



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Volume 36, No. 3
Fall 2025

Jackson Heights
Beautification Group

www.JHBG.org

Jackson Heights – “A Garden in the City”

Choices for Change: 249 Years of Democracy



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

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On the cover: Art by Kirsten Magnani.
 I think the bench on 80th Street under the flagpole painted by ISI45 students makes an inspiring image for this moment in time. Called WE ARE ALL PART OF THE SAME TREE, the piece addresses some of the things that need to change. Sitters can consider that we are all in this together as a community. The background image is by Jackson Heights resident Brandon Muñoz, our neighborhood's roving photographer. He posted a series of flags flying patriotically in front of buildings in JH on July 4th; his handle on Instagram is [@arch.itecturenyc](#), check out his beautiful images!

**en español
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President's Message

BY LESLIE ELLMAN



Dear Neighbors,

This issue is dedicated to Democracy, a timely topic as we approach election season in our city, and as our nation celebrated its 249th anniversary this past July 4th!

Democracy is hard work. It requires constant engagement and dedication from all of us. How does this connect to what we do at JHBG? We are a group of dedicated and involved community members who radically believe that our volunteer activities make our community better and stronger. We know it takes work to care and to put the effort into making positive changes. We find joy and beauty in this work as it reminds us that each of us can contribute to our community, enriching our own lives as well as those of our neighbors.

We also know that consistent effort and dedication are required to maintain our endeavors and for 38 years we have been putting in the work. Here in Jackson Heights, JHBG is proud of our sustained civic engagement which makes our democracy stronger, empowering our community. —Leslie Ellman, President



From attending public meetings to engaging in protests (above) and volunteering (below), the work of democracy is a participatory process, requiring coalition-building and individual work.



Editor's Message

Our Vote, Our Voice

BY MELISSA ZAVALA

Voting is vital for bringing about change in participatory governments. This election year, we remind everyone that individual voters influence local policy, impacting community life even more directly than through national elections. Though presidential elections usually mean higher voter turn-out, voting has consistently averaged below half the eligible population

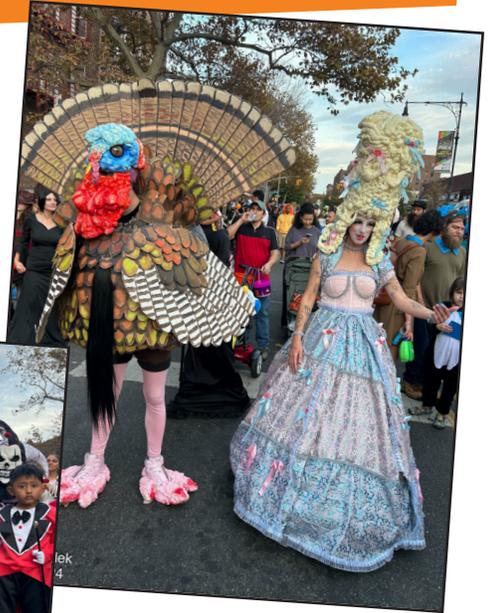
until the last two cycles when rates surged. This fall, our city and neighborhood will be electing new leaders, from Mayor to City Comptroller, Public Advocate, Borough President, and City Council. What matters most to our community? Speak out using your vote. This issue introduces two new writers. Our youngest contributor considers the politics of a label this campaign season. The second,

a poet, shares memories and poetry that prompt us to value our neighborhood's rich history and civic life in its many forms. Other articles explore the impact of big money on politics; how to become a poll worker; and government's potential to improve lives, as was evident during the New Deal Era which left an imprint in our Post Office in a classic mural. Ensuring representation and diversity of positions honors past

civic struggles. Make your vote count this upcoming November! As always, we thank readers for their support of our community-building civic work. Please keep sending us your suggestions and ideas for interesting people to feature and new stories to tell. Email us your suggestions and feedback by writing to info@jhb.org or write to us by mail at JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

Halloween's a Real Scream!

One of our neighborhood's most cherished traditions, the **34th Annual Children's Halloween Parade** is right around the corner! On **Friday, October 31st**, the parade's regular course runs along **37th Avenue, between 89th Street to 76th Street. Lineup on 89th Street and 37th Avenue at 5 PM.** Known for its inclusivity of people of all ages and demographic groups, their pets, as well as for family-friendly fun, school participation, and more, the event makes for a great time, so join us this year and have a Fang-tastic Halloween! To volunteer to pack goodie bags and help during the parade, contact info@jhbg.org.



Fall Events in Jackson Heights

Events and dates are subject to change.

The Jackson Heights Art Club

Meets at St. Mark's Church, 3350 82nd Street, offering classes for children on Saturdays and adults on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

Art Retail Therapy

For art classes and community events, visit A.R.T. at 84-26 37th Ave. artretailtherapy.com.

