If I Can Make It Here

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by Paul Hernandez

"If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere" — I can practically hear Frank Sinatra singing those words as my imagination conjures them. Why is that song stuck in my head? You might be surprised at first, but I have been hearing this song in my head when I've met some of the New Yorkers served by the Food Bank For New York City.

Sinatra himself clearly had made it in New York. But, I would argue, there are many more people to whom this statement should apply as well: the recipients and beneficiaries of the Food Bank's programs and services.

Many of the people I've met who rely on the Food Bank have lived in New York City for many years, if not their whole lives. We've come to know them and their families through our citywide network of food assistance programs — including our Community Kitchen in Harlem — as well as our tax assistance, food stamp outreach and nutrition and health education programs. And we can certainly attest to the fact that they have "made it" here.

New York City's working poor often find themselves holding down more jobs, for more hours, than is imaginable to many of us — on top of supporting children, attending school and caring for sick or elderly family members. Many of them are bilingual and multi-cultural — both accepting and knowledgeable about peoples and cultures from around the world. They are street smart and personable, reasonable and kind, quick to help and quick to tell someone when they aren't helping. In other words, they're New Yorkers, making it here every day, resting assured that they could make it anywhere, if they so choose.

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