America." Gordon said Santiago's mother was faced with the heart-breaking irony of having brought her children to America for a better life but having lost her daughter in the process.

Yet through her tears and confusion, Gordon said, the victim's mother continually asserted that the U.S. provided a good life for her daughter. "She thinks America must work together to correct what happened to her child," he said.

As the new sense of solidarity has improved community life by uniting officers and community members, the tragedy also has sparked greater political interest among Dominicans.

In the past, copies of El Siglo or Listin Diario, both Dominican papers from the motherland, would sell out long before even a dozen copies of The New York Times were bought, according to Mohe Yuddin, a newspaper vendor on the corner of 181st Street and Broadway. Yet four days after the attack, the mainstream newspapers were selling at a rate that required Yuddin to double his typical order.

Dominicans in Washington Heights also voted in higher numbers than ever before, as nearly 15,000 area residents cast ballots during the primary election on September 25, despite predictions from polling experts who said that turnout throughout the city would be markedly low. The offices of three city council candidates in the area's District 10 said they expected more Dominicans than in the past would register and vote in the general election on November 6.

"I'm certainly voting this year," claimed Emilio Nunez, a 76 year-old who has lived in Washington Heights for 31 years. "I've never seen so much patriotism here. I think it's a good idea to protect that."

Six days after the attack, as Nunez gazed at an American flag raised at half-mast in Bennett Park, he said he felt more proud to be an American than ever before.

"This is a prejudice against the world, not just Americans," he said of the attack. "I am just happy to be in a country that will say 'harming innocent people is wrong' and then do something about it."

Nunez turned from the flag and read a note hanging on the park's fence written in Spanish by a fifth grader. It read: "Live on America. Live on our hope of the world. America, we love you."

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Terror and Response

September 24, 2001

Queens Sikh Community Fears Racial Attacks

By Franziska Bruner

When Harjinder Singh was a boy in India, he learned that ancient leaders had given his people, the Sikhs, a uniform of turbans and flowing beards, so they could always be identified, even in a crowd of thousands. Now, after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, Harjinder Singh has found that his turban has singled him out in a new way: as a target for harassment by New Yorkers who mistake him for a follower of suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden.

A 22-year-old taxi driver from Jackson Heights, Harjinder Singh stayed home from work for almost a week after the explosion, out of fear that a passenger would assault him. This past Monday he returned to the streets, but remained wary.

"When they get into the car, I tell them right away I'm not from Afghanistan," Harjinder Singh said, his cell phone ringing at his hip as his father called to check once again if he is safe. "If they see how I look, they might attack me, even though I'm not Muslim."

It is for a look, not a religion, that a 66-year-old man was beaten on the evening of Sept. 11 near the Sikh Cultural Society Gurdwara temple Harjinder Singh attends in Richmond Hill. It is for a look, uncannily similar to that of turbaned and bearded bin Laden followers, that a Sikh gas station owner was murdered on Sept. 15 in Mesa, Arizona. Now, even Sikhs in the heavily Indian Queens neighborhoods of Jackson Heights and Richmond Hill are scared.

Monami Maulik, coordinator for Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), an Indian-American community group, said 10 DRUM volunteers walking through the five boroughs last week collected hundreds of reports of harassment and violence against Indian and Arab-Americans, many of them Sikhs in Queens.

Although Officer John Zamot of the 115th Police Precinct said police received only a few reports of bias attacks in Jackson Heights last week, Maulik said many attacks are never reported to police by Indians who don't speak English or are illegal immigrants.

"People are terrified," said Subhash Kateel, a DRUM volunteer. "They're scared to go to work, scared to go to school. They're throwing the American flag on everything."

In the days since the World Trade Center disaster, Sikh-Americans posted reports of 262 verbal and physical attacks, including four in Queens, on a Sikh-run hate crimes web site, said Harpreet Singh, director of external affairs for United Sikhs in Service of America, a community group based in Queens.

Osama bin Laden's omnipresence on television, and repeated broadcasts showing a Sikh man who was pulled off an Amtrak train in Rhode Island and mistakenly arrested as a terrorist suspect on Sept. 12, have only made matters worse for Sikhs, said Dr. Inderjit Singh, a Sikh professor of anatomy at New York University and columnist for Global Sikh News Online.

"The television images mistakenly associate Sikhs with bin Laden, and that creates a problem in the mind of the average American," Dr. Jit Singh said. "But we are not related to him--not in religion, not in beliefs."

Although two Sikh separatists are suspected in the 1985 bombing of an Air India jet which killed 329 people, no Sikhs in the United States have ever been accused of terrorist acts. The Air India attack is widely condemned in the Sikh-American community as the work of extremists who do not follow Sikh tenets.

A 528-year-old Indian religion, Sikhism is based on helping others, not on terrorism, said Mriginder Singh, an information technology consultant and member of the Sikh Cultural Society Gurdwara. Most Sikh men take on the surname Singh, meaning "lion", to denote their equality and fearlessness in protecting others. Sikh religion prohibits the use of alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes, and prescribes a hardworking, chaste lifestyle for those who wear the turban.

"Our uniform is a symbol of saintliness, not a symbol of evil," Mriginder Singh said.

Turbaned men and traditionally dressed women continued to worship at the Sikh Cultural Society Gurdwara last week as a police officer stood watch across the street. In the past two weeks, the temple was attacked by men throwing rubber balls from a car and two Sikh men were assaulted nearby.

Eager to publicize their loyalty to America, many members of the gurdwara traveled to the Upper East Side of Manhattan Sept. 15 to join about 3,000 other Sikhs in a candlelight vigil to remember the victims of the terrorist attacks and to show that they are "part of the American mosaic," Harpreet Singh said. About 100 Sikhs, most of them from the Richmond Hill gurdwara, also attended the Sept. 23 multi-faith prayer services in Yankee stadium, where a Long Island Sikh priest was among clergymen representing New York's major religions.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and President George Bush both made statements last week decrying racial attacks against Indian and Arab-Americans, announcements which Sikhs appreciated, Dr. Jit Singh said.

Still, Sikh leaders urged people to be careful in their neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. "We're telling people not to wander around at night and to try not to challenge people who stare at them," Dr. Jit Singh said.

A pamphlet of tips to minimize "mistaken identity," distributed by the Sikh Cultural Society Gurdwara last week, advised Sikhs not to let the elderly or children go out alone, and suggested that Sikh parents meet with their children's teachers to explain their culture. To promote understanding in public schools, a group of six Sikh mothers from the Sant Sagar Gurdwara in Bellerose met with the executive secretary of the New York City Board of Education last week.

The tip sheet also advised Sikhs to put American flags on their cars and houses. In Jackson Heights' "Little India" neighborhood, this tip proved to be the most popular last week. Teenagers on 37th Avenue seemed to compete for the most creative ways to display the flag--on bandannas, rear-view mirrors, t-shirts, and key chains--and every business along 74th Street pasted the same plastic flag prominently onto its window.

"That flag is a protection shield, a bullet-proof jacket for Asians," said Bobby Johal, a Sikh DJ and owner of 74th Street Audio and Video in Jackson Heights, as he ran his hands over the red white and blue cloth stuck to the dashboard of his Mercedes. "That flag has so much power."

Shiv Dass, vice president of the largely Indian-American Jackson Heights Merchants Association, handed out 100 American flags to store owners the Thursday after the terrorist attack.

"It's not a show, we mean it," Dass said. "We lost highly educated young people in the disaster, the cream of India. My customers and friends are missing. We sympathize with the rest of America."

The irony of the prejudice being directed at Sikhs was not lost on Jatinder Singh, a young Sikh man on 74th Street wearing an American flag bandanna in place of a turban. Sikhs and Muslims fought for much of the past century in India, and now Sikhs are paying for Muslim crimes in America, he said.

"Now people are attacking us thinking we're them, when they're our worst enemies," Jatinder Singh said.

Perhaps because years of strife in India led him to understand so well the anger that follows violent death, Johal said he can sympathize with the current backlash against Sikhs.

"All the people out there are looking for someone to attack," Johal said. "When something happens to your family, that's when you go crazy."

