

Colombians. More than drug dealers

Jackson Heights is a part of Queens, NY where there's a big community of Colombians and you'll be surprised to see what this community has to offer.

By Valentina Silva



In Jackson Heights, a small neighborhood in Queens, there's many communities that have been around for a while. Colombians are one of these particular communities that run around the streets of Jackson Heights. The population of Colombians grew heavily in the 80s, restaurants, bakeries, events etc started appearing. Sadly, as a community for

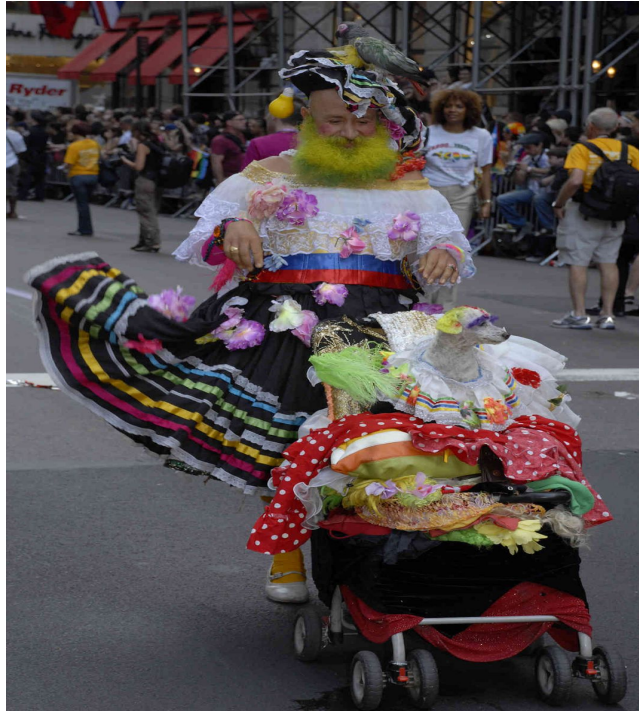
the outsiders we are only known for Pablo Escobar, the most famous drug dealer , but I'm here to show you that our community has so much to offer culturally.

If you get off at 82 street in the seven train you'll immediately find yourself in a crash of culture. you'll find yourself smelling delicious food, when you walk around you'll see Pollos Marios, Cositas Ricas, Seba Seba, and many more restaurants and bakeries.

When you go inside of one of these bakeries, there will be people of my community sitting down drinking coffee with bread or other pastries. There's no specific time to do this. However, if you ask a Colombian they would tell you the best time to go for a cup of coffee is to go in the mornings or between 4-5 pm. Coming to Jackson Heights to eat Colombian food is one of the most amazing things to do. The cooking is fresh and there's always an amazing flavor to the food. Do yourself a favor and try Bandeja Paisa, one of our typical plates, try the beans with chicken in Pollos Mario, there would be no disappointment. In the mood for going out and having some drinks while listening to reggaeton? Go to Yeras it would become one of your favorite spots. Come to our events in Northern Boulevard during the summer where there would be two main parades such as la feria de Flores, where there's displays of beautiful colorful flowers or the Independence Day where many famous people who are a part of the community show up. Colombians celebrate this and many more occasions with a smile on their faces, while listening to our folklore music. Colombians in Jackson Heights also own small stores where you can find Colombian clothes. We have jeans that have a pretty specific way of looking in your body and they are usually worn by us or even other hispanics who

know them as Colombian jeans. Lastly , we can't forget the jersey for our team, you'll see us wearing these shirts for the parades or the soccer games.

If you walk around, you'll hear us speaking in spanish which is the way that most of us communicate, you'll often hear "Que hubo pues mijo?" or "hola parcerero" which are ways to greet someone you're friends with. As a Colombian when I hear "colombia Tierra querida" it's an unexplainable feeling, and like me, many others feel the same, this is an artifact that it's so recognized by the Colombian community in Jackson heights, it brings good memories and a happiness it's a reminder of who we are and where we come from. If you walk around 82 street between roosevelt ave and northern Blvd you'll see posters where it's announce there would be an specific day where there will be performances, If you want to hear something new, music wise choose any of the vallenato, salsa , cumbia, despecho performances. Definitely, if you speak Spanish go to one the comedy performances, believe me when I say you will be laughing for the entire set. Not only do we use the posters to communicate, but we usually would tell each other anything that has happen in our community, As a example I want to talk about the day I found out an Icon for our community died. Ms Colombia aka Osvaldo Gomez, I would always see her at the parades or just walking around carrying her small dog in a stroller, she would always tell jokes and be such a vibrant energy for this community, sadly she passed away at 64 years old and when the news broke out everyone starting talking about it, in social media or if you run into someone who belonged to the community they would bring the topic up.



This community has so much to offer, visit "the little colombia " and you can find all and more that I have talked about. space. Don't be shy, Colombians are quite friendly and don't worry if you don't speak Spanish, they'll understand you. I do think my community it's pretty welcoming to outsiders as long as you are respectful of our culture. As for my fellows Colombians don't forget where you come from, go to Jackson heights see how huge this community is and try to join it by participating in our events. Our main goal as a community it's to preserve our culture even when we live here in

New York city, we still want a safe space. Our main goal as a community it's to preserve our culture even when we live here in New York's city. We still want a safe space.