Boxing gyms are rarely located in the most welcoming neighborhoods. The surroundings can often seem intimidating, but for Yuri Foreman the journey to the gym was akin to a trek into a forbidden land.

Foreman was born to Jewish parents in the then-Soviet state of Belarus, before moving with his family to Haifa, Israel. But the Foreman clan felt uncomfortable in their new home as the natives frowned upon their Russian roots.

The Russian settlers were forced to stay within their own community and with little else to do, Foreman began practising the basics of boxing with an old ex-Soviet fighter, Mike Kozlovski. But without any suitable equipment and no backing from the local government, Foreman's education in pugilism stymied.

Ultimately, Foreman came to the conclusion that barriers would be no obstacle to his pursuit of contentment. His dedication to the sport ultimately saw him venture into a gym located on Arab territory.

At first, Foreman felt threatened in the new environment, but he soon realized that underneath the religious differences, all boxers are bonded by a desire to succeed.

"After a while, the wall that was between us melted," he recalled. "We all wanted the same thing. I traveled with them as teammates. It helped that I won almost all the time. And finally, we became friends."

But the facilities were still meagre, with the fighters using worn-out gloves with weakened padding. Foreman eventually got to train with proper equipment when Kozlovski went on a hunger strike campaign and convinced the government to support the local boxing club.

Foreman enjoyed success in the amateurs, claiming three national championships, but before long he was on the move again, forced to flee Israel to avoid the prospect of subscription to the army. "That would have ended the dream of boxing for me," he said.

In 1999 his journey brought him to America, and like so many other immigrants he initially felt overwhelmed in the bustling urban jungle of New York.

With little English and no family, Foreman was isolated in the intimidating city.

"Living by myself here the first couple of years, I needed some support," he admitted. "I didn't have many friends, not much people I could trust."

But when he entered Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn, Foreman felt at home again. He turned professional in 2002 and has since built up a record of 26-0 (8 KOs).

Three years after Foreman entered the paid ranks another young man with lofty boxing ambitions ventured to Gleason's, willing to forego the relative comforts of his homeland to try his luck in new surroundings.

James Moore was born into a boxing family in Wicklow, Ireland. The noble art was the only art in his house as a youngster, and he went on to compete in over 300 amateur bouts, winning a bronze medal at the 2001 world championships.

But Moore grew disillusioned with boxing and hoped the pro game in New York would look more favorably upon his aggressive fighting style.

"I was getting very frustrated as an amateur," said Moore, 16-1 (10 KOs), earlier this year. "The judging system was and still is all wrong. I might have turned professional after I won the bronze medal in the world championships in 2001 but the pro game in Ireland was dead at the time, unlike today when it's thriving.

"Also, I got a hand injury which took the guts of a year to heal. But I saw what Wayne McCullough and Steve Collins had achieved by coming to the US and turning pro so I decided that was the road for me, and I've no regrets."

Moore's compatriot John Duddy has recently enjoyed extraordinary success in the Big Apple, but Bruce Silverglade, the proprietor of Gleason's Gym, believes Moore can match the Derry native's accomplishments.

"I'm actually more impressed with James than I am with John," Silverglade told Robert Mladinich. "James is a much more solid fighter. John has a more outgoing personality and his boxing style quickly made him a fan favorite. But once James gets out of John's shadow, he's going to be just as big of a star."

On Saturday, the 30-year-old Moore will attempt to take a significant step toward world title contention when he squares off against Foreman in a 154-pound showdown in Atlantic City, which will be screened on Showtime as part of the Kendall Holt–Demetrius Hopkins card.

While both fighters have some similarities outside the ring, when the bell sounds their styles could hardly be more divergent.

Foreman has proven to be a slick-punching defensive stylist, deftly avoiding punches while routinely landing textbook jabs and sleek right crosses. But in terms of excitement his rating is less than perfect.

The 28-year-old, who is studying to be an Orthodox rabbi, has said that his intention in boxing is to outscore opponents, not hurt them. That mantra has proved true thus far, as his punches carry little power, and when unable to land his speedy jab he has resorted to holding in an effort to avoid exchanging fire.

His most noteworthy bout, against Anthony Thompson last year, was an ugly encounter,

characterized by repeated holding and a reluctance by both fighters to engage. Yet Foreman has remained unbeaten as his skills have proven vastly superior to his competition to-date.

Conversely, Moore always aims to force opponents onto the back foot, attacking with a barrage of body punches and heavy left hooks. Yet his fine boxing skills have been underutilized in his pro career and he was surprisingly outworked by the unheralded Gabriel Rosado in a tight eight round points loss last June.

For Saturday's fight Moore has relocated to Los Angeles to train at Freddie Roach's Wild Card Gym and has been sparring with former world titlist Roman Karmazin and undefeated prospect Craig McEwan.

Moore's preparation will need to have been extensive if he is to enjoy success against Foreman.

"I certainly give Moore a chance," says New York-based writer George Kimball. "Foreman is facile, but doesn't have the punch to hurt him, and if James is willing to take some risks, pressure him, and go to the body, I can see those left hooks doing enough damage to stop him, but of course if Foreman just runs, which he probably will, James may not get near enough to hurt him at all.

"Put it this way: I don't see a lot of opportunity for James to counter-punch in this one."

Regardless of how they ultimately mesh, the clash of styles and cultures has all the hallmarks of a classic old-fashioned prizefight: two hardnosed immigrant pugs battling for success in the land of opportunity.