

**South Ozone Park, Richmond Hill and Ozone Park
United for Justice & Empowerment
114-06 Rockaway Boulevard
Richmond Hill, NY 11420**

2/8/23

TESTIMONY

Petition to unite South Ozone Park, Richmond Hill and Ozone Park, in Queens, NYC, our communities of common interests, into one (1) State Assembly District in accordance with the NYS, US Constitutions, Voting Rights Act, justice and fairness

Attention: To The NYS IRC, Legislature and Leaders, LATFOR

- We are a group empowered to secure justice for our diluted, 7 splintered and marginalized communities, which includes advocacy before you and, if necessary, bringing legal action. After 4 decades of lobbying/ pleading, we are fed up, nothing has changed, in fact, it has gotten worse, and our highest COVID disasters and deaths due to lack of attention and inaction are the last straws. See betrayal map attached: sliced and diced!

- We wholeheartedly accept State Assembly Map AD 24/Map AL version of the above communities of interest as a unified, compact and contiguous district. In fact, both Democrats and Republicans on the Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) have agreed to keep the South Asian districts of Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park united in proposed Map AD 24. See consensus, compact map attached.

- This is the ONLY map both Republicans and Democrats agree on, almost 100%, which confirms that you must take notice of this unprecedented and dispositive agreement that these communities should be kept together, no matter what! We urge, and advise, the entire NYS IRC, Legislature, et al, to embrace this map-everyone! It is the right thing to do. It is a *bona fide* effort.

- Any other versions will result in communities being drawn that have no compactness, community of interests, commonality, characteristics, nor

contiguity with Richmond Hill and/or Ozone Park and/or South Ozone Park, whatsoever. We must choose who represent us, not vice versa.

- These districts comply fully with the principles and requirements of the “block on border.” As you are aware, we are currently segregated into 7 different Assembly Districts, making it impossible for our communities to receive services responsive to our economic, medical, educational, dietary, vocational, small business, ethnic, religious, historical, racial, cultural, language, customs and/or other needs, and/or coalesce around a representative focused on our priorities. We have been abused as mere fillers for others.

- As the current 2021 census data undoubtedly shows, our numbers have increased exponentially. They demand, justify and mandate a united State Assembly district, at a minimum. These census numbers confirm the largest increase in our numbers of South Asians, Latinos and African Americans, *a protected class*, residing in Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park and Ozone Park.

- In Queens, our Asian population grew 29%, to nearly 706,000 out of 2.4 million residents, far outpacing the borough’s overall 7.8% population growth, and Richmond Hill, Ozone Park and South Ozone Park is the center of gravity of this massive increase in numbers, even though we were undercounted due to deportation and building inspectors phobia!

- Of course, the failure by this Legislature to act, will only result in the continued dilution and disregard of our issues, advocacy and problems, while diminishing your duties and responsibilities, as per your mandate. We are entitled to these stated majority-minority districts. You know it, we know it, the Courts know it! SHAME ON YOU IF YOU DO OTHERWISE!

- Voters will also be informed of any negligent and/or rogue action by rogue legislators, conflicts of interest, self-service, and they will be voted out of office. Your ouster will also be justified, for failing to adhere to the people’s wishes. You will be in dereliction of your duties. This contempt and disregard for the Supreme Court and Judge Love who sent the maps back for agreement by you, will trigger penalties and just derision.

- We therefore pray and beseech of you, in accordance with your sworn duties, good conscience, justice, the Voting Rights Act and the NY and US Constitutions, and on account of the fact that these districts share common established ties of

common interest and association, that it is only right that you keep our neighborhoods and communities intact, as an Assembly District, as is herein requested.

- Or let a Judge/Referee draw us our districts, and abolish so-called "independent redistricting," where you will have duped 20 million New Yorkers and wasted \$4 million funds allocated to this dog and pony circus and con artist schemes! We have suffered long enough. Enough of this charade!

THIS SUBMISSION SHALL CONSTITUTE NOTICE OF INTENDED LEGAL ACTIONS AGAINST ALL THOSE CONCERNED, AND/OR COMPLICIT IN ANY FAILURE TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED STATE ASSEMBLY AD 24/MAP "AL."

Respectfully submitted.

Thank you for your kind courtesies and consideration.

