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Did you know that Queens County, New York, has over two million residents and is the most diverse county in the United States? Hundreds of languages are spoken, and the mix of immigration fluctuates continuously and has done so for over a hundred years. **If you want to see a slice of the real New York, step on the train and head to Queens.** I had the opportunity to do so last month for two very different reasons.

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, thousands New Yorkers were inspired to assist those affected-and we here at AAMD felt no differently. The **Rockaways** is a narrow strip of land which juts westward at the bottom of the Long Island peninsula, between Jamaica Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, and it was one of the hardest hit parts of Queens. At one point, the water from the bay and the ocean met on the Rockaway peninsula, filling the first story of many homes and storefronts with sea water, flooding cars, and leaving devastation behind. In early November, we spent the day emptying and stripping an older man's flooded, moldy basement. We removed tons of hardware and tools and what must have been a lifetime of memories. It was a hard day, both physically and emotionally, but on the ride home we all felt that we had done something important and that we contributed to making someone's life a bit better.

Last weekend I had the pleasure of returning to Queens. This trip took me to the Corona neighborhood with three different goals: to stop by the New York Hall of Science, to see the panorama at the Queens Museum of Art, and to eat. All three relate directly to the diversity of the borough. Upon its re-opening in 1986, **The New York Hall of Science** recognized that one of the challenges it faced was building broad sustainability within their large but diverse Queens community. The Hall actively sought a way to become recognized and valued among hundreds of different ethnic and socio-economic communities by ushering in one of the most successful programs to foster employment diversity in the area. Now named the Science Career Ladder, the basic concept is simple: the Hall recruits young people, mostly high school and college students, to work as **Explainers**, the museum's primary floor staff. On a typical day, the Explainers will collectively speak over a dozen languages, and many will be first or second generation immigrants from Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. I believe this program reflects everything we talk about when AAMD members identify the need to diversify the staff of their museums. If you walk into The New York Hall of Science you will see that it is a mirror of the audience it serves. A short walk took me to my next stop, The **Queens Museum of Art** (QMA), also in Corona. Much like the Hall of Science, the QMA has invested in rethinking its approach to diversity, in particular how to address a tremendous outflow of long-time residents and an influx of recent immigrants. One approach spearheaded by the Museum is the Corazón de Corona/Heart of Corona initiative, which aims to improve the health of residents and to activate and beautify Corona's public space. Instead of just expecting the community to support the Museum, it makes the Museum a stakeholder in the revitalization of its surrounding community.

So what about the third part on my trip? My goodness, the **food of Corona, Queens** is something I don't tell enough people about. It is that good! Two of my favorites: the three-year-old Tortilleria Nixtamal, for tortillas straight from the pan, and at sixty years and counting The Lemon Ice King of Corona, for lemon ice worth eating in the freezing cold. It was standing in the cold eating a lemon ice that this all came together for me. In one month I experienced two museums that not only serve their community but also play an active role in the success of those communities. I enjoyed two restaurants that represent the different demographic trends but happily co-exist. And finally, I visited two, slightly contrasting sides of Queens: the Rockaways and Corona, both equally gritty, and both determined to face whatever challenges arrive with as much energy and gumption as possible.

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