For now, Sikhs in Queens are keeping vulnerable family members indoors until attacks stop. Americans will learn the difference between Sikh turbans and Afghan turbans soon enough, they hope.

Afghan-Americans, who cannot publicize their distinctness from bin Laden so easily, are the ones who really need to worry, Johal said.

"You should get an American flag tattooed on your forehead," he told an Afghan-American friend. "You're in for more trouble than us when people find out who you are."

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Terror and Response

September 28, 2001

Torn Apart By Terrorism

By Kelly Smits

On the evening of September 15, a procession of children stopped to sing in front of a small shop on East 116th Street in Manhattan, as a magenta sign in the window flashed "Flowers by Sweet William." Rows of glowing candles, sympathy cards, poems, and pictures outlined the storefront and spilled down the sidewalk. There were more bouquets decorating the steps of the flower shop than filling the glass cases inside. Three crosses lined with flowers were leaning against the window. On a yellow ribbon dangling from one of the crosses, an anonymous author had scrawled, "We love you Sweet William's wife." A picture of a Puerto Rican woman occupied the center of the display. She had blond tendrils and luminous green eyes that seemed to gaze fondly over the congregation.

William Cintron stood in the doorway of his shop in the East Harlem neighborhood, listening to the voices. Several similar candlelight vigils and memorials had been held at his store over the past few weeks. The woman on the flyer was his wife, Edna Cintron, who would have turned 47 on October 14. Cintron worked as an office manager for Marsh and McLennan, an investment management company that lost 315 employees in the World Trade Center attacks on September 11. Cintron is among 295 of her colleagues still missing in the debris. Always reliably punctual, she had reported by 8:30 a.m. to her office on the 97th floor of tower one. Moments later, the first aircraft plunged into her floor, and a ball of fire engulfed the building.

For the families of the 6,453 innocent victims that perished in the World Trade Center on September 11, the impact of the terrorist attacks has been deeply personal. The Cintrons and their friends and neighbors represent the intimate, individual face of this mass murder. To add to East Harlem's sorrow, the Cintrons had overcome tremendous obstacles to become stable, productive members of the community -- only to be broken apart forever by terrorism.

William Cintron was working at his second job, as a doorman, when he heard the news of the terrorist attacks. He raced down FDR Drive to the World Trade Center, as the radio blared reports of the second tower's collapse. Mistaken for a rescue worker in his doorman's uniform, Cintron was able to gain access to the site and began digging frantically through the rubble for his wife.

Even now, weeks later, he forces himself to stop calling her cell phone just to hear the sound of her voice on the message. Every night he enters an empty house in Queens only to be constantly reminded of his wife's absence. He notices her extensive collection of angels peering out from every corner, her favorite green plant that needs watering, and their oak wood sleigh bed, which is uncharacteristically disheveled. "It's the worst thing in the world to have someone that you love so much and lose them," he said. "They just took my heart and just ripped it right out of my chest."

William's brother introduced the couple 15 years ago at a friend's house. "It was love at first sight," he said. "She was my puppy true love." But the couple faced countless obstacles throughout their 14-year marriage. "We've been homeless, we ate out of garbage cans, you name it, we were drug addicts," he said. "We were living door to door." The Cintrons spent six years living on the streets. There were many days the couple could only share a cup of coffee, a sandwich, and a cigarette. "But even when we were struggling, we never were hungry," he explained. "We could be stranded anywhere together, we had that powerful love. And I had this wonderful, beautiful woman. There isn't a single day that I would do again differently."

With Edna's guidance, the couple was able to turn their life around. William entered a recovery program in 1987, and then obtained his current job as a doorman on 79th Street. Then, five years ago, the couple opened up their own flower shop in East Harlem. "She held my hand and guided me," he said. "I was her always her baby and her best friend. She lifted me up and cared for me when I didn't have a pot to piss in. Right now I'm just trying to take care of myself because I can't fall back." Cintron refused to delve further into the personal details of their early life. These secret struggles had formed an unbreakable bond between them, and they were all he could preserve between them. "We loved each other very much," Cintron said. "We struggled very hard and all of the sudden it was taken."

William described the first ring he gave Edna in 1989. "It cost \$225 dollars," he recalled, laughing. "You couldn't even see the stone. But she absolutely cherished it, and showed it off to everyone." He bought her a second ring only four months ago; this time it was a one- karat diamond. "I told her I wished I could buy her a bigger ring. But she just wore it like it was a doorknob. She was so sincere." The other day, when William was looking through his wife's papers, he stumbled across the tickets to Las Vegas that she was going to surprise him with as an anniversary gift. The couple would have celebrated their 15-year wedding anniversary on September 29. To mark the occasion, William hosted a gathering of friends and neighbors at a memorial service on Saturday afternoon. As the sound of Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On" echoed down the street, Cintron released thirty white doves in Edna's memory.

The Cintrons enjoyed the simple pleasures in life. They made frequent trips to Atlantic City to play the slot machines and to indulge at the Sands buffet. They loved sitting out on their porch and inviting friends over for picnics and barbecues. On Sundays, they would walk down the street to brunch after attending church at A.F. Montcomo, and then Edna would come by the shop to take care of the bills.

Rosa Morrone, who owns Morrone Bakery next to the flower shop, waited for Edna's weekend visits. "She had a good heart," Morrone remembered, smiling. "And she loved my prosciutto bread." On September 6, Morrone had waved to the couple as they were walking across the street. "Willy yelled, 'It's my birthday, Edna's taking me out,'" she recalled. "Edna just turned and laughed. That was the last time I saw her"

Doris Robles, who helps William manage the shop, has been friends with Edna since she left Puerto Rico 12 years ago. In July, Robles fell from a 12-foot ladder and was in critical condition for twenty days. She had broken her jaw and nose, had four screws and a metal plate on the side of her face, and her jaw was wired shut. Robles remembered Edna's daily visits to her hospital bed. "Miss Edna was my strength," Robles recalled. "She'd say, 'Oh, Doris, you look beautiful. Don't worry, you're gonna be with us again. Get up from that bed, woman. We need you at the store, you're our family.' That's the way I'm going to keep her in my mind always. She was more than a friend." Robles's eyes filled up with tears.

Robles's ten-year-old daughter, Karina, finished the note she had been carefully scribbling across a white poster board on the sidewalk. In careful block letters, she had printed, "I love you Miss Edna and I know that you are in a better place. We will never forget you." Edna had always wanted to have children. However, complications from an operation left her unable to conceive. And so she put all her maternal wishes into spoiling Karina. "She'd help me fix my Barbies and talk about girl stuff," Karina said. "She wore the gold and silver bracelet that I gave to her on Willy's birthday. We used to eat chicken wings and tostones with hot sauce all the time."

Edna's closest friend was Jeanette Hernandez, 40, a billing administrator at New York Hospital. She had known Edna for eight years; Hernandez lives across the street from the flower shop. "We would always go Atlantic City because she loved to play Wheel of Fortune," Hernandez said. "We would get so excited when we'd win. But more than anything she was just such a generous person and a great listener." Hernandez stood at William's side during the vigil, clutching Edna's picture tightly to her chest. The two couples had spent the Labor Day holiday together at Manhattan Beach in Brooklyn. "We haven't heard anything yet, nothing at all," Hernandez said, her voice quivering. "The thing is, I spoke to her the night before. She wasn't feeling well, I was like, 'Don't go to work tomorrow,' and she said, 'I've got to.'"

Karina's eyes flickered as she studied Edna's picture. "Mr. William says God knocked on her door," the girl remembered, "and told her it was time to move on."

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The Graduate School of Journalism at [Columbia University](#)

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Terror and Response

Dec 19, 2001

Arab Muslims Leaving Astoria, Queens

By Amy Miller

Mohamed El-Nicklawy's wife and eight-year-old daughter were vacationing in Egypt, his birthplace, when Islamic terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, killing more than 3,000 people. Since that day, his wife and daughter have refused to return to their home in Astoria, Queens.

"They're just too scared," El-Nicklawy said in a recent interview. "They don't know what will happen to them because we're Muslim. I'm worried, too. I've heard of several incidents of harassment right here."