Ralph Bedessi (Sgd)

President & Legal Coordinator

**State
Assembly
Map "AL"**

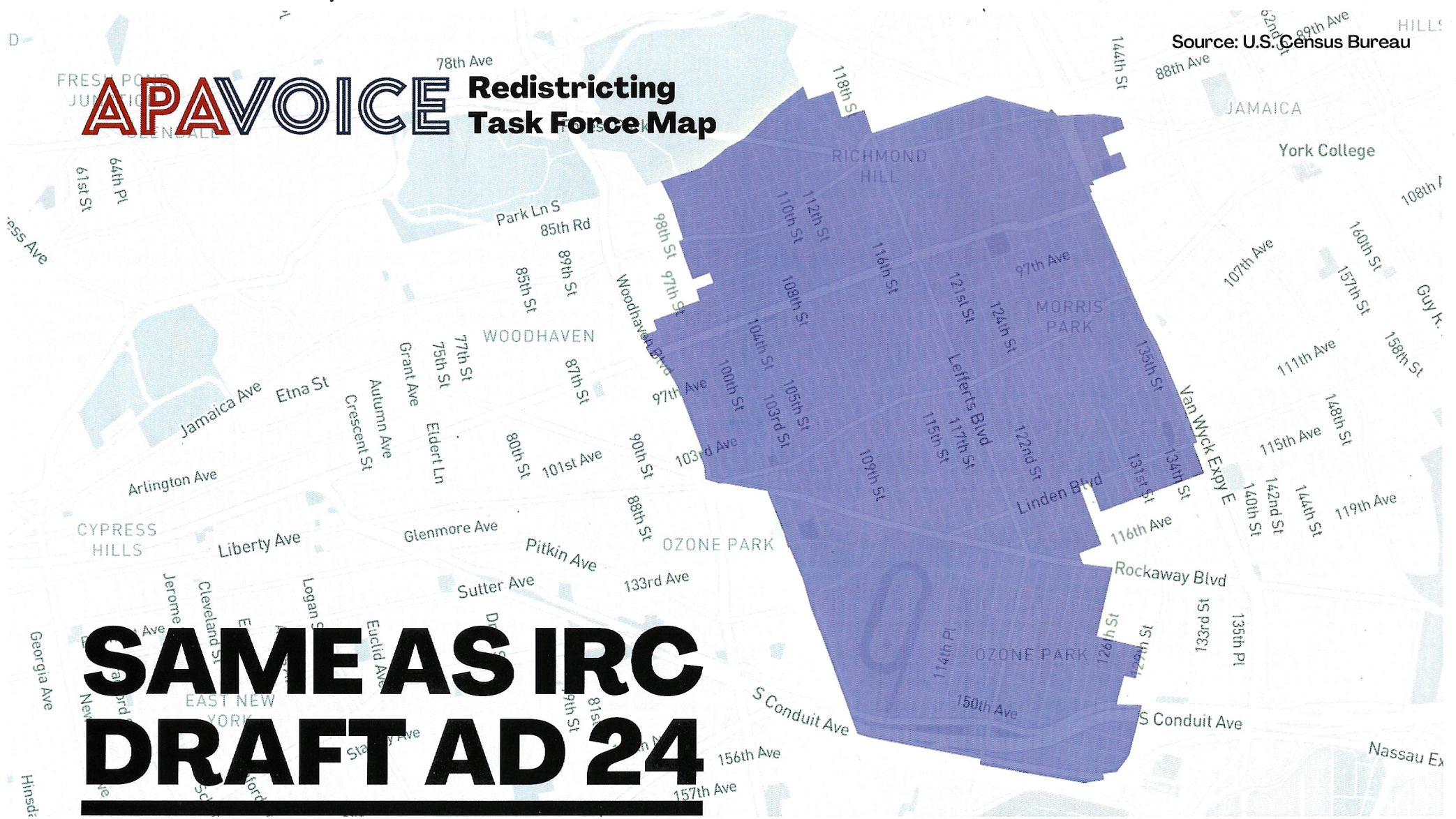


AL

**UNITY
MAP**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

APAVOICE Redistricting Task Force Map



SAME AS IRC DRAFT AD 24

Queens - Richmond Hill & South Ozone Park

IRC Draft Map Voting Age Population	Black	Hispanic	Asian	White	Native	Pacific
	20,696 19.1%	29,360 27.2%	37,528 34.7%	8,272 7.7%	5,752 5.3%	1,031 1.0%

Split 7 Ways, Immigrant Neighborhood Seeks to Unify Its Political Power

As New York begins to draw new legislative districts, partisan fights may overshadow the electoral harm the process can do to some groups.