Figure Drawing (every Monday 7-9pm)

Two hours of in-person drawing from live models. All materials & skill levels welcome! \$20

Big Kids Art Club (every Saturday, at 9am or 10:30am)

An inclusive, bilingual (ESP/ENG) time and space for kids to learn different media, create, and be encouraged to find their artistic voice. \$24

Queens Fiber Crafters Club

(one Wednesday a month, 7:30pm) Fiber artists gather

to create together in a process-conducive art space. \$15

Crochet Club (biweekly on Wednesdays, 7:30pm)

Beginners learn to crochet or choose a pattern to recreate with guided help. \$20

Epicenter x A.R.T. Gallery Series (last Thursday of the month)

Join Epicenter NYC and A.R.T. every month featuring a new artist and walls of A.R.T. in your own neighborhood. Celebrate local artists and their art on view and for sale. Free attendance for all!

En Construcción

Readings are scheduled for **Saturday, Sept. 13**, and **Saturday, Oct. 18, 7pm**.

Saturday, November 8th, 7pm:

A staged reading of the play "El rey del viento" written by Guillermo Severiche and directed by Fernando Vieira.

All events are in Spanish and held at Librería Barco de Papel, 4003 80th Street.

The Queensboro

80-02 Northern Boulevard

Open Mic Nights

8:30pm, Thursdays TBD Don't miss our monthly Open Mic Night featuring great local performers. Come check it out—bring your friends, participate, perform, sing, dance, do something! Check out thequeensboro.com/events for schedule.

Summer Sundays

Extended Season: **Alex Owen Quartet September 21** New Orleans jazz. Espresso 77, 35-57 77th St.

Javier Arau New Jazz Quartet

October 5 contemporary jazz saxophone The Queensboro, 80-02 Northern Boulevard



@jhbg-donate

The Jackson Heights Beautification Group Presents

JACKSON HEIGHTS ORCHESTRA

WED. DEC 10, 2025
LEXINGTON SCHOOL
25-26 75th ST
East Elmhurst, NY

7:30 P.M.

Concert is free
\$20 suggested donation
Visit JHORCHESTRA.ORG/DONATE
to make a gift to the JHO.



ALEX WEN
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

An evening of beloved Masterworks and holiday classics!

Haydn: Symphony No. 26 in D-minor
Tchaikovsky: "Winter Dreams" from Symphony No. 1
Handel: "Hallelujah" Chorus
"Christmas at the Movies" medley
... and more!



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How to Be an Election Day Worker

BY MELANIA LOEWY

Election season is right around the corner and while it may be a tense time for some, it could also be a chance to get more involved in the community. A great way to do this is by becoming an election day worker!

What does this mean?

Election Day workers help people on Election Day or beforehand by performing various roles like those listed below.

Election Inspector Helps ensure the election process runs smoothly at voting sites, manages ballot distribution, helps voters with machines, etc. Inspectors must be registered as voters and under a given political party.

Poll Clerk This may include preparing the polling place for voting

and later closing it; signing in voters; and providing general assistance. Poll clerks must be 18 and older but can be 17 for those in school districts that are part of a program under education law 3207-a, but all must be registered with a political party.

Information Clerk Greets voters, showing them different district lists and maps, and hands out poll worker application forms. Must be a registered voter.

Interpreter Helps to interpret election information in a variety of languages. Being a registered voter or registered to a certain political party are not required.

Accessibility Clerk Ensuring that those with disabilities are able to vote without access problems (e.g.,

checking signs and ramps, etc.). Being a registered voter or with a political party are not required but being a NY resident is a must.

Early election dates:
Oct. 25 - Nov. 2

Election Day: Tues., Nov. 4

Election day workers are paid each day they work. On Election Day, workers may work the full day (5AM-9PM) and can earn \$250. In addition to this, staff are also paid up to \$100 depending on the training. This varies based on each role assigned on Election Day.

Ready to be an Election Day worker? You can fill out an application form at the NYC Board of Elections website: pollworker.vote.nyc ♦



Public libraries open their doors for early voting, while local public schools serve as polling sites on election day.

JACKSON HEIGHTS NOTABLES

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

Dovima Timeless Grace and Beauty

BY DAN KARATZAS

Jackson Heights was home to three of the top models of the 20th century—Dorian Leigh (previously profiled in this column, Winter, 2023), her sister Suzie Parker, and Dovima. The name Dovima may not ring any bells, but her photograph alongside two elephants, taken by Richard Avedon—aptly called “Dovima with Elephants”—is one of the most iconic fashion images of the last century.

Born Dorothy Virginia Margaret Juba in 1927, her professional name was comprised of the first two letters of her first and middle names, hence Dovima. Her Jackson Heights childhood was not an especially happy one. She contracted rheumatic fever as a young girl, which resulted in years of bedrest and home-schooling thanks to her overly concerned mother.

She was discovered, chipped front tooth and all, by a *Vogue* magazine editor at the age of 21

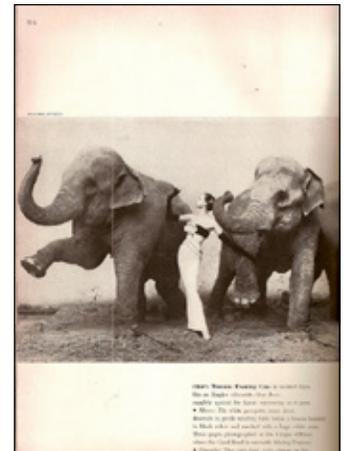
outside of an Automat in midtown Manhattan. The very next day she was being photographed by Irving Penn. Her instant appeal to the fashion cognoscenti led to over a decade of shoots with top photographers and top fashion publications. She was among the highest paid models in the country, commanding up to \$60 per hour (in 1950s dollars) and known as the “dollar a minute” girl. She



was among the first models to be recognized by only one name.

She is probably best remembered for the photograph “Dovima with Elephants,” taken at the Cirque d’Hiver in Paris in 1955. Published that year in *Harper’s Bazaar*, she is modeling a Christian Dior gown that was actually designed by the then 19-year-old “newbie” Yves Saint Laurent, his first design for Dior. Since then, the photograph has taken on a life of its own, selling for record prices on two separate occasions—\$1.15 million in 2010, and then \$1.82 million ten years later.

Unfortunately, Dovima’s future turned out to be far more challenging. She retired in 1962 at age 35, unable to gain much traction as an actress or agent. Going through multiple divorces, she ended up moving to Florida to live near her parents. Before dying from liver cancer in 1990, she worked as a hostess at a pizza parlor



Above, the Richard Avedon photo “Dovima with Elephants” as it appeared in *Harper’s Bazaar*, September 1955. Left: Dovima on *Vogue’s* cover, September 1953.

where a poster of “Dovima with the Elephants” hung on the back wall.

Yet this middle-class girl from Jackson Heights ruled the fashion world for the decade of the 1950s. The photographer Richard Avedon considered her “the last of the elegant, aristocratic beauties,” and “the most remarkable and unconventional beauty of her time.” ♦

Requesting a Street Tree with a Click Is Over

NYC Parks Switches to Neighborhood Planting BY LEN MANIACE

Until a few months ago, New Yorkers who yearned for a street tree could simply request one at their computer. That city program came to a quiet end to focus planting efforts on neighborhoods most in need of trees' cooling benefits.

The tree-request system that began in the late 2010s was popular but had some bugs—an 18-month wait for those who were lucky, longer for those who were not. Still others never saw new trees because the sites did not meet NYC Parks specifications.

Long underfunded compared to many big American cities, NYC Parks could not meet the demand for trees. By focusing on several neighborhoods in each borough annually rather than sending tree contractors across the entire city, the department predicts trees will be planted more efficiently.

Going online to request a street tree was a chance for people to get directly involved in a key part of the city's plan to help protect residents against extreme heat caused by climate change. "Trees are Mother Nature's air conditioners," is a slogan of

JHBG's Tree LC, the group's tree and environmental sustainability program. Neighborhoods with lots of trees, especially big trees, are significantly cooler than those lacking them.

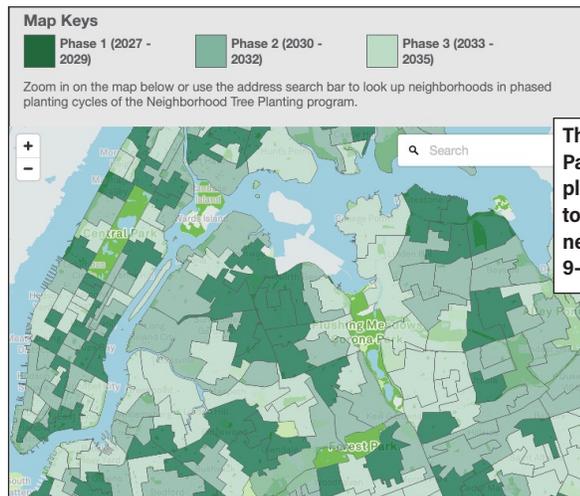
The new planting plan seems to have other benefits; foresters will determine which sites are suitable for street trees rather than initial decisions made by staff city records without leaving the office, a process that led some sites to be mistakenly eliminated.

