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## Opinion: Don't Harass Small Businesses Like Terraza 7

JUNE 18, 2014  
BY **FREDDY CASTIBLANCO**  
SOURCE: QUEENS LATINO |  
TRANSLATED BY EMILY  
LEAVITT FROM SPANISH  
[ORIGINAL STORY](#)



Freddy Castiblanco, owner of Terraza 7 in Jackson Heights, Queens. (Photo by Javier Castaño via QueensLatino)

Dear friends in the diaspora,

As I promised, after I voted yesterday for peace in Colombia, today I am renewing my commitment to the quest for equality, and I invite you to read this message from a small business owner in Queens, New York.

On Friday, June 13, the [New York City] departments closed Terraza 7 with an excessive display of force, although the city allowed me to reopen my restaurant Monday afternoon [June 16], after reaching an agreement to pay [fines that I owed] over a five-year period. The reason [was that I] hadn't taken care of unaffordable fines [which I] acquired in past years, since my business's mandatory insurance was temporarily suspended. An auditor from the insurance company was negligent during a visit, which caused my business to operate longer without mandatory insurance; as a result, my business received exorbitant fines.

It is exactly because of situations like the one that Terraza 7 is now facing that small businesses along Roosevelt Avenue are against policies such as the "Task Force," through which all the state's departments harass our vulnerable businesses with penalties and unaffordable fines.

During the Bloomberg administration, small business owners were fined through the roof, while [the administration] simultaneously offered huge tax breaks to billionaire businessmen.

In immigrant communities such as ours, where small companies are the majority of businesses, the city departments (Transportation, Sanitation, Buildings, Consumer Affairs, Environmental Protection, the MTA, workers' compensation) should follow their procedures with visits to small businesses, but not with the intention of unfairly penalizing such fragile companies. Rather, they should ensure that businesses operate smoothly, grow, and get stronger, and they should keep in mind that small businesses – not large ones – form the backbone of our city's economy and our nation.

Instead of thoughtlessly harassing and shutting down businesses that create jobs and build community at the local level, city departments should check that they are complying with labor, health, and financial regulations as required by law.

As an American citizen, doctor, immigrant, and small business owner, I want to respectfully call on our city councilwoman, Julissa Ferreras, to reconsider and reformulate the purpose of the "Roosevelt Avenue Task Force," which hasn't been clarified, in my opinion.

Is it meant to keep an eye on public health, protect the well-being of the local economy, and improve our community's standard of living? Or is it meant to cripple the growth of a local, diverse, and productive economy? Why doesn't the "Roosevelt Avenue Task Force" investigate the economic harassment of small businesses, whereby the city departments force them to pay unbelievable fines? Why break up a nascent economy instead of stimulating and nourishing its healthy growth?

We have inherited a city model whose budget largely depends on the unaffordable fines that burden our businesses. We urge small business owners to stay committed to earning a living and supporting their families in order to settle debts that arise from arbitrary policies. These policies suck the life out of small businesses and increasingly demand less responsibility from billionaires, who avoid supporting the national economy with the taxes [they should pay] according to the rise in their earnings.

Tags: [Freddy Castiblanco](#), [Roosevelt Avenue](#), [Roosevelt Avenue Task Force](#), [small businesses](#), [Terraza 7](#)

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