By Nicholas Fandos

Nov. 10, 2021

6 MIN READ

When Ejaz Nabie saw his congregation in Queens become ensnared in one of New York's worst Covid-19 outbreaks last winter, he did what any desperate community leader would do: He turned to his representative in state government for help.

For Mr. Nabie, the congregation's pastor, that meant trying seven of them.

The extraordinary outreach was not merely zealous, but a reflection of the surreal political geography of his Richmond Hill neighborhood and adjoining South Ozone Park. The south Queens area, whose residents are heavily Indo-Caribbean and Punjabi, is a prime example of the collateral damage caused by the way New York has historically drawn legislative boundaries.

Seven State Assembly districts slice through the few square miles around Mr. Nabie's Faith Assembly church — dividing blocks, congregations, even families. At several intersections, three out of four corners are split among different assembly members, leaving residents with no clear leader to turn to in state government.

"We should have one person who we could hold accountable," said Mr. Nabie, 61, recalling his struggle to secure masks and vaccine doses for his fellow immigrants from Guyana, Trinidad and elsewhere in the Caribbean. "Instead, I'm trying to hold seven persons accountable who are all evading me."

As New York begins the once-a-decade task of reshaping its congressional districts, the focus has mostly been on the kind of seismic clashes between Democrats and Republicans that help determine majorities in Washington and Albany.

But as Mr. Nabie's experience illustrates, redistricting also involves something more fundamental: the battle for representation, and how it can pit communities against one another and, sometimes, even their elected leaders' interests.



An intersection at 114th Street and Liberty Avenue in Queens. Three of four corners fall in different State Assembly districts. James Estrin/The New York Times

Asian American activists in other parts of the city are also trying to capitalize on their surge in population over the past decade to ensure that cohesive legislative districts replace splintered ones in Elmhurst, Queens, and in Sunset Park and Bensonhurst in Brooklyn.

Further afield, cities like Ithaca and Rochester that lean Democratic but were split by Republicans a decade ago for overtly partisan reasons are pushing for more coherent district lines.

But the situation in Richmond Hill may illustrate most clearly just how hard it can be to break decades of political inertia, particularly when those drawing the final lines could have an interest in maintaining the status quo.

"For any community to really come to its rightful place in America, you need folks from that community that rise up take on a leadership position and have a viable way to elected office," said John Albert, a well-connected lobbyist and the founder of Taking Our Seat, a group that has helped organize a campaign to unite the area's fractured legislative districts.

There is no easy answer for why exactly the cracks formed in Richmond Hill or why have persisted. There does not appear to have been an overt effort to keep South Asians out of power or to target the area. Instead, political scientists point to a mix of inertia, self-interest on the part of Democratic incumbents and legal precedents that tend to punish newcomers.

Roman B. Hedges, who helped draw the Assembly maps for three decades as a member of a legislative task force, defended the current boundaries as a best attempt at balancing competing political interests.

Another consideration, he said, involved the complex legal requirements created by the Voting Rights Act and the courts for protecting the ability of African Americans, Latinos and Asians to elect candidates of their choice and draw districts that are all of roughly equal size.

In an area as diverse as Queens, that means mapmakers must essentially preserve existing districts dominated by one of those groups before addressing what to do about newer or less homogeneous ones like Richmond Hill.

Part of the problem may be that the South Asian community's size in the area is hard to measure. Although people of Indo-Caribbeans heritage trace their lineage to India, large numbers choose not to identify as "Asian" on census forms, selecting "other" instead. As a result, at least on paper, there is not the kind of dominant ethnic group that mapmakers must heed.

"Maybe it is not so much a plot to prevent as a hope to create elsewhere for other purposes," Mr. Hedges said. "If you are in the community that is not the focus, maybe it feels like, 'I was not paid attention to and I now am going to make my voice known.'"

But there may be more politically oriented reasons.

Incumbents can pad their districts by slicing off as "filler" small parts of immigrant communities, which redistricting experts said are less likely to vote in primaries. That way, they can maintain the number of constituents required by law without diluting their own base of support.

Once that community matures and becomes more politically engaged, a lawmaker may have little incentive to give up those votes, preferring to keep the district lines intact.