The new city planting effort comes to Jackson Heights in 2027-2029, but our neighborhood, along with Elmhurst and Corona, are already seeing more trees planted. The \$5 million federally funded Stewarding Canopy and Community in Central Queens program is to bring 2,000 street trees planted or distributed to the public and community groups for planting until 2029.

For more information, go to: nycgovparks.org/trees/



Left to right, CM Krishnan and NYC Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa join Senator Chuck Schumer to celebrate the first 450 trees planted in Central Queens, funded by the Federal Inflation Reduction Act, targeting areas most in need of canopy coverage.



The goal of NYC Parks' new tree planting plan is to reach every neighborhood on a 9-year cycle.

What's in a Name? Political Labels, Fear, and Change

BY THEODOSIA KALLIONTZIS



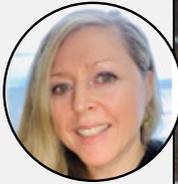
Successful candidates benefit from grassroots efforts from dedicated neighbors like ours working to bring about progressive change. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (left), a key progressive voice, meets with constituents in JH.

Change doesn't have to mean doom, especially if it is positive, progressive change—which is what some seem to fear most. The era we are living in has in some ways become a sort of renewed Red Scare, when *Communist* or *Socialist* has become the worst thing to be. Examples of this fear are everywhere, often at the upper social levels. In order for change to happen at the top there must first be change at the bottom. Communist or socialist candidates have recently had more success locally. Why is this? Progressive and socialist policies are popular among the masses in theory. The fault may lie in the simple description of "socialist." Branding oneself with that label is a kind of political death. Recently, this applied to the Zohran Mamdani campaign. Most smear ads and reports about his mayoral candidacy tack on "Socialist" to it. They do not counter his positions or take on his policy ideas, just put out scary warnings about him being bad, idealistic, or a radical. Strangely, this treatment is rarely applied to other candidates (who are not without their share of scandals, bad raps, or smear campaigns). There is no label, "Capitalist," beside their names as a silent, fear mongering deterrent. Why does socialist seem to be such an ominous moniker? Is it time to change this attitude? ♦

Mensaje de la presidenta

POR LESLIE ELLMAN

Esta edición está dedicada a la democracia, un tema que coincide con las próximas elecciones para el Gobierno de la Ciudad y con la celebración del aniversario 249 de los Estados Unidos este pasado 4 de julio. La democracia surge de un esfuerzo constante y de la participación de todos nosotros, por eso el JHBG se enorgullece de la colaboración ciudadana que durante 38 años ha puesto manos a la obra en el cuidado de Jackson Heights, fortaleciendo así nuestra democracia y empoderando a la comunidad.



Sherif Sadek
JHBG 2024

Nota de la editora

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

El voto es fundamental para generar cambios en los gobiernos participativos. Este año de elecciones, recordemos que el voto individual interviene en las políticas locales e impacta la vida de la comunidad. Este número incluye artículos sobre diferentes aspectos que impactan la política e introduce a dos colaboradores nuevos. Como siempre, agradecemos a los lectores por su apoyo y los invitamos a enviar sus sugerencias y retroalimentación a info@jhb.org o a la dirección postal JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.



temen—. Adoptar etiquetas puede ser fatal, como ha ocurrido con los términos “comunista” y “socialista”, populares entre las clases bajas pero temidos entre las clases altas. No hay una etiqueta que diga “capitalista”, como una forma silenciosa de disuasión que infunda miedo. ¿Por qué una es peor que la otra? ¿No será momento de cambiar esa actitud?

Los destacados de Jackson Heights Dovima: gracia y belleza que trasciende el tiempo

POR DANIEL KARATZAS

Jackson Heights fue el hogar de Dovima, una de las tres modelos más famosas del siglo XX. Quizás su nombre no te suene, pero seguro has visto la icónica fotografía Dovima con elefantes, tomada por Richard Avedon. Dorothy Virginia Margaret Juba nació en 1927. Su infancia en Jackson Heights se volvió difícil cuando contrajo fiebre reumática. A los 21 años, fue descubierta por un editor

de la revista *Vogue* afuera de un autoservicio en Midtown Manhattan. Por desgracia, el futuro de Dovima se tornó aún más difícil que su infancia. Tras retirarse del mundo de la moda a los 35 años y haber pasado por varios divorcios, terminó viviendo en Florida cerca de sus padres. Murió de cáncer de hígado en 1990.

Cómo puedes ser un trabajador electoral

POR MELANIA LOEWY

Se acercan las elecciones, y si bien puede ser un momento de tensión para algunos, también puede convertirse en una oportunidad para participar en la comunidad. Una buena forma de hacerlo es apuntándote como trabajador electoral para realizar distintas actividades antes o el día de las elecciones en alguno de los siguientes puestos: inspector electoral, recepcionista, proveedor de información, intérprete y guía para discapacitados. Puedes obtener más información y llenar el formulario en el sitio

web de la Junta Electoral de la ciudad de Nueva York: pollworker.vote.nyc. Recuerda que puedes votar con anticipación del 25 de octubre al 2 de noviembre, o el 4 de noviembre, día de las elecciones.

