

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13, 2007



**Rocio Martinez, of Mexico, works at 116 Flowers Shop**

Speaking of life in Puebla: "The economy became troubled and we said, 'What are we going to do?' Mama said, 'You have to work.' So we left town and went to Mexico City. There weren't that many opportunities there so I came here. I was 18. I had three kids, and I am happy that they were born here. Very happy. I feel really proud"



**Jose Sorcia, 36, of Mexico, who owns Xochitl Unisex Barber Shop**

"Many Mexicans lived here in El Barrio. When I arrived here, there were many. Now I see a lot of whites coming in, and the Mexicans are moving to the Bronx. Whatever it is, the neighborhood was propelled forward by the Mexican people."



**Nilda Perez, Puerto Rican, works at 116 Flowers Shop**

"116 [Street] was pure emptiness. When they started to come, little businesses started to open up. You would see businesses everywhere, working people everywhere. It got more popular around here ... when they decided to come here, they decided to put their mind and soul to do what they showed what they didn't waste their time ... right away they showed what they wanted to do. Everywhere around here you can see it. There's not a place that I have gone that I do not see a Mexican."

Rose Morrone has been holding down the fort at Morrone Bakery on East 116th Street in El Barrio since 1958. Most of her compatriots are gone — she can count the remaining Italian businesses on one hand — but she has embraced her new neighbors. Yet it wasn't that long ago that you could count the number of Mexican shops on one hand. The neighborhood has in the past decade morphed from Puerto Rican to Mexican as waves of immigration continue to shape it. (Rolando Pujol)

# Voices of El Barrio

In Day 2 of our series on New York's Mexicans, we explore life in East Harlem



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of El Barrio

Photos by Lane Johnson



**Guadalupe Aguirri, 50, of Mexico, the owner of Little Mexico Meat Grocery**

"There weren't a lot of Mexicans back then. This was El Barrio. It was Puerto Rican. You'd see a Mexican and you'd think they were your brother. Nowadays, the neighborhood is full of Mexicans. The community has become more Mexican."