"What I do know is what the community looks like now and what it's looked like for a few decades now," said Aminta Kilawan-Narine, the founder of the South Queens Women's March, an advocacy group. "These lines are not reflective of that history, they are not reflective of the people who live here."



John Albert is pushing to unite the Richmond Hill, Queens, area in one legislative district. For an immigrant group to truly establish itself in America, he said, its members need "a viable way to elected office." James Estrin/The New York Times

South Ozone Park and Richmond Hill, which run north from John F. Kennedy Airport, through streets lined with Queen Anne-style homes and elevated subway lines, are familiar emblems of modern New York City. Traditional white ethnic enclaves have been reformulated by Latino and, later, South Asian immigrants, with stores selling saris and roti replacing Italian bakeries and German beer halls.

But although the influx of newcomers has coalesced and become a dominant force culturally, political power has lagged. That is largely because of an incoherent patchwork of City Council, State Senate and, above all, Assembly districts.

Divided among so many representatives, many in the community have grudgingly concluded that they are the priority of no one.

Take brick-and-mortar district offices, the linchpins of government services and administration that provide a point of contact for constituents, take feedback to Albany and act as clearing houses for state benefit and relief programs. Of the seven Assembly members who represent parts of the area, only one, David I. Weprin, has opened a district office.

"We felt as if we were not a part of the democratic process, we felt neglected, we felt voiceless," said Taj Rajkumar, a Guyanese-American professor who ran unsuccessfully for an Assembly seat in 2000 on a platform that included a call for more immigrant services, a community center for older residents, increased job training and a health clinic.

"All of our struggles and all of our cries were falling on deaf ears," Mr. Rajkumar said. "That was the sentiment of the community then and now."

Those who favor redrawing district lines to unify a community's voice have looked optimistically to New York's new independent, bipartisan redistricting commission, which is supposed to remove lawmakers from the mapmaking process.

When the panel released its first draft maps in September, Democratic members proposed combining most of Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park in one Assembly district.

But it may not be that simple. The commission's Republican members did not agree to the changes, and the panel appears headed for the kind of partisan gridlock that could doom its proposals. If that happens, the process would revert to the State Legislature, which may be less receptive to the community's appeals.

The best hope for proponents of redrawing Richmond Hill's district lines could be that the commission's maps give the Legislature a new starting point, effectively shaming lawmakers.

Mr. Weprin acknowledged that his district made little sense geographically, with a major highway cutting Richmond Hill off from the heart of the district. He said he had done his best to represent an "area I didn't know anything about" before becoming its assemblyman, and that he understood the community's interest in having a single representative.

"I'm not going to actively lobby one way or another," he said. "I could live with whatever the outcome is, but if I was going to lose that area, I'd want to see what they would offer me in terms of making up the population."

Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar, whose Woodhaven-based district collides with Mr. Weprin's in Richmond Hill, has more fully positioned herself behind the drive to draw a single seat based there. In 2020, she became the first South Asian woman ever elected to state office in New York.

"Right now, the South Asian community is hungry and determined to be heard," she said. "Things are changing. We are taking our seat at this table of power both in our state and nationally."

In the pandemic's darkest days, Mr. Nabie eventually succeeded in securing help for his parishioners: Mr. Weprin delivered personal protective equipment; city officials turned the church into an impromptu vaccination site.

Some damage, though, may take longer to repair.

"It has created a sense of apathy and disillusionment with the system," he said. "People feel, 'I don't care anymore, they are not going to listen to me, they are not going to do anything for me.' That's a terrible place to be."

Nicholas Fandos is a reporter on the Metro desk covering New York State politics, with a focus on money, lobbying and political influence. He was previously a congressional correspondent in Washington. @npfandos

A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 17 of the New York edition with the headline: Diced Into 7 Districts, a Queens Neighborhood Can't Get Anything Done



You are here > Home > Top Stories > Guyanese listed as second largest immigrant group in Queens

Guyanese listed as second largest immigrant group in Queens

February 7, 2014 TIMES INT'L

In December 2013, the New York City Department of City Planning issued a detailed report showing that Guyanese are the second largest immigrant group in Queens and the fifth largest in New York City.

Immigrants from Trinidad & Tobago occupy the eighth position. The report, The Newest New Yorkers, is based on data collected in the 2010 Census and the 2011 American Community Survey.