No permitamos que el dinero controle la democracia

POR SHERIF SADEK

Las elecciones primarias celebradas en la primavera son un buen ejemplo de cómo el dinero corporativo, los Comités de Acción Política (PACs, por sus siglas en inglés) y los grupos con intereses especiales no necesariamente tienen que ganar y acallar las voces del pueblo. Aunque es posible recabar datos importantes, es difícil encontrar y acceder a la información que podría decirnos qué compañías donan a quién y qué implica eso para los residentes. Esto también deja la duda de si los candidatos ganan porque son los mejores para el puesto o porque las donaciones

de corporativos pueden influir en la contienda, pero la pregunta más inquietante es ¿a quién van a servir los candidatos una vez electos para una posición de poder: a los donadores o a los votantes?

Jackson Heights recuerda. Negocios del viejo mundo desaparecidos pero aún apreciados

POR MARÍA TERRONE

María Terrone sabe escribir sobre Jackson Heights y fue parte del proyecto de Escritores de Queens del Museo Guggenheim en 2012, titulado *stillspotting nyc*. Recuerda lugares como Toy City, una tienda de lácteos en la Avenida 37 y la calle 89, una carnicería, las panaderías Bauer's y Shelly's, la sección trasera en Jahn's donde se celebraban fiestas, entre otros. Muchos de los poemas de su última antología poética, *No Known Coordinates* (2025), están inspirados en Jackson Heights; y su libro de no ficción, *At Home in the New World* (2018), incluye secciones sobre Jackson Heights.

Solicitar un árbol para nuestras calles con un simple clic ya es cosa del pasado

POR LEN MANIACE

Hasta hace pocos meses, quien quisiera un árbol podía pedirlo dando un clic en su computadora. Ese programa terminó para dar paso a otro enfocado en las zonas más necesitadas de los efectos refrescantes de los árboles. El sistema anterior, que empezó en 2010, era popular, pero tenía varios inconvenientes: 18 meses de espera si tenías suerte o que te lo negaran si no cumplías con los requerimientos de NYC Parks. Al concentrarse en varios vecindarios cada año, el programa anticipa una distribución más eficiente de los árboles. A Jackson Heights le tocará de 2027 a 2029.

Para más información visita nycgovparks.org/trees/street-tree-planting.

La primera banca dedicada en Travers Park: en memoria de David Lee

POR ANNE ZACCARDELLI

El 13 de julio de 2024, mi

esposo David Lee murió inesperadamente a la edad de 38 debido a un coágulo sanguíneo. Poco tiempo después, una vecina me contó que ella había adoptado una banca en Central Park para su último esposo. Pensé que sería una buena manera de honrar a David, así que decidí que Travers Park era un buen lugar. El proceso de adopción duró cuatro meses: primero llené un formulario Adopt-a-Bench Inquiry en el sitio web de NYC Parks, después tuve que pagar \$1,500, firmar el acuerdo, y elegir la banca y la inscripción. El departamento de parques me envió un bosquejo que aprobé para que fuera grabado en el respaldo de una banca localizada en el lado este del parque.

Lo que tu país puede hacer por ti

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

Legados: En abril se celebró el aniversario 90 del programa laboral nacional, mejor conocido como Administración para el Progreso de Obras (WPA, por sus siglas en

inglés). Durante el gobierno del presidente Franklin Delano Roosevelt, el congreso aprobó la propuesta legislativa de ayuda que financiaría el programa. Esta propuesta expandió la infraestructura y mejoró la vida cultural al dar empleo a millones de personas, y dejó varios legados, en especial en el arte, la investigación y lo que se conoce como Americana. Uno de esos legados se encuentra en Jackson Heights en la Oficina de correos. La pintura, titulada *Development of Jackson Heights [Desarrollo de Jackson Heights]*, data de 1940 y es obra del pintor y muralista Peppino Mangravite. La escena representa el desarrollo histórico del vecindario y se centra en la construcción del tren elevado (ahora la línea 7 del metro). De derecha a izquierda la escena avanza de un entorno rural a la construcción de las vías del metro y termina en el jardín de los edificios de apartamentos que dieron origen al vecindario.

