

Two Worlds in Chinatown: Authenticity and Identity in Urban Ethnic Enclaves

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Abstract

Ethnic enclaves are unique sites that hold historic and contemporary significance and special meaning for those that have interacted with them. These sites offer a transnational and local sense of place and can provide safety and solidarity amongst those with shared identities or lived experiences. This project examines Los Angeles's Chinatown as a case study of urban ethnic enclaves and their capacity for building a sense of community and belonging. This community-informed research analyzes 18 semi-structured interviews with individuals and those affiliated with Chinatown organizations. Participants were asked to describe their sense of community and belonging, their awareness of issues in Chinatown, and their ideas for the future of the site. Difficulties in building a cohesive "community" across Chinatown, actors' authenticity or lack thereof, and the prominent role of socioeconomic class, were a few of the significant findings from this study. This project presents recommendations that seek to address issues identified in collaboration with community members including looking to other areas for support and guidance, accountability for harmful actions, and investing a larger role in community control and power. While change may seem inevitable in ethnic enclaves, Chinatown remains a refuge for many within the multifaceted community of low-income, working-class immigrants. Chinatown's organizing efforts to remain true to its legacy demonstrate the possibility to continue authentic existence at the local and community levels.

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Personal Statement

Conducting this research has been a fulfilling process, both academically and personally. Being able to connect and build relationships with people who share similar values and are interested in this research project has been a joy to create. I am deeply grateful to all of my professors and people in the Urban and Environmental Policy Department, especially to Professor Shamasunder, Professor Matsuoka, Professor Rodnyansky, and Sylvia Chico.

This project could not have been completed without my family, friends, and classmates. Thank you for supporting me through this lengthy process and for helping me find enjoyment when I felt overwhelmed. I feel so content with the state of this research project, yet I know that I want to expand and keep learning and growing in my ability and in my community. I am forever thankful to everyone who has helped make me who I am today.

Introduction

Ethnic enclaves are dynamic sites of history, creation, and change. The value of ethnic enclaves can not be overlooked. They are significant in hosting spaces to live, work, and convene with others. Those that inhabit and utilize these sites create meaning through lived experiences and building relationships. The various perspectives people hold within these sites can also generate tensions within and across the community. Ethnic enclaves facilitate unique conditions and challenges to developing community and belonging. **Using LA Chinatown as a case study what are the most pressing issues in areas considered ethnic enclaves, how is a sense of community and belonging fostered and made material, and what are people's social imagination of this place, and its future?**

Literature Review

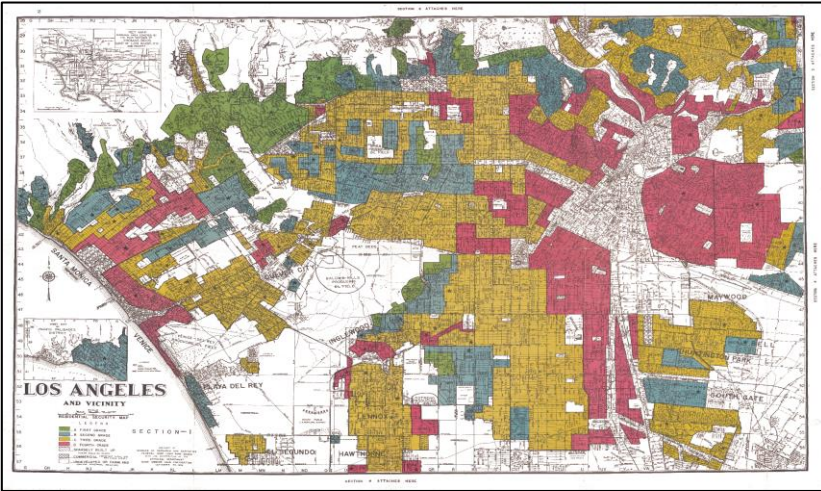
What is an Ethnic Enclave?

Literature in sociology, anthropology, geography, urban planning, ethnic studies, and Asian American studies provide context and insight into the formation and importance of ethnic enclaves. Further, documented accounts of these sites' long histories include conflict that has sparked intervention by various actors to address them (Li, 1997).

Ethnic enclaves are identified as a concentration of a particular ethnic group within a limited spatial area (Lim et al., 2017). Additionally, social and economic factors are distinguishable from the majority (Lim et al., 2017). The creation of Chinatowns and other ethnic enclaves have been out of a necessity for individuals to feel a sense of familiarity, protection, and connection in community with others of a shared identity (Li, 1997). For the Chinese immigrant community, ethnic enclaves became a necessity when enduring institutional and interpersonal violence initiated by both non-government and government entities. Anti-Chinese immigration policies and discriminative policies on the basis of race were factors that led to the development of Chinatowns (Gee et al., 2009). Beyond immigration, communities were confined to specific areas instituted through restrictive loan qualifications and racist housