

COMMUNITY NOT CONDOMINIUMS

Doña María is up before the sun rises

Moon shining on her face she gets ready for the morning commute

It's her job to feed others

Moon shining on her face ella empieza a cocinar arepas, tamales, café y chocolate

Arepas made with corn and cheese

They start to melt as soon as they touch your mouth

Tamales wrapped up in leaves

That break off at a single touch

Authentic café from the hills of Colombia

Chocolate de la Abuelita

The food is hot steaming up her small home in Queens, NY

Where she has seen her children grow into young people

Their infant pen marks on the wall and cracks on the tiles from rough play are still present

They wake up to the smell of comida caliente

"That's not for you!" she reminds them

Packed in her food truck she makes her way down Roosevelt Avenue

Las luces all around her

Always the same routine

True Colors Gay Bar is now closed after a long night of celebration

Newspaper clippings, apartment rentals, and jobs are stapled across every wooden pole

Se solicita mesera

One bedroom apartment

Close to the train

Dishwasher needed

Hablamos Español

Hablamos Ingles

A man is selling social security cards
Abundancia Colombian Restaurant is on the right
Mamas Empanadas
There is a catholic church on the left
Venga y pare de sufrir
Need help with your taxes?
There used to be a movie theater here
Right across the street from la panaderia
Near the hospital where she gave birth, Elmhurst

She arrives at the same street corner she's worked in for the last several years

74th street

On this corner

In her truck she has paid years of

Rent

Food

School trips

Clothes

Construction of a house abroad

Care for parents abroad

And saving for college degrees

Doña María knows these streets like her hands

Cracked and calloused

The same streets she has walked up and down with her family on hot summer nights

Ices and paletas in hand

The same pot holes

The same broken bricks

The same graffiti

These streets have not changed

El dueño de la bodega speaks to her on a first name basis as he carries the store pet

There are no strangers here

Esto es comunidad

Moon shining on her face she lights up her truck

Ready for service

The lights read, “open”

¿A cuánto los tamales?

¿Tienes más arepas?

Un café por favor sin azúcar

Yo quiero un café, dos de azúcar y un poquito de leche

Café para mi, más leche que café con una de azúcar

Solo una arepa hoy porque estoy cuidando mi figura

¡Hola Doña María como esta de bonita hoy!

¿Y sus hijos como están?

Questions comments and food orders

This is the routine

What puts food on the table

Doña María always cooks and sells just enough

Never more never less

She's content with the little she has

It was never about wealth or riches

The sacrifices were for happiness

Sin papeles pero con sueños

Sin papeles pero con dignidad

Without papers but with dreams and dignity

The 7 train runs every minute during rush hour
Shaking the street when it passes by
Waking everyone up
It runs from 42nd street Times Square to Flushing Main Street
Purple
Bright
Illuminated and alive the train is never empty
The train is never silent
The train is always busy
The train is multilingual
From the train window
Five Pointz once smiled at us
Colorful and unique art decorated its façade
Rain and snow come into the train
Wetting riders
JFK and Lagueardia airport
At Queensboro Plaza you can see the skyline
The twin towers were once visible in the distance
At 82nd street you can buy the latest fashions
Cheapest jewelry
Colorful communion dresses
And quincinera outfits
Some elotes, samosas and roti
Or devour a bistec ensebollado at Quisqueya
On 103rd you can buy tacos
Real tacos
De carinitas o al pastor

There are no taco bells here no chipotles

There used to be a movie theater here

For a cheap price you and your family could watch two films

It's a CVS now

Helado de coco and mudanzas papi

Dozens of immigrant screenings, attorneys and organizations have come together down the 7 train

Mets-Willets point was once Shea Stadium

Asados

Parrilladas

Tortas de milanesa

¡GOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOL!

Sunday soccer games

The Unisphere

The Andean Food Festival

The Colombian Festival

Men in Black

San Simon dance practice

The Queens Zoo always open but always empty where are the animals?

The Hall of Science

Rowing competitions

Family gatherings

Musica playing in the background

This is Flushing Meadows Park

Blocks of auto repair shops

Tinting, cracked glass, new lights, oil change, new paint job, affordable prices

Willets Point

Last stop last stop

Stand clear of the closing doors

Two blocks up from the last stop you can buy four dollar sushi roles

Hot pot dinners

Fried and steamed dumplings

Buy 1 get 1 free taro, coconut, apple, chocolate, mango bubble teas milk tea, and green tea

Busy mall

Chinese New Year

Dim sum

Moon festivals

Red decorations

Admiring the dragon racing up and down the streets

It's a tradition

There are no strangers here

This is community

How will Doña Marla sell her tamales, arepas, café y chocolate

When the streets become businesses she cannot pronounce

Will her café con leche compete with Starbucks?

These signs of a cleaner and safer Queens erase the resiliency already here

We weren't dirty to begin with

Will her house stand untouched during gentrification?

My childhood is splattered across the windows of houses and buildings in Queens

Woodside, Corona, Elmhurst, Roosevelt and Flushing

Home away from home

The only communities that have nurtured my growth

Where I met Mexican and Dominican food

Where I learned to play dominoes and heard Bachata playing from the neighbor's window

Home away from home

Where I was welcomed since I was 4

Español spoken on my block I never felt alone or scared

Community not condominiums

There are no strangers here

Doña Marla packs up her truck

Her casita awaits

Tomorrow will be a new day

Filled with hopes that these streets will always stay the same