

Racial Tension Eased By Early Thanksgiving Feast

**BY BETH J HARPAZ
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER
NEW YORK (AP)** --- Last summer, a black teen-ager was killed by a gang of white youths in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Bensonhurst and the area became a symbol of the city's racial tensions.

On Thursday, parents, teachers and students at a public junior high school in Bensonhurst tried to change the area's image by holding an early Thanksgiving feast attended by families of all ethnic backgrounds.

"Nice things do happen here because nice people make them happen," said Rose Molinelli, principal of Joseph B. Cavallero Junior High School, as she looked around the cafeteria at the nearly 400 people of Chinese, Italian, black, Jewish and other extraction who came to share turkey, stuffing, sweet potatoes and other traditional holiday food.

"This proves to people that Bensonhurst is a good place," said Rebecca Marston, a school adviser. "The kids are tired of the slurs being thrown at them. There are people out there who give these kids a bad name and it's not fair."

The school is attended by children from the more suburban, affluent parts of Bensonhurst as well as by those from the Marlboro public housing projects.

Cynthia Lambert, a black woman sitting at a table with several white families, said she decided to attend the dinner, "to show an example, to be among other people." Pointing to her daughter,

Cassilda, a seventh grader, she added, "In that way, she will learn."

Sally Yu, an immigrant from China who was brought to the dinner by her nephew, Johnny, a seventh grader, agreed. "I'm really glad to see everybody here."

"There's no racial problems here," added Ashana Jones, a black eighth grader who was among those helping to serve the food. "This is a good thing and maybe it will put things in a different direction."

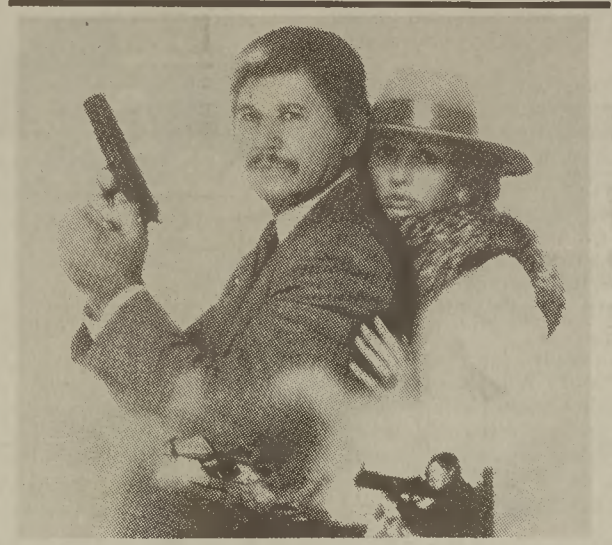
Parent-Teacher Association President Mabel Marzigliano was one of dozens of volunteers who spent two months organizing the event, decorating the drab cafeteria with pumpkins and turkeys, and cooking the food. Sporting a "Let's End Racism Now" button, the beaming Italian-American looked around the room and said: "They're all my children, no matter what color they are."

The dinner was co-sponsored by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations and the Council for Unity, which run a variety of programs to foster better interracial relations.

"We've got a really serious problem in the city with trying to live with one another," said NECO Chairman William Fugazy, who attended the dinner. "Racism is bad. Bigotry is terrible. We've got to attack it by starting with the kids. ...You're going to accomplish something by doing what we're doing, by bringing people together."

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"A Chrysler air bag saved my life."

March 8, 1989

19128 Merriman Road
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Mr. Lee Iacocca, Chairman of the Board
Chrysler World Headquarters
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Dear Mr. Iacocca,

I am writing to thank you and your team of engineers for having the forethought and expertise to install air bags in the Chrysler LeBaron.

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