So even though El-Nicklawy has lived in Astoria for more than 20 years, he now plans to return to Egypt on December 15, perhaps permanently. He sold the immigration service he owned to two lawyers and turned over management of his travel agency to his brother. He is even leaving his 17-year-old son in the care of his brother so his son can finish his senior year at Long Island City High School.

"What else can I do?" said El-Nicklawy. "My wife has always stood by me. I can't live without her. I'll just have to keep coming back to check on things."

El Nicklawy is one of many Arab Muslims in Astoria who say that fear of harassment, discrimination and even incarceration following the World Trade Center attacks is convincing them to leave the country. And such fears are not limited to the Arab Muslim community in Astoria.

"There is an environment of fear and confusion among Arab Muslims across the country," said Khalil Jahshan, vice president of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. The committee said there have been over 500 acts of violence against Arab Muslims, including five murders, reported since Sept. 11.

On December 12, Federal prosecutors charged the chairman and another member of the Jewish Defense League in a plot to set off pipe bombs at a mosque in Los Angeles and at the congressional office of Representative Darrell Issa, a California Republican of Lebanese descent.

Approximately 3 million people of Arab descent currently live in the United States, and 82 percent are American citizens. About 35,000 live in Queens, New York, which has the 12th-largest Arab population in the country.

No one knows exactly how many of these Arab Muslims will leave the U.S., but the committee estimated that nationwide, between 2,000 and 3,000 people will return to their home country. More than 20,000 Muslim university students, mostly from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, have already left, Jahshan said.

Egypt's ambassador to the United States, Mahmoud Allam, said Arab Muslims who have immigrated to the United States recently are particularly vulnerable, and therefore more likely to leave. "They don't have a social or economic foothold in this society yet," he said. "They are also likely to have strong family ties in their home country. They may think it's safer to be with their families."

For the last six years Rajab Aly, 34, has been searching for the American dream in New York City. "Not anymore," he said. When he was fired from his job as a limo driver for Golden Touch Transportation this fall, Aly decided to break his apartment lease and return to his family in Luxor, Egypt. Although Aly was told he was fired for being rude to a customer, he said he believes he was fired because he is Muslim.

"Everywhere I go, people look at me like I'm a terrorist," Aly said. "I know that's why I lost my job. There's no place for me here now."

Mustapha Sadouki, a 35-year-old Algerian, said he believes his American wife filed for divorce after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks because he is Muslim. They had planned to raise a family together in Astoria, he said. Now, he and his three brothers have decided to return to their family.

"It isn't just that my wife left me," Sadouki said. "People are making us feel like we have to live in the gutter. I'm getting stopped by the police all the time. I can't sleep."

Police officers at the 114th Precinct, which covers Astoria, said they have heard few complaints of harassment in the area. "We've met with all the Muslim groups and imams in the neighborhood," said Sgt. James Heffernan. "We're doing everything we can to make them feel safe. If they have been having problems with harassment, they haven't told us about it."

Khalil Jahshan said that police might not be hearing complaints because many Arab Muslims immigrants are afraid to report a hate crime. Immigrants worry that when police arrive to investigate a crime, they will find a problem with their immigration status and arrest them instead of the criminal.

Since Sept. 11, the U.S. Justice Department has detained 1,200 Arab Muslims suspected of involvement in terrorist activities. On November 27, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced that 641 people were still being held, mostly on immigration violations or other charges unrelated to the attack.

Ashcroft has also asked local and state law enforcement officials across the country to interview more than 5,000 Arab men who recently entered the country on student, tourist or business visas. In December, the Immigration and Naturalization Service detained ten Arab students in the San Diego area for having allegedly overstayed or violated the terms of their visas.

"There is a de facto double jeopardy going on," said Jahshan. "They're sending a message of panic to Arab Muslims."

Said Ahmed, a café owner on Steinway Street, has several Arab Muslim friends who plan to leave the country because they fear their uncertain immigration status could land them in jail. "All we hear is that innocent, hardworking people are being harassed," said Ahmed.

The problem for many of these recent immigrants, Ahmed said, is that they work in low-paying jobs and have not saved enough money to leave. The flight to Cairo alone can cost upwards of \$1,000.

"It's better for the people who do have money," he said, "but it's bad for businesses around here if all the people with money leave, too."

Many Arab businesses owners are concerned about what will happen to their community if wealthier, more established Arab Muslims decide to leave. In the last five years, the four blocks of Steinway Street between 25th and 28th avenues have become the bustling heart of Astoria's Arab community.

In cafés and coffee shops, men smoke tobacco from sheeshas, or pipes, as they watch Al-Jazeera—an Arabic-language satellite television station modeled after CNN. Clothing stores sell hejabs, the headscarves worn by Muslim women. The recently renovated Masjid Aliman Mosque with its marble exterior and neon sign that calls worshipers to prayer now draws followers of Islam from across the city.

Storeowners on Steinway Street said that business began dropping after Sept. 11. Many of their regular Arab customers who worked as taxicab or limousine drivers are out of work, they said, because tourism is down throughout the city.

Khaled Ahmed, co-owner of the Sunshine Deli, used to make \$800 on Saturdays. Now he said he's lucky to make \$450. "My customers just don't have as much money to spend like they used to," said Ahmed.

Ahmed said he believes the city's weakened tourism industry is not the only reason Arabs in his

neighborhood are out of work. "You see these men hanging out in the coffee shops smoking all day?" he said. "Many of them were fired because they are Muslim. Especially anyone named Mohammed."

Ahmed said he's also lost his American customers. So many Americans used to come to his deli that Ahmed made and sold food especially for them, such as chicken salad, tuna salad and egg salad. "I don't have to make them no more," he said. "It'd be a waste of money."

Business is so bad that he and his brother, El Said Ahmed, are selling the deli they bought just over a year ago and returning to Egypt where they were born. "We've already had an offer to buy the deli," said El Said Ahmed. "And business is only going to get worse in January and February. How can we survive if we stay?"

Ali Fathalla, owner of Sam Appliances, said business is down at his store 40 percent from last year. He worries that business could get even worse if more people decide to leave the neighborhood. "We won't have a life here anymore," he said, "Our community will disappear."

That's why many Arab Muslims on Steinway Street are refusing to let fear dictate their destinies. "People can look at me however they like," said Tarek Elhosini, owner of T&H Electronics. "I'm going to stay here and make people understand that we are good people."

Ambassador Allam is encouraging Arab Muslims to stay in the U.S., despite their apprehensions. "The wisest thing Arab Muslim communities can do is pull together and not let anger prevail," he said. "They can help build a cultural bridge between America and the Muslim world."

But some Arab Muslims in Astoria said they have no choice but to leave. "Nobody wants to go," said Mohamed El-Sied, the Egyptian owner of the Nile Deli. "I love this country. I can't stand more than two weeks in Egypt before I go crazy. But I sent my wife and daughters back because my wife was terrified to go outside wearing her hejab."

For now, there seems to be little noticeable change in the Arab Muslim population in the Astoria area. At William Bryant High School in Long Island City, Principal Bernadette Kriftcher said attendance among Muslim students, who make up 15 percent of the student body, remains the same now as before Sept. 11.

Members of the Masjid Aliman Mosque on Steinway Street in Astoria, however, said that attendance is down about 25 percent, even during the holy month of Ramadan. "We don't know why," said Mahiam Dohida, the mosque's bookkeeper. "Maybe some people are afraid to come now. Maybe they have left the country."

Few, however, doubt that those who do leave will take with them painful and disappointing memories of their time in the U.S., memories that will likely feed growing anti-American sentiment in the Middle East. "People came here to follow a dream, to build a better life for themselves," said Said Ahmed. "How would you feel if you lost everything you hoped for, and it wasn't your fault?"

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Terror and Response

Dec 21, 2001

Farmers Markets Suffer Through Winter September 11 Attacks

By Anne Sachs

On September 11, Alan Hersey arrived with a van full of goods from his family-run bakery, Baker's Bounty, to sell at a farmers' market outside Borough Hall in Brooklyn. Meanwhile, his brother-in-law, Jim LaPrete, was assembling tables and hanging signs at Baker's bounty's other market of the day, located on the corner of Church and Liberty Streets in Lower Manhattan, under the shadow of the World Trade Center. Just as LaPrete was putting the finishing touches on his display tables, American Airlines flight 11 crashed into the north tower.