Lecciones: Parte del título de este artículo viene un conocido fragmento de la famosa frase del discurso inaugural del presidente John F. Kennedy de 1961, en el que llama a la población a servir. Pero ¿cómo puede el país servirnos a nosotros? La república democrática en que vivimos requiere un equilibrio entre representación y participación. Con un buen liderazgo respaldado por una participación civil fuerte, el Gobierno puede volver a ponerse al servicio de su gente y no de intereses especiales. Es tu voto y tu voz lo que decidirá este noviembre quién pondrá en práctica nuestros ideales. ♦



El líder minoritario, senador Chuck Schumer, en JH con el concejal Shekar Krishnan y la comisionada adjunta Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, promoviendo el programa federal para aumentar la copa de los árboles, especialmente aquí donde los porcentajes andan bajos.



What Your Country Can Do for You!

Building a More Perfect Union BY MELISSA ZAVALA

Legacies

This past April marked the 90th anniversary of the national works program, later renamed and better known as the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, an extraordinary New Yorker, Congress approved the relief bill that would fund the program which expanded the nation's infrastructure and improved cultural life by employing over eight million people, skilled and unskilled alike. Workers built roads, bridges, and parks; provided disaster relief; created manuals, paintings, writings, and so much more. The program's unprecedented scale broadened the reach of government and left vital legacies, especially in the form of artistic works, research, and Americana. One of those legacies is found here in Jackson Heights, on the far-right wall of our local Post Office (PO) when facing the clerical windows. What is the story behind that subtle mural near the ceiling?

The painting at our PO was created by **Peppino Mangravite** in 1940 and is titled **Development of Jackson Heights**. It is one of three New Deal murals in Queens crafted to make art accessible to all (the other two are found in post offices in Flushing and Woodhaven). As its title describes, the work depicts the historical development of the neighborhood, centering the construction of the elevated line, now the No. 7 train, which paved the success of the planned community envisioned as a suburb in the city. Read from left to right, the scene moves from farming activities to the train line's construction, ending with the garden apartments that originated the neighborhood and still make it distinctive. Work, family, and community life blend together in a seamless tale still representative today considering that the commuter benefits provided by the 74th transit hub a mere five blocks away from the PO continue to draw people to this area.

While a New Deal painting, this piece is not the product of work relief but of what



became known as The Section. Eventually the Section of Fine Arts, The Treasury Section of Fine Arts was a primary program under the WPA focused on public buildings. Unlike WPA works which could involve unskilled work, the section secured the best artwork by holding competitions to ensure high standards for site-specific paintings and sculptures. Art was expected to uplift Americans following The Great Depression by highlighting beloved scenes of familiar places.

The artist, Mangravite, helped define the American scene movement which celebrated rural life, social realism, and the everyday. In reaction to European modernism which emphasized experimentation and rejected the past in favor of innovation, the



American scene movement offered social commentary, something especially relevant during tumultuous times. His JH painting reflects Modernist ideas representing human universals, concepts like divisions of labor, daily routines, tool use, and others.

Mangravite (pictured at right) was a painter, a muralist, an educator, and an author. Born in 1896 in Lipari (an island north of Sicily), he studied fresco techniques and human anatomy in Italy before moving to NYC when he was 18. He attended several schools, mainly The Cooper Union, later also studying under Robert Henri at the Art Students League.

He taught at Columbia, the Hansen School of Fine Arts, as well as some of the schools where he also studied, eventually becoming director both at the Art Department at Sarah Lawrence College as well as at the Ethical Culture School. He died in Connecticut in 1978.

Lessons

If the lasting, beneficial, and splendid urban infrastructure around us is any indication of the power of government, we should harness our collective will and channel it towards upgrades that will better serve us in this century.

Part of this article's title is a recognizable segment of the famous phrase in President John F. Kennedy's



famous inaugural address from 1961 which called that generation to service. But what about what our country can do for us? The democratic republic we live in requires that we balance representation and participation, duties and responsibilities, with rights and entitlements. The complexities of these

different elements and objectives require that we think more creatively about our government's functions. Is it time to reconsider skepticism of our government, its inefficiencies and overreach, and find solutions for growing challenges through new, compelling visions instead?

Maybe one of the lessons we can learn from a crisis a hundred years ago and its legacies is that with the right leadership backed by strong civic participation, our government can again be put in service to its people rather than to the special interests threatening to undermine the legitimacy of its procedures and our popular vote.

