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## **Queens: the Jewel in New York's Crown?**

All Eyes are on Rudy Giuliani as he prepares to take office. But the real shift in power is not happening at City Hall but in Queens - the city's new center of political power. For the first time in our history, Queens has produced the governor, city comptroller and the speakers of the State Assembly and the City Council. Queens - with a population that is 36 percent foreign-born - gave Rudy Giuliani his largest bloc of votes. In Queens, the "gorgeous mosaic" really works.

Immigration in Queens is not dominated by any one race or country of origin. According to the Department of City Planning, from 1983 to 1989, 36 percent of the immigrants to Queens were from Asia, 24 percent from South America, and 11 percent from Europe. Queens has also become the haven for Romanians and Yugoslavians seeking to escape the chaos of Eastern Europe, a trend that will surely increase in the years ahead. As the new immigrants become citizens, they will not automatically raster as Democrats. Most of the Asians, East Europeans and non-Puerto Rican Hispanics are conservative champions of the work ethic and small business, and they could provide the basis for a competitive two-party system in this city.

"The influx of immigrants is most acutely felt in the public schools where overcrowding, rather than guns, is the biggest problem. But the new immigrants have also energized the schools; this year, 14 of the 300 semifinalists in the national Westinghouse Science Talent Search came from Queens, and most were from immigrant households. And immigrant parents, who can't vote in the mayoral elections, are exerting influence where they can vote - in the school board elections.

Unlike the other boroughs where upward mobility often leads to the suburbs, the quality of the neighborhoods has allowed Queens to retain its middle and upper classes. For example, a Greek immigrant might start with an apartment in Astoria, move to a co-op in Jackson Heights and eventually buy a home in Douglaston. In Queens, the African-American community consists predominantly of middle-class households in stable neighborhoods such as Hollis, St. Albans and East Elmhurst, which have strong political organizations. There are twice as many black state Assembly members from Queens than from Manhattan.

Job development in Queens may be the key to the city's economic future. With LaGuardia and Kennedy airports, the aviation industry in Queens is the city's link to the national and world economy. More than 50,000 people work at Kennedy Airport, a fact that elected officials seem to ignore. From 1977 to 1990, while New York City lost 19 percent of its industrial employment, Queens lost none, according to the Department of City Planning. And Queens is attracting half of all the manufacturing start-ups in the city. The combination of skilled labor, good housing and access to Manhattan has allowed Queens to emerge as more than just a bunch of bedroom communities. Today, Long Island City is New York's largest industrial

neighborhood outside of Manhattan. It's also the production site for two of the city's most successful exports: "Sesame Street" and WFAN's "Imus in the Morning." And the hottest star of television this season is David Caruso, a graduate of Archbishop Malloy High School.

Although the civic elite still regards Queens as Archie Bunker territory, the smart money knows that Queens is the borough of the future. That's why Time-Warner has built its most advanced cable system in Queens; that's why New York Hospital has extended its health care empire and acquired Booth Memorial Hospital in Flushing; and that's why Bill Clinton made two visits to Queens last fall. Eight members - or more than one-fourth - of the state's Congressional delegation have a piece of Queens in their districts. If you understand Queens, you understand the future of New York.

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