"I didn't stop running until I got to the Manhattan Bridge and I turned around," said Hersey, 32, as he described his race from Brooklyn into Manhattan to find his brother-in-law. "That's when I realized it fell. [Jim] went uptown and didn't stop running until 50th Street. I thought I was toasted. You couldn't see anything."

Before the lunchtime rush, both towers had collapsed. Although both men escaped unharmed, the outdoor markets that had sustained Baker's Bounty through each winter were demolished. The immediate loss came to \$12,000.

"The crates, the cases, the tents, the plastic signs are six dollars each, the plastic bags," said Kim LaPrete, 31, Alan's wife and Baker's Bounty owner. "Things you don't even think of. They're gone."

And in addition to a loss of supplies, the bakery's one good van was destroyed. A replacement van will cost approximately \$20,000, according to Mr. Hersey, but so far, the insurance company has awarded Baker's Bounty only \$3,200 in damages. The bakery's policy does not cover losses due to war or terrorism.

The financial blow to Baker's Bounty was felt similarly by the all 12 Greenmarket vendors at the year-round market held at One World Trade Center on September 11. Like Hersey and LaPrete, all escaped injury but all lost their produce, cash, and essentials like farm displays and tents. Greenmarket, a privately funded program that manages 25 open-air farmers markets in all five boroughs of New York, reports that produce loss that day ranged from \$375 to \$4,000 per vendor. Seven out of 12 vendors lost their vehicles. Equipment loss estimates range from \$200 to \$48,900 per farmer. Greenmarket is still calculating the total losses, but Assistant Director Joel Patraker estimates that vendors lost more than \$1 million since September 11, although payouts from some insurance companies have helped to offset costs.

Bakers like Hersey and LaPrete used to rely heavily on large year-round markets such as the ones hosted at Federal Plaza, City Hall, and The World Trade Center—all of which were closed after the September 11 attack. They now must depend on smaller but more stable markets in the outer boroughs. In the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn, the Saturday farmers' market offers Baker's Bounty partial relief in the form of steady income and regular customers.

"It's a really nice little market," said Kim LaPrete. "You get the kids in the park, the people exercising in the morning. They love the round bread—the uglier the better."

But unlike the year-round World Trade Center market, the Saturday Greenpoint market is seasonal, and is scheduled to close soon, leaving bakers like LaPrete and Hersey struggling to stay in business with the loss

of nearly half of their customer base.

This one's a good market," said Hersey on a recent Saturday in Greenpoint, during a break from fixing his battered old van that now is the business's only vehicle, "but it's only through December. He stopped his work on a battered old van that now is the business's only vehicle. "So now I'll have to lay people off. We've never let anyone go in the winter. I don't know what we're going to do."

Baker's Bounty, founded in 1987, was the first baking business to sell through the Greenmarket program. While the markets are composed predominantly of farmers from upstate New York and New Jersey, 17 bakers also sell their goods, and they are one of the few types of Greenmarket businesses able to sell year-round. Using funds from the Council on the Environment of New York as well as individual donations to secure space for the vendors, the markets allow farmers and bakers to sell directly to the public, according to Greenmarket Assistant Director, Joel Patraker. Vendors pay \$68 per 12-square-foot of space, but keep the rest of the day's earnings. The promise of heavy foot traffic--Greenmarket estimates over 250,000 customers visit its sites between July and November--entices farmers and bakers from hundreds of miles away to travel to New York City several times a week.

"It's their life's blood," said Patraker. "For some, it's their only source of income."

Baker's Bounty counts on Greenmarket for 100 percent of its business. For the past 14 years, LaPrete and Hersey have made the hour-long drive from the bakery in Linden, N.J., to New York City to sell their goods at open-air farmers markets.

"It's just getting pretty slow," said Hersey. "We've went through winters where we lost a little bit of money but now, with all the markets closed..." He trailed off. "When it comes down to three markets a week, it's going to be pretty bad."

Baker's Bounty has tried to make some minor cost-saving changes. The company is making fifty percent less bread. It has cancelled what would have been the bakery's second annual vacation this January. "Too many bills to pay," said Hersey. Kim LaPrete, Alan Hersey, and Jim LaPrete also agreed on a major change to the family-run business, which was started by Kim and Jim's father. Baker's Bounty can no longer afford to employ the entire family, so Jim agreed to be laid off. He and his wife moved to Colorado to find work at a ski resort, although neither has any experience in the industry.

"I don't know. Maybe he'll work sizing shoes or something," said Hersey as he pulled out a cigarette--a habit he'd quit years ago, but started again after Sept. 11.

Even Kim LaPrete may take a break from the family business to look for a more lucrative job this winter, leaving her mother, sister, and a family friend they call "grandma" to do the baking, and Alan to run the markets. Hersey said neither he nor Kim have any ideas as to what kind of job she might do. "She hasn't had a different job since she was 19," said Hersey.

Greenmarket is working with city parks officials to find permanent homes for displaced farmers and bakers. In the meantime, the program has opened new temporary markets throughout the city. All Soul's Church at Lexington Avenue and East 80th Street in Manhattan now hosts a market for displaced farmers. Joel Patraker of Greenmarket hopes to make this into a permanent year-round market. Unfortunately, All Soul's Market will not be of much help to Baker's Bounty; because spots for bakers filled up quickly, Kim LaPrete could not secure a space at the new market. Hersey said Baker's Bounty was given an extra market day at Borough Hall through Christmas. As of November 1, the bakery started selling at the Columbia University market on Thursdays, but it will close for the season at the end of November, and the business from both temporary markets is not enough to compensate for the three that have closed since Sept. 11. Baker's Bounty is eager to extend successful markets with strong customer support like the one at Greenpoint, into a year-round business.

Patraker said he is willing to consider the idea of keeping Greenpoint market open year-round if their market

manager, Ken Wiss, 23, can convince him that "there's going to be something going on there besides guys sitting out there, freezing." Richard Rossmassler of Red Jacket Orchards serves as the Greenpoint contact for the orchard, which is based in Geneva, N.Y. If Greenmarket can gather more farmers to sell at Greenpoint, he said Red Jacket would be very interested in staying on for the full year.

Patraker said he is aware that, despite the success of the reopened markets and the lift in outdoor market business due to the unseasonably warm weather, some of the businesses may not survive the financial losses they have endured since Sept. 11.

"It's the kind of thing you can't really make up just by being open again," Patraker said. "You can't just make up for three months of sales. We can get people a new place, but it might not help."

While some insurance companies may not cover losses due to an act of terrorism or war, there are funds available to help. Greenmarket, in conjunction with the Farmer's Market Federation of New York, has established a fund for participants whose businesses were affected by the attacks. The federation's "Fund for WTC Greenmarket Farmers" has raised over \$100,000, according to Patraker. Both Greenmarket and the federation will oversee the distribution of these funds by early January. According to Diane Eggert, executive director of the federation, Senator Charles Schumer is working with the farmer's market organization to secure funds from the United States Department of Agriculture. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton is considering an agriculture appropriations bill that would outline specific relief programs for farmers affected by Sept. 11, and would protect farmers in the event of future disasters.

But none of these options offers the hope of immediate relief to Baker's Bounty.

"Right now we sell at five and in the winter we'll be down to three," said Hersey, referring to the markets.

His wife is beginning to face the reality that the family business may not be able to weather the winter.

"To be honest, I may have to close," said Kim LaPrete. "I don't want to think about it."

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Gay Support Crucial for East Harlem Councilman

By Gary M. Chandler

In their brownstone duplex on West 20th Street in New York's Chelsea district, William Floyd and his partner Jeremy Berman uncorked wine and arranged plates of cheese and crackers on a table in their garden. Company began arriving at 6 p.m., including the guest of honor, City Councilman Phil Reed. It was July 11, 2001, and Reed was running for re-election in District 8, which covers East Harlem as well as parts of the Upper West Side and the Bronx.