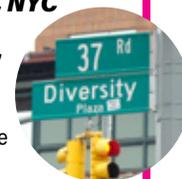
Our election cycles provide us with opportunities to elect representatives who will put our core ideals into practice. Will we vote for a more responsive government, or for the kind of agenda endangering the best aspects of American life? It's your vote, your voice. Decide this November and become involved in your community, not just as a voter, but as a civically minded participant in service to our beloved community. ♦

The Fruited Plain

BY MARIA TERRONE

At a Korean Greengrocer's, Jackson Heights, Queens, NYC

The purple mountains are so high, our hands must climb to reach the top, the plum at its peak of perfection. Once there, we strive



for more. No surprise—desire is why we came, and this fruited plain knows no fence, pushing out to sidewalk shoppers intent on seizing the best. We sniff, squeeze, exclaim

to companions in Farsi, French, English, Urdu, Spanish, Cantonese, Korean, Russian, Creole. By the cash register, a sign extols: We Will Never Forget. Citrus wear the tattoos

of corporations. Aztec-faced men build pyramid displays, unpack papayas, their arms branded with hearts and names of loved ones stranded south of desert borders. At ten p.m., they sweep up fetid

remains, vanishing into a back room with plastic buckets of unsold bouquets. At eight, Kim and her brother, Sam, raise the steel gate again on amber waves of ginger, bins stacked

with aloe huge as oars, tofu squares afloat. Kim knows how plants can keep her customers well or steer them back to health—the Irish supers; women who peer from burkas; spike-heeled retirees; Croatian

carpenters; turbaned Sikhs with flag pins on their suits. Proud to Be American from sea to shining sea of blueberries, blood oranges, kiwi, yams, yucca, mangoes, guava, pumpkins

that teachers at P.S. 69 will buy and soon carve for the children, their grinning faces also lit from within. They'll dress like goblins, learn the Holy Writ: United We Stand. This is America. No one starves.



**Jackson Heights
Beautification Group**
P.O. Box 720253
Jackson Heights, NY
11372-0235
(347) 766-9129
info@jhbg.org

Newsletter Committee
Edwin O'Keefe Westley
Jerry Goldman
Melissa Zavala
Rommel Alama
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Design & Production
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Edwin O'Keefe Westley

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The First Dedicated Bench in Travers Park: Remembering David Lee

BY ANNE ZACCARDELLI

On July 13, 2024, my former husband, David Lee, unexpectedly passed away at the age of 38 from a blood clot. David lived in Jackson Heights from 2013 to 2019; you may have spotted him weightlifting at Blink Fitness or working on his doctorate at Starbucks.

He spent his career working for the NYC Department of Mental Health & Hygiene, first in the mental health division, and later in the infectious diseases department. During the pandemic, he worked with the contact tracing group to get resources to infected New Yorkers.

After his death, my neighbor mentioned that she adopted a bench in Central Park for her late husband. I thought this would be a fitting way to honor David. After much thought, I decided that Travers Park would be the best place. While David never got



to fully appreciate the renovated park, one of my last meetings with him occurred there. Parks play such an important part in the health and well-being of our communities; I knew David would approve!

The process of adopting a bench took four months. I started by filling out an Adopt-a-Bench Inquiry

form on the NYC Parks website at nycgovparks.org/opportunities/support/honor. I received a response that benches were available and would cost \$1,500. I confirmed my interest and was sent an agreement to sign. After the agreement was signed and paid for, I sent the coordinator what I wanted on the plaque; it is text only, 30 characters per line. I had wanted song lyrics, but the agreement was clear that permission is needed from the copyright holder.

I rewrote the lyrics in my own words. The parks department sent me a mockup of the plaque I approved before it was engraved. As for the bench itself, I decided on one on the east side of the park. I took a picture, circled the section I wanted, and emailed it to the parks department. On April 25, 2025, I decided to stop by the park to see if the plaque had been installed. It was! So please enjoy sitting on this bench. David would be thrilled that you are taking a moment to sit and enjoy the scenery. ♦

The Central Park Conservancy began dedicating benches in 1986. Its program helped grow funding for park upkeep and became vastly popular. Donations pay for plaques and bench maintenance for a decade.

Don't Let Big Money Control Democracy

BY SHERIF SADEK

Big money doesn't always win the race, and candidate ideology doesn't always determine to whom special interests contribute. Those are two of the lessons from this spring's Democratic primary, both citywide and in Jackson Heights.

Andrew Cuomo had heavy support from the monied elite in his bid for the Democratic mayoral nomination. Cuomo lost, though he later climbed back into the race as an independent. Some special

interest donors also spent big bucks and lost, too.

It took me hours to search public records for this data, but the story it tells shines a light on how corporate and special interest contributions may drown out the people's voices. Some small news platforms, such as **City & State New York** and **The City NYC**, work hard to report campaign donations by corporations and special-interest Political Action Committees (PACs) in New York City elections, but they

lack the reach of the traditional news media.

As reported by the New York City Campaign Finance Board, the biggest special-interest loser was **Fix The City**, backed by wealthy donors like Barry Diller, Billy Joel, and others, which spent \$14.7 million supporting Andrew Cuomo and \$7.7 million against Zohran Mamdani. And in a bit of twisted political logic, it spent \$59,000 to support Mamdani. Fix The City is no ordinary PAC; it's a Super PAC

which allows it to raise and spend unlimited amounts of money.