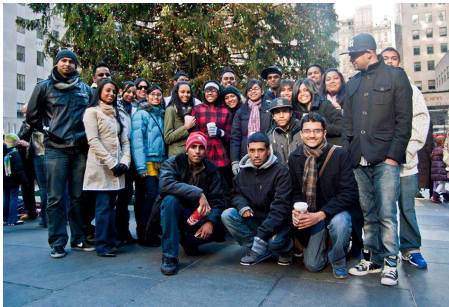
The report details the change in population and provides comprehensive information on the foreign-born population to policy makers, program planners, and service providers to help them gain perspective on a population that continues to reshape the city. The data is based on the foreign born population from specific countries, but the Indo-Caribbean Alliance, Inc. combined the data for Guyana and Trinidad to reflect the overwhelming ethnic and cultural similarities among the two nationalities.

The combination also reflects the propensity for Indo-Caribbean persons from Guyana and Trinidad, and other Caribbean countries, to work closely together for social, political and economic development in New York City.

While this report demonstrates the large Indo-Caribbean population in New York City, it does not account for the population born in the United States. Immigrants from Guyana and Trinidad began moving to New York City in significant waves since the 1960's and many are now first and second generation Americans. If these populations were included, we are confident the number of Indo-Caribbean residents in New York City would be considerably larger.

In New York City, the combined foreign-born population of Guyana and Trinidad is 227,582. This is the 3rd highest foreign-born population in New York City-trailing only the Dominican Republic (380,160) and China (350,231) and ahead of countries such as Mexico, Jamaica and India among others.

In the largest New York metropolitan region, the combined total number of Guyanese and Trinidadian immigrants would be over 288,000, the 5th highest foreign-born population, trailing the Dominican Republic (557,520), China (477,386), Mexico (366,810), and India (330,881).



Some members of the Indo Caribbean Alliance organisation based in Queens N.Y. pose for a photo op.

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82,000 individuals trailing only Chinese immigrants who account for over 142,000. The report also found that nearly half of all Queens' residents are foreign born as of 2011 out of a total population of 2.2 million residents.

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GUYANA CHRONICLE

The Nation's Paper



Guyanese 5th largest ethnic group in New York City

By Staff Reporter - July 19, 2015



Koreatown, West 32nd Street, Manhattan

NEW York isn't known as a melting pot for nothing. It's one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, boasting dozens of under-the-radar ethnic enclaves that go far beyond a basic Chinatown.





Little India, Jackson Heights, Queens

From Brooklyn's Little Odessa to Queens' Little Guyana, here are our favourite ethnic neighbourhoods in NYC. You might not be able to place Guyana on a map, but it's taken over Richmond Hill. The small country on South America's Caribbean coast, east of Venezuela, has a population that's a colourful mix of South Asian (mostly from east India) and Afro-Caribbean.

New York is home to around 140,000 Guyanese, making them the fifth largest group of immigrants in the city.

Liberty Avenue is Little Guyana's nucleus, featuring saris and spices, roti and rum, as well as businesses like the Little Guyana Bake Shop and The Hibiscus Restaurant & Bar.

K-Town, a highly concentrated strip along Manhattan's West 32nd Street, between Broadway and 5th Avenue, is a slice of Seoul in the city, and officially known as "Korea Way".

It features dozens of Korean restaurants, karaoke clubs, and even 24-hour spas, most of them stacked on top of each other, thanks to the narrow borders of the area.

New York is home to over 140,000 Korean residents (the second largest Korean population in the U.S.), and while they may not all live in Koreatown (many live in Flushing, Queens, another Korean hotspot), they do frequent it enthusiastically, giving the area a super local and authentic vibe.

While there's always a debate as to where the food is better, Flushing or Manhattan, K-Town is steadily gaining a stellar foodie reputation.

Jackson Heights is incredibly diverse, and it can make you feel like you've been transported to a different country, with every block.

However, India (and Bangladesh and Pakistan) has staked its claim on 74th Street, between Roosevelt and 37th Avenue, where women will shop for jewellery and rich fabrics while wearing colourful saris, and stores are full of Bollywood films and incense.

Like an open-air market, the air is thick with the smell of curries and spices, and the streets are lined with sweet shops, curry houses, and eateries selling fresh curry leaves and chutneys. (Houston Chronicle)



Little Guyana, Richmond Hill, Queens