The gathering was one of several house parties that had been organized to raise money on Reed's behalf, and yet it was something other than gladhanding as usual. "You could see he was truly among friends," said Floyd, 36, a public-affairs officer at Verizon.

Reed is one of three openly gay city councilmen in New York, and most of the guests that night were longtime supporters from New York's gay community. None of the attendees were from East Harlem, but the event raised over \$2,000 and refreshed friendships and connections that would prove critical in the months to come.

On Sept. 25, 2001, Phil Reed won the Democratic primary in District 8, defeating television personality Felipe Luciano in a closer-than-expected race. Reed had been endorsed by virtually every union, community organization and political leader that weighed in on the race; still, he earned less than 52 percent of the ballot, beating Luciano by just 617 votes out of 17,459 cast.

In a race in which gay issues were all but absent, and which was held in a community with virtually no gay presence, one decisive factor in Reed's narrow victory was his financial and logistical support from numerous gay political organizations outside East Harlem. Those groups provided Reed with cash contributions, fundraising events, access to phone banks and dozens of volunteers. Beyond helping to reelect Reed, the effort highlighted the growing influence of gay political organizations in New York.

Such support was analogous to-and overshadowed by-the central issue in the campaign: race. Luciano and his campaign staff avoided overtly playing on racial tensions, but implied in myriad ways that Reed, an African American, was out of touch with the mostly Latino population of District 8. Some of Reed's campaign staff viewed those comments as veiled references to the Reed's sexual orientation, as well.

"The councilman could walk from his office between Park and Lexington to Third Avenue and not be recognized," said Robert Stopper, 31, who worked as a liaison between Luciano's campaign and the office of Assemblyman Adam Clayton Powell IV. "The people that dealt with Luciano's campaign, they were from the community."

By early August, a month before the scheduled primary, Luciano's campaign was gathering steam, and Reed's reelection team found itself in a much tougher race than expected. Reed called a number of groups for help, including the Empire State Pride Agenda, a statewide gay and lesbian political organization. The group sent Stephanie Anderson, a 32-year-old community organizer who had previously spent five years in the army and a year organizing an after-school program in Brooklyn. Anderson served on Reed's staff through the primary, and continued on as campaign manager for the general election. Her salary was paid partly by the Empire State Pride Agenda, appearing as a \$1,250 in-kind donation on Reed's campaign-finance disclosure. That, plus \$1,750 in cash donations, made Reed the Empire State Pride Agenda's top money-getter in this year's citywide races. The group also hosted a phone-banking session for Reed at its offices in the Village, and regularly sent volunteers to hand out fliers in District 8. Anderson said reaching out to the gay community was straightforward.

"We told people, 'If you want to keep a gay councilman in the district, you need to come up with the support,'" she said.

The New York City Campaign Finance Board's latest figures show that Phil Reed raised \$99,852 for the primary and general elections, and received an additional \$150,700 in public matching funds, the maximum a city council candidate can receive. Felipe Luciano, by comparison, raised \$51,664 and received only \$41,648 in matching funds. Reed spent approximately \$150,000 on the primary-\$13,000 in 2000, and \$137,000, the maximum allowed, in 2001. Luciano spent just \$84,898. Harry Lirtzman, Reed's campaign treasurer and himself a long-time gay activist, said 15 to 20 percent of Reed's contributions came from gay and gay-affiliated donors and organizations.

"Everyone understood Philip had the toughest race," said Lirtzman, referring to City Council races in other districts with gay candidates.

Despite his significant gay support, Reed did not give gay issues, nor his endorsements from gay organizations, a prominent place in his platform or campaign literature. Campaigning in District 8, Reed rarely mentioned his sexual orientation, and beyond new housing for AIDS patients, he highlighted few of the legislative accomplishments that have made him so well regarded-and well supported-in the gay community.

"The lesbian and gay community understands Phil is open and progressive," said Lirtzman, "but in his district, he has to be balanced."

The balance to be struck lies between the expectations of the gay political establishment and the conservative cultural mores of the largely Catholic community Reed represents. Reed has spearheaded programs to increase HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention in communities of color, and is an outspoken critic of the Boy Scouts of America's no-gay policies. Most recently, he has co-sponsored a bill that, if approved, would add transgender people to the list of protected classes in the city's Human Rights Law. Groups like the Empire State Pride Agenda are counting on his support for upcoming legislation, including a bill to expand domestic partnership coverage to workers employed by companies contracting with the city. Lirtzman said there's nothing untoward about Reed's outspoken support of gay issues downtown and his relative reticence on the topic in his own district.

"Does he get up and say, 'Hi, I'm Phil Reed, your gay City Councilman?'" Lirtzman quipped rhetorically. "I doubt it. But very few people in that district don't know he's an openly gay man."

Reed's detractors aren't so sure. Few say the councilman deliberately downplays his homosexuality for fear of alienating people in the district. "Your average Joe Blow doesn't know and doesn't care," said José B. Rivera, a long time East Harlem resident and founder of East Harlem Online, a community website. But for Rivera and others, the same issue, seen broadly, is emblematic of their, and Luciano's, central critique of Reed-that his energy and focus is not on the problems of East Harlem.

Harry Lirtzman disagreed. "You can't get far in that district without paying your dues on housing, parks, and health," he said. "Unless you're in Chelsea or the Village, you have to build a coalition of supporters."

Reed's campaign-finance disclosures do show over 400 individual donors, plus significant help from unions, real estate developers, and healthcare providers. Still, gay political organizations are sure to remain key supporters of Councilman Reed. Reed is a contender for the position of City Council Speaker, and shortly after his victory in the general election, he traveled to Washington D.C. for the International Lesbian and Gay Elected Officials conference; the event was sponsored by the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, a national organization that had donated \$2,200 to Reed's 2001 campaign.

"We really are part of the base now," said Cynthia Smith, president of Gay and Lesbian Independent Democrats, another group that gave Reed money and volunteers. "That's part of how you win elections."

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Brooklyn Councilman Wins His Seat With the Help of His High School Yearbook

By Anne Sachs

Anne Tergesen, a 37-year-old finance editor at Business Week magazine, first met David Yassky 16 years ago, when he was hanging around her dorm room at Princeton University. He had an unrequited crush on her roommate and, according to Tergesen, could be found skulking in the hallways on a regular basis, shyly waiting for a chance to chat.

In January of 2000, when Yassky began his campaign for a City Council seat from Brooklyn, Tergesen remembered his guileless manner, and considered it one of his chief attributes as a politician. Although she herself lived outside his would-be district in western Brooklyn, she made a \$175 contribution to his race.

Yassky's work as a Brooklyn Law School professor and former chief counsel to a crime subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee may have helped him defeat the favored candidate, Steven Cohen, to secure his first seat in New York City government. But the bulk of financial support and voter backing that locked in 75 percent, or 15,889, of the votes for the native New Yorker seemed to come from old buddies from his elementary school days rather than powerful local unions or activist groups. While Yassky supplied the shoe-leather by canvassing the streets of Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Park Slope and Brooklyn Heights to make his platform known, his campaign was funded in large part by well-connected, highly-educated peers who have traveled in the same social circles as Yassky since he was a child.

"I know we went to high school together," said Jill Herzig, a 35-year-old features director at Glamour magazine who donated \$100 to Yassky's campaign. "We probably went to elementary school together, too. His brother was in my class."

Such personal connections have long proven valuable in American election campaigns. "This is the norm in local politics from time immemorial," said Dr. Richard Semiatin, assistant professor of political science at American University in Washington, D.C., and the author of the upcoming book, "Campaigns in the 21st Century." "First-time candidates usually rely on their friends--whether they are active in the community or not-- to help them run for office."

While incumbents frequently win financial support from individuals or businesses that supplied funding in the past, Semiatin said that challengers in local races rarely get strong backing from the community. "This is the reality of campaign finance," said Semiatin. In relatively low-profile races like those for City Council seats, some financial backers and voters find a personal bond to the candidate as compelling as the platform. Rachel Dretzin, a 36-year-old documentary filmmaker for PBS's Frontline, went to the Dalton School with Yassky, and donated \$100 to his run for office. "Frankly, when you know someone that long, you know they're made of the right stuff," explained Dretzin.

Family friend Ruth Gruhin, vice president of licensing and trademark-compliance for NHL Enterprises, is a self-professed "forty-something" who contributed \$200 as well as some of her free time to the campaign. She said her long-time friendship with the Yassky family was useful on campaigning days on the streets of Brooklyn. She could talk to voters about David-Yassky-the-friend, or David-Yassky-the-son, or some other sort of inside perspective on the man behind the platform. "They just kind of wanted to get familiar with the candidate, know what I know about him," said Gruhin. "When someone wants to talk about the person they're standing up for, people pick up on that."

Sam Walsh, Yassky's campaign manager, said when the candidate began planning, he sought advice from Senator Charles Schumer, for whom Yassky had worked in Washington. Schumer's first tip was to "call everyone he knew," said Walsh, and Yassky indeed went on to call former roommates, friends from law school, and fellow graduates from his old high school. He started with nothing more than his Rolodex and

high school and college yearbooks and began reconnecting with old friends. His younger sister, also a Dalton graduate, reached out to her old high school buddies, many of whom remembered her older brother, and she encouraged them to get in touch with fellow Dalton grads. His father, an attorney, spread the word to friends and colleagues, as did his mother, who works in the marketing department at Columbia House.

Like the childhood game of "telephone," the chain of acquaintances spread the message of Yassky's candidacy to create the base of his support. Yassky's friends from the Dalton School, Princeton University, and Yale Law School hosted parties throughout New York City to generate financial support and introduce the candidate to their friends. With the spending cap in place for the primary election, Walsh was eager to promote his candidate with these parties, which are both cheap to throw, and exempt from the spending cap created by the New York City Board of Elections for all candidates who chose to receive matching funds from the city.

"As a first-time candidate, you really have to rely on people that know you and like you," Walsh said. "Remembering old classmates' names and faces-that's part of it."

Deborah Meyers, 35, said she decided to support Yassky with her \$50 contribution because he had clerked for her uncle, federal judge Stanley Sparkin. Judith Margolin, a 36-year-old attorney for Time, Inc., gave \$100 to Yassky's campaign. Margolin said she and Yassky "have a ton of friends in common," including Ms. Meyers. "I think he clerked with my best friend. He just has so many friends-he knows everybody." Yassky supporters are filled with these less-than-six-degrees-of-separation stories. "He's someone I saw through his awkward years and he saw me through mine," said Jill Herzig.

As Professor Semaitin noted, the first-time candidate's strategy of counting on a wide circle of friends to support his foray into government is not particularly unique. What is unique about Yassky is the group of friends to whom he owes the bulk of his financial support. Of the 457 contributors listed by the New York City Campaign Finance Board, 25 work for media organizations, and 189 are attorneys, as was Yassky before his run for office.

From U.S. News and World Report and the Associated Press to NBC and HBO, Yassky's friends and financial supporters are young-between the ages of 35 and 40-and successful employees of some of the biggest media companies in the country, although only a handful of the donors affiliated with a media organization work on the editorial side of the company. Nearly half of those affiliated with a media organization were lawyers with little interest or overlap with the editorial content produced by their companies. They saw little possibility of a conflict of interests in their support of Yassky as a candidate. "I know a lot of people who cover local politics and I suppose they might cover him and want to talk to me about it," said Jill Herzig, "but I don't consider myself wildly influential in politics."

The advantage Yassky's supporters could provide was an opportunity for the councilman to look outside of the traditional neighborhood contribution sources to secure funding and votes. Even cash was not necessarily the most valuable contribution offered by Yassky's media-savvy friends; in fact, the Democratic organization's candidate, Steven Cohen, raised \$321,137 from 998 campaign donors, compared to Yassky's grand total of \$85,563 from 458 donors, according to the New York City Campaign Finance Board. Cohen "out-fundraised" Yassky by 275 percent, but could not defeat the far-reaching influence of Yassky's smaller but more vocal and supportive contributors. The playing field was leveled further by the Campaign Finance Board's matching-funds program, which imposed a campaign-spending limit of \$137,500 for all participants. For all of the extra funding Cohen was able to raise, in complying with the spending cap, he could not outspend his competitor on campaigning. All that was left was locking in votes, and Yassky's ability to make use of his well-connected social circles to spread the word proved to be quite valuable.

Many Yassky supporters in this election regarded him as a spokesman for their generation and social class, and were happy to have a candidate they could support--a sort of class president for his ever-widening circle of friends. "He's just from the most generous, inclusive, warm family that I've known," said Thomas Naiman, 38, who went to high school with Yassky. "And it's almost amazing to be able to say that about

someone in politics. When we've had such horrible candidates to choose from for mayor, he's been one of the bright spots."

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Retirees Remain Loyal to City Council Candidate

By Stephanie Martin

Nearly a quarter-century ago, so long ago she cannot recall the exact year, Lynn Summers left her native Queens for Manhattan. In 1999, she retired from her job as a research and development director at Con Edison in Manhattan. But all along, Summers had retained at least a few ties to the old neighborhood. She served on the board of directors of the Garden School, a private school in Jackson Heights she had attended as a child. And she came to know a fellow board member named Helen Sears.

So when Summers heard that Helen Sears would be running for the City Council from District 25 in Queens in the fall of 2001, she did not hesitate to write a check for \$75. "She's intelligent, she's caring," Summers said in December of Sears, who had indeed been elected. "I thought she deserved my support.

And in her support, Summer typified a substantial number of Sears's donors who are retirees living outside District 25, which includes parts of Elmhurst, Corona, Woodside and Jackson Heights. In fact, out of approximately 400 individuals who gave money to Sears's campaign, nearly 40 were listed as retirees living in regions outside the council district-some as nearby as Maspeth, Queens, and some as distant as Florida, Arizona and California.

The support of retirees for Sears was no coincidence. Before running for City Council, Sears had served as a senior specialist for the New York City Department for the Aging, and her professional career included managing programs for the elderly as a hospital administrator at Elmhurst Medical Center in Queens. For the 2001 election, she campaigned at local senior centers, and she also received donations from about 50 retirees living in her district. And, at the age of 71, Sears herself qualified as a senior citizen, albeit hardly a retiree.

Approximately 90 individual retirees contributed to the Sears campaign. They gave \$8,600, 6 percent of the \$147,150 Sears received in net contributions. The Sears campaign also received \$117,400 in matching funds, and campaign finance records show that \$6,800 of Sears's matching fund claims came from retirees' contributions.

Throughout Sears's campaign, however, opponents criticized her for her outside donors. One such opponent, Rudy Greco, who opposed Sears in the September 25 primary, expressed concern that, even though Sears had the backing of the local Democratic leaders, the majority of her campaign donations came from outside the district. Greco added that most of his donations came from local residents and were gathered through grassroots campaign efforts.

Still, Greco conceded, "She's been around for a long time" and, over the years, has created an expansive network of friends, allies and family members who, though retired and living outside the district, express a continued desire to help Sears gain political power.

Sears's campaign co-manager, television producer Michael Teodoru, said he was not surprised by the kind of long-distance-and long-term-loyalty Sears seemed to have from many donors. "She's done so much for so many people throughout her life-whether it's her political life, or just her life," Teodoru said.

Born in Brooklyn, Sears has lived in her current Queens neighborhood of Jackson Heights for approximately 35 years, and, during that time, has built her resume on community involvement. Sears has, among other things, served as vice president of the Queens Child Guidance Center, been a member of health and housing committees on local community boards, and served as director of the 82nd Street Business Improvement District. She is a member of the Jackson Heights Neighborhood Civic Association

and has served more than 20 years as district leader for the Queens Democratic Party.

In a recent phone interview, Sears confirmed that many of the political friends she has met in her neighborhood and through her work are now retired and that some do not live in her district.

"I think the fact that seniors are so involved in my campaign should really tell you something," Sears said, explaining the loyalty of her many retired friends. Sears added that, although she held fundraisers, she did not compile a formal list to solicit contributions from retirees. Many of her friends, even those from outside the district, volunteered to contribute without being asked.

