

# Editorial

## Silence Greets Queens Park Crime Wave

At 1,255 acres, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park is the second largest park in New York City, exceeded in size only by Pelham Bay Park in The Bronx. And while other parks can be found throughout Queens, for the two million people who live in the borough, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park is their unofficial back yard.

As is the case with the other parks in the city, the grassy swaths and forest thickets, the lakes and meadows for which Flushing Meadows-Corona Park is named are the scene of problems as well as pleasures. The latest such problem—to use the term lightly—is a crime spree that began November 20 and ended Friday, January 5 with the arrest of three teenagers—a fourth is still being sought. The crimes include a murder by machete and a Christmas Day assault so vicious its victim is still comatose and, indeed, may never recover. At least 10 other knife-point robberies were committed by at least two of the suspects, both 17 years old; police were able to charge a 19-year-old with only one of four assaults because in only that one case was the victim known.

In our book, a crime wave with 10 known robbery victims, a comatose assault victim and a murdered man whose body

was found in a lake the day after his killing certainly ranks as major news. And while it is a truism that news is seldom recognized as such while it is happening, after the third or fourth assault it should have been apparent that some sort of a pattern was beginning to develop. It is a sad fact of life that parks are far from being completely crime-free, but a sudden spurt in assaults, all of which happened after dark, should have rung alarm bells in several places, including newsrooms.

For the most part, however, until the Christmas Day attack which left Jae Woo Park comatose, little attention was paid to the crime statistics for Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. Not even the murder of Carlos Flores, whose body surfaced the day after his murderer dumped it in Meadow Lake, drew much notice. The news for the most part seemed to be greeted with a universal shrug.

Ten years ago, in 1997, a homeless man was killed and his body dumped in a lake in Manhattan's Central Park. The cries of outrage were audible throughout the tri-state area, as they should have been. The murder was a vicious act and deserved the opprobrium it received. However, the murder of

Flores, a 44-year-old Ecuadorian immigrant, for \$6 and a MetroCard, seems to us equally heinous and equally deserving of the kind of hue and cry attendant on such a crime in Midtown Manhattan.

Any kind of incident that happens in Central Park is almost certain to be considered front page news. This is all well and good. Our parks will become safe places that everyone can enjoy only if the collective voice of righteous indignation is raised whenever and wherever something happens. We must, however, point out that in this respect, all parks, apparently, are not created equal. Fourteen robberies, a vicious beating and a murder in Central Park would have sent a wave of indignation throughout the city. We don't recall anything much happening after Flores' murder or Park's assault. The unpleasant but logical, only conclusion possible is that in some quarters, what happens in this borough doesn't count for much.

Queens is a part of the city of New York, and so is Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. It's about time some media outlets—and even some people in fairly high places—recognized that fact.

security for the average Iraqi while looting destroyed what infrastructure there was.

If sufficient troops were used in the beginning, perhaps the sorry tale of Iraq would have been different. There is no way to go back in time. To do now what should have been done in the past will only compound the errors, relying upon failed policies and ensuring additional attacks on our troops.

Iraq currently is far more complicated than during the reign of Saddam. It is far more dangerous to the citizens of Iraq and the peace and security of the world. The attempts by [President George W.] Bush to change the course of events through the surge will not alter the realities. Increasing our military presence will exacerbate the awful circumstances that take the lives of Iraqis and U.S. troops daily and will damage the military's combat effectiveness.

The facts demand new and untried policies. The Bush Administration seems incapable of closing the book on the past, concluding that to do so would be to acknowledge error. Until ties to the past policies are rejected, we can expect only more of the same at additional cost in lives, funds, national polarization and growing hatred of the U.S. Edward Horn Baldwin, New York

### Lauds Vallone

To The Editor:

I applaud our Councilmember Peter Vallone Jr. for making such a difference in the lives of the residents of the Astoria area, as well as greatly improving life throughout our city.

Recently, I heard on the news that Councilmember Vallone wants to enact a law in the City Council outlawing pit bulls in our city and I commend him wholeheartedly for

this action. Pit bulls are vicious animals, beasts invoking terror and destruction, fatalities and injuries that are serious.

In addition, I applaud Councilmember Vallone for his extreme concern, positive action and caring about the Ditmars-Astoria area and his taking positive prompt action when the vans that contained movie equipment were parked in the area, causing loss of money and business for that area's merchants and business people and precious loss of holiday shopping time for the residents. That area was already victim to the blight of the 2006 summer black-out.

A tireless advocate for all city residents, young, elderly, in between, disabled, and one who has the city in his heart, on his mind and who takes positive action to improve conditions, Councilmember Vallone, in my estimation should be Councilmember of the Year. Cynthia Groopman Long Island City

### He Supports Edwards

To The Editor:

I support [former U.S. Senator from North Carolina] John Edwards fully. He cares about the poor, and is pushing his sleeves up literally not to stand for a picture op like our president did when [Hurricane] Katrina hit, but John Edwards is building new houses, by hand HIMSELF. That is the kind of man we need in office, that doesn't just talk, or throw money at a situation, but take[s] a literal hands on approach to fixing our problems. As an African American man I am proud to have met Senator Edwards, and he will surely get my vote in 2008 when he is nominated as the Democratic nominee.

William Flood Astoria



### 'Surge' Goes Nowhere

To The Editor:

The "surge" is the creation of Senator John McCain and his supporters, who believe Iraq can be salvaged after years of Bush mismanagement. Nationwide few believe placing more U.S. troops in harm's way will result in anything other than increased casualties and devastated neighborhoods. The militias are prepared to take on the U.S. military. Urban warfare guarantees destruction, loss of life and enduring hostility for the U.S.

Iraq is a case study on how not to manage an occupation. The present situation is the result of miscalculations, false premises and foolish beliefs predicated upon fantasies of single-minded desires. The White House may have believed that we would be welcomed as liberators, discounting history and the warnings of our Middle East allies. Any hope for success following the fall of Saddam was squandered by our failure to provide

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