Other big-spending PACs, such as Airbnb's **Affordable New York**, **Uber NY Pac**, and Doordash's **Local Economies Forward NY**, saw mixed results.

Faring a little better, Local Economies Forward NY spent \$368,000 supporting Andrew Cuomo, but also \$842,000 supporting City Council Members who mostly won. Ideology wasn't always crucial for Affordable New York. ➡

Old World Businesses, Some Gone but Still Cherished

BY MARIA TERRONE



While Hamburger Express with its exciting delivery trains is gone, we are lucky to still have Jahn's in the neighborhood.



The author and her best friend over the years are featured in the photos on the far left. Ms. Terrone is on the right in the above photo, and on the left in the bottom. Hawthorne Court has inspired her writings, as have other places around the neighborhood.

Maria Terrone was featured in a 2012 Guggenheim Museum Queens-based writers project called stillspotting nyc where her essay on JH was read in various neighborhood locations, including on the roof of the Jewish Center. guggenheim.org/press-release/stillspottingqueens

Her fourth full poetry collection, *No Known Coordinates* (2025), was recently published by The Word Works. Many of her published poems are directly inspired by life in Jackson Heights and the Hawthorne Court co-op garden. She is also the author of a book of creative nonfiction, *At Home in the New World* (2018), which includes pieces on JH. Read more at mariaterrone.com.

Send us your memories! Email us at info@jhb.org and share your stories.

My parents moved from Manhattan to Jackson Heights when I was six months old. I grew up here in the 1950s and have lived in JH my entire life except for the five years I lived elsewhere after college. I used to love going to **Toy City** to peruse and buy the latest Nancy Drew books, a wonderland that came back to me with the story in the last issue. It brought to mind memories of the library's children's story hour, when as a 4-5-year-old, I used to go often with a friend and our mothers, which helped plant the seeds for a lifetime love of books.

Before my parents bought a one-family house on 88th Street between 35th and 37th Avenues, we rented an apartment in a three-family home on 88th Street. Our upstairs neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had escaped Vienna with his family during the Nazi era. When I was about 10 years old, he hired me to do some shopping for him. That's how I was exposed to an old-world dairy shop on 37th Avenue, about 89th Street. The all-female servers wore impeccable white uniforms, and I was able to buy small quantities of pot cheese, which I'd never heard of, and I'd even come home with two brown eggs. Imagine that! Nearby was a **Schaller and Weber** butcher, where I could buy just one or two knockwursts for my neighbor.

I remember that **Bauer's** and **Shelly's** bakeries were the best! There was also a restaurant called **Hamburger Express** that delivered lunch down the counter via a kind of train. Birthday parties were in the back room of **Jahn's**, which still had Victorian-era decor and free ice cream for the birthday kid. Somewhere on the south side of 37th Avenue, around 84th Street, was a bowling alley downstairs that had pinboys. JH had—and still has—it all! ♦



Comptroller Brad Lander on 34th Avenue during the Democratic primary season. Despite substantial private contributions, he received less Super PAC money than Andrew Cuomo and Zohran Mamdani. What role does money play in politics?

BIG MONEY continued

It opposed Brad Lander, Zohran Mamdani, and Scott Stringer with \$440,500 each, but spent \$252,600 to re-elect Public Advocate Jumaane Williams. All lean to the Dem's liberal-progressive wing.

In Jackson Heights' District 25, Shekar Krishnan did not take corporate funding but accepted \$79,500 from Airbnb's Affordable New York PAC, winning his bid as incumbent running for re-election. In neighboring District 21, now represented by

term-limited Franciso Moya, Shanel Thomas-Henry accepted \$187,900 from the Real Estate Board of New York's Jobs for New York. An exception to this trend was Shahana Hanif in Brooklyn, who won her re-election bid as an incumbent despite being outspent by PACs.

So what does this mean for city residents? Are candidates being elected because they appear to be the best for the job or because of their special interest donors. And once they are in office, whom do they serve? ♦



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69th St. & 35th Ave.
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contact info@JHBG.org

Most Saturdays, 10 am
Tree LC *Meets at the NE corner of
80th St. & 37th Ave.*
Schedule may vary and include some
Sundays. Check the
[JHBG Facebook page](#)
for complete information.

Saturdays 10 am
Clean and Green
For complete details,
go to info@JHBG.org.

Saturdays 10:30 am
*Meet at the gardens at St. Mark's
Episcopal Church on 34th Ave.,
between 81st and 82nd Streets.*

Daily
JH-CREW dog run
69th St. between 34th & 35th Aves.
To join, go to info@JHBG.org
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