"You know people. You socialize with them," she said, explaining how she maintains her network of support. "It works. It just works."

Manhattan resident Charlotte Scheman, 60, who served as 27th Assembly District leader from 1974 to 1992, said she first met Sears when Sears became the Democratic Party district leader for Queens in 1978. Scheman has given \$600 to the Sears campaign.

"We're buddies," Scheman said. "I've always been in her corner."

While most of the retired, out-of-area donors cited friendship as their primary reason for giving to Sears, Maspeth resident and Community Board 5 chair Francis Principe, 91, spoke candidly about why he gave her a \$60 donation. "She was very successful in getting a business improvement district for 82nd Street in Jackson Heights," Principe said. "We've been trying to get one here in Maspeth, so she's been helping me with that."

While many of Sears's supporters, from both outside and inside her district, have ties to Democratic Party politics, the retirees who contributed have known her for years, and most say they are not expecting political favors.

"They're not looking for jobs, they're not looking for food," she said. "Seniors don't want anything," she added. "Whatever they need, they know where to get it."

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County Party Organization Support Is Key to Queens Councilwoman's Victory

By Franziska Bruner

Months before Election Day, the race for the City Council seat from District 25 in Jackson Heights was probably the most diverse the Queens neighborhood had ever seen, with candidates ranging from a gay library advocate to a Peruvian Board of Education rabble-rouser. But even with all the fresh blood, the result of the Nov. 6 vote hardly differed from the outcome in years past. In a year when New York's term-limits law and campaign-finance reforms were supposed to give outsiders, newcomers and underdogs a realistic chance of victory, the winner was once again the candidate backed by the Queens Country Democratic Organization--in this case, Helen Sears.

The night after the election, Sears celebrated her triumph at Bruno's catering hall on Astoria Boulevard among party loyalists she had known during her 20 years as a district leader. Political players from campaign aides to new Queens Borough President Helen Marshall danced to disco hits and sipped free cocktails as they mutually congratulated each other. Party-backed candidates had all but swept Queens elections that day.

Some political experts had predicted that this would be the year the party organization would finally lose its grasp on Queens politics. Term limits were forcing all 14 of the borough's City Council incumbents to give up their seats, and the availability of public matching funds was making it easier for new candidates to get the money to run for office. And while the county organization remained largely white, most of the borough's population was now composed of racial minorities, many of them immigrants.

"Most of the other party 'machines' in the country have long gone the way of the dinosaurs", said Steven P. Erie, associate professor of political science at the University of California at San Diego and the author of *Rainbow's End: Irish Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics* (University of California Press, 1990), a book about urban party organizations.

"Machines are on their deathbeds," Erie said. "It would be surprising to find a machine that is still strong enough...to win elections."

Indeed, American voters have become much less likely to affiliate with any political party over the past 50 years, while the proportion of self-proclaimed independents has grown. And private consultants rather than party operatives tend to devise and manage campaigns.

But the scene at Bruno's indicated that in Queens, machine politics were still alive and well this fall. The nine City Council winners whom the party had backed, including Sears, would now make up almost 20 percent of the total City Council and two-thirds of the Queens delegation. In a year when the council would be choosing a new speaker, and battles over rent regulations and scarce city funds promised to be fierce, some experts said the party had continued to use its money and influence to buy political control in the city.

"The Democratic machine has been in power pretty much as long as Queens has been in existence," said Michael Jones-Correa, an associate professor of government at Cornell University who has written extensively on politics in Queens. "They are still more united than other boroughs in backing their candidates. To win in Queens, you almost always have to have their support."

Correa said Democratic organization leaders help their chosen candidates win in part by drawing on a powerful network of district leaders to get out the vote on primary and election days.

"All the people in our community don't know me and don't know Helen," said Rudy Greco, a Jackson Heights lawyer who ran unsuccessfully against Sears in the Democratic primary. "But they know their local

leaders. Those leaders tell the people how to vote. They have a strong personal following, so people will vote for whoever they endorse."

In Sears' case, party money and services also gave her an advantage over the less-connected independent candidates in District 25, Greco said.

Sears did not respond to any of seven calls or two visits to her office requesting an interview.

Campaign-finance records show Greco spent \$64,789 on campaign flyers, posters, and mailings. Sears spent only \$37,298, but plastered the district with far more literature than Greco, because the party printed and distributed many of her flyers for free.

One run of a flyer can cost \$14,000 to print and distribute, Greco said. But Sears never needed to report the party's donation of flyers to the campaign finance board, since campaign finance law requires only statements about monetary contributions, not donations of services.

The party organization also helped Sears raise the most money of all the candidates in her district, Greco said. The organization helped plan fundraisers for her on Jan. 18, 2000 and Oct. 21, 2001, at which they were able to pull in thousands of dollars in donations. Of the \$73,505 Sears raised in total, 17 percent came from these two events, which drew donations both from other party-backed politicians, and from real-estate and landlord interests like the Bronx Realty Advisory Board and the Rent Stabilization Association. Campaign-finance records show real-estate interests also supported other candidates from the Queens party organization, which is headed by Thomas Manton, a real-estate lawyer.

Twenty-four percent of Sears' total contributions came from politicians and real-estate interests. Seventy-two percent of her contributions came from outside her district--mostly, opponents said, from friends of the party organization.

"If you're the party candidate, they'll take you by the hand and get you all the people and the money," said Barton Goff, housing chair of Community Board 3 in Jackson Heights and a former City Council candidate. "And whoever has the most money has the better chance of winning."

Perhaps most crucial to Sears' victory, opposing candidates said, was that the machine provided Sears with highly-trained election lawyers free of charge during the period when she challenged several opponents' nominating petitions. This service would cost Sears at least \$20,000 if she had to pay for it, opposing candidate Greco said.

Although any candidate in the race is allowed to challenge the validity of the signatures on any other candidates' petition to get on the ballot, only Sears took her foes to court. She was able to get five of her nine adversaries, including all the African-American and Latino candidates, removed from the ballot, mostly for technicalities like crossing out "N.Y.C." on a petition address and replacing it with "New York City", or for anomalies in petitioners' name spellings.

Two African-American candidates, Al Blake and S. Terry Lewis, said that in a district that is 79 percent non-white, knocking minority candidates like them off the ballot proved to be the main factor in Sears' victory. Most of the 775 votes that won her the Democratic primary on Sept. 25 - essentially ensuring her victory in the general election in November -- came from Blake's and Lewis' home turfs in the Lefrak City and Sherwood Village apartment complexes, they said.

Some voters said they were angry that Sears' lawyers kicked their favorite candidates off the ballot. "Democrat should mean for democracy," said Juttana "Moo" Rimreartwate, a restaurant owner in Jackson Heights. "But if you are not letting people run against you and letting people choose who they want to vote for, that is not democracy."

Even the one non-white woman who managed to stay on the ballot, Louisa Chan, a school-board secretary who is Asian-American, said her campaign was financially crippled by her court battle with Sears. Her legal

fees totaled about \$16,000, she said, and the dispute stopped her from receiving campaign finance board matching funds until five days before the primary.

"In this district, there are 31 percent Asians," Chan said. "They just wanted to get me off the ballot because Helen Sears wanted those votes."

Other politicians said losing candidates trying to play the race card were just cry-babies who didn't understand the system well enough to complete their petitions correctly.

"The county party organization is just doing what makes political sense," Lewis said. "It has nothing to do with the opponents' race."

Racially motivated or not, county support has its price, Jones-Correa said. Candidates are usually endorsed by the county only if the machine thinks they will be easy to control, he said.

"These people are not robots," Jones-Correa said of the new council members. "But when the chips are down and the Democratic party leaders need their support, usually on issues like who will be the next City Council speaker, there will be a lot of pressure for newly elected officials to do what the county wants."

Although Sears was backed by the county organization, some longtime Democrats say she is an independent thinker.

"I don't think the county would expect her to vote their way on any issues," said newly-elected District 23 Councilman David Weprin. "And I don't think she would do that."

But party-backed City Councilman Hiram Monserrate, newly-elected in District 21, said Sears is definitely one of the party's favorites, and that the organization will expect loyalty in return for its investment in her campaign.

"If you owe your seat to the party, obviously you're likely to favor what they want," said Monserrate aide William Salgado. Candidates who go against the party's wishes are sometimes punished financially, Salgado said. Monserrate received far less money than Sears from the party this year partly because he broke with party wishes by endorsing Fernando Ferrer for mayor, instead of the Queens organization's pick, borough native Alan Hevesi. While Helen Sears received \$4,635 from party organization members, Monserrate only got \$1,300.

Party-backed candidates are also usually expected to vote pro-landlord on housing issues, Housing Chair Goft said, since the party receives so many donations from powerful landlord and real-estate lobbies.

When landlord groups donate to party-backed candidates, "they are not doing it because they like you," Goft said. "If they give you \$100, they want \$100 of your time." Between the interconnected party and real-estate interests, ordinary citizens' and tenants' concerns are likely to get shoved aside, Goft said.

"Having the issues controlled by non-elected people behind the scenes is what makes the system stink," Goft said. "That doesn't bode well for democracy."

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Developers and Lawyers Fund Peter Vallone, Jr.'s City Council Campaign

By Amy Miller

In 1999, Marshall Rose, a Manhattan real-estate developer, wrote out two checks worth \$5,500 to the political campaigns of both Peter Vallone and Peter Vallone, Jr. Two years later, Rose donated \$3,250 to their campaigns.

"It's about good government," he said. "Peter Vallone has been a brilliant public servant, and I'm confident that his son will be, too."

Although the \$6,750 Marshall gave to the senior Vallone's mayoral run didn't pay off, the \$2,000 he gave to Peter Vallone, Jr.'s campaign for the City Council seat from Astoria, Queens, did. On Tuesday, November 6, the younger Vallone won election to a position his father had used to become New York City's second-most powerful politician, City Council Speaker.

And donations from Peter Vallone, Sr.'s supporters, people like Rose, were essential to the younger Vallone's political success. Campaign Finance Board records show that 60 percent of Peter Vallone, Jr.'s donations—\$78,215 out of \$121,610—came from people and organizations that also supported his father.

"It's simple," Peter Vallone, Jr. said of the congruence. "We know the same people."

But some critics charge that there is a problem. They say the majority of Vallone, Jr.'s donations came from the same real-estate and land-use interests, both in Astoria and in Manhattan, that filled his father's political coffers. The agendas of these groups, not the needs of the Astoria community, they claim, will dominate his decision-making as City Councilman.

"Vallone, Jr. owes his seat to the same big-money real-estate interests in Manhattan that funded his father's campaigns," said John Ciafone, one of Vallone, Jr.'s rivals in the City Council race. "There's no way he could have won without them."

Peter Vallone, Jr., who raised three times more campaign funds than all four of his opponents combined, defeated his Republican opponent, Sandra Vassos, with only 52 percent of the votes in one of the city's closest City Council races.

Vallone, Jr. has denied that his campaign depended too much on the financial support of real-estate interests. His main campaign contributors, he said, were average Astoria residents. Campaign Finance Board records, however, showed that people involved in real estate and development, from the Rent Stabilization Association, a landlord group in Manhattan, to realtors in Astoria, did in fact donate \$13,475 to his campaign, more money than his opponent, John Ciafone, raised altogether.

Pistilli Realty Group, which recently won approval to convert the abandoned Eagle Manufacturing Plant in Long Island City into condominiums, donated \$1,250. The RSA and its ancillary group, the Neighborhood Preservation Political Action Fund, together donated \$500. Graubard Mollen & Miller, a law firm whose clients have included Donald Trump and Leona Helmsley, gave \$400.

Many of these same real estate groups donated thousands of dollars to the elder Vallone's mayoral run. In June, the Campaign Finance Board reported that a large portion of Vallone's campaign chest was being raised through intermediaries, called bundlers, who organize fundraisers and collect contributions on behalf of a specific candidate. Although legal, bundling helps organizations bypass the \$4,500 limit on campaign contributions and thereby wield greater political influence.

The board found that the largest bundled donation to Vallone came from the Real Estate Board, a real-estate lobby that lined up \$178,275. Joseph Strasburg, a former staff member for Vallone and president of the Rent Stabilization Association, gathered \$107,980 for Vallone. The association and Vallone's campaign staff even rented office space in the same building at 123 William St. in Manhattan.

Frank Ricci, director of governmental affairs for the RSA, said his group supported Peter Vallone, Jr. because it believes that he, like his father, will work with them on issues such as reducing property taxes. "We certainly don't donate to people who won't support our issues," said Ricci.

As a group, people and businesses involved in real estate did not donate the largest amount to Vallone, Jr. Attorneys and law firms, who together made over 82 donations totaling nearly \$20,000, contributed the most. Michael Flynn, a lawyer and campaign contributor, said Vallone, Jr.'s years as a Manhattan Assistant District Attorney may have helped him win the legal community's support.

"Lawyers like lawyers," said Flynn. "They like to vote for other lawyers."

Some of the lawyers who donated, however, may have done so for reasons other than admiration. One example is Martin McLaughlin, an attorney who made two donations to Vallone, Jr. totaling \$1,050 and four donations to the elder Vallone totaling \$3,500.

McLaughlin has also worked as a lobbyist for Kaufman-Astoria Studios, the eighth most generous lobbying interest in New York City in 1999, the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) reported. In August of that same year, Vallone secured \$2.5 million from the City Council for the expansion of Kaufman-Astoria Studios.

Chris Meyer, executive director of the New York Public Interest Research Group, said such findings are not surprising. Real-estate and land-use issues dominate New York City politics.

"Oil is to Texas what real estate is to New York City," said Meyer. "It's big, really big."

Development affects nearly every aspect of politics in New York City, Myers said, because issues from water and sewage rates to property taxes are related to land use. On several of these issues, Myers said, Peter Vallone has supported the interests of landlords over those of ordinary citizens as Speaker of the City Council.

In 1999, Vallone pushed through legislation that reduced a landlord's responsibility for eliminating lead paint from rental properties and made it harder to bring negligence suits on behalf children with lead poisoning. A year later, the State Supreme Court in Manhattan overturned the law.

Micael McKee, associate director of Tenants and Neighbors, a tenants' advocacy group, said Vallone also hurt thousands of poor and working-class families by allowing landlords to permanently deregulate rent stabilized apartments when they are vacated.

"When our organization met with him to discuss our concerns, he dismissed us," said Michael McKee, "He never even took the time to hear us out. We might as well have not met."

Such criticisms are rarely heard in Astoria, where the Vallone family has dominated local politics for decades. Peter Vallone Sr.'s father, Judge Charles Vallone, became a well-known civil rights advocate in the 1950s, and PS 85 is even named after him.

Athanasios Alafogiannis, president of Astoria's Greek Homeowner's Association, said he has supported the Vallone family for 30 years. This year, he gave nearly \$1,000 to both the Vallone's campaigns.

"I believe in the Vallone family," he said. Alafogiannis is confident that the elder Vallone can help Peter Vallone, Jr. become a successful City Councilman, even though he has no experience in elected office.

"Peter Vallone, Jr., knows the problems we have in this community," he said. "And if he gets in trouble and

doesn't know what to do, he can always ask his father for advice."

Many Astoria residents agreed, saying that the younger Vallone earned their support through his hard work on issues important to them, such as reducing pollution from power plants. For the past several years, he has donated his legal services to C.H.O.K.E. (Coalition Helping Organize a Kleaner Environment), a community organization fighting the building of more power plants in Astoria.

Campaign Finance Board records showed that he did win support from many different groups, including senior citizens, labor unions, political-action committees and small business owners.

Like most recently elected New York City politicians, with the notable exception of Mayor-elect Michael Bloomberg, Peter Vallone, Jr., owes the greatest debt to the city's Campaign Finance Board, which provided \$114,000 to his campaign, giving him a grand total of \$235,610.

Vallone, Jr., said he isn't worried about whether a campaign donation comes from the Campaign Finance Board or a real-estate developer. "I would accept a contribution from anyone," he said, "as long as they're interested in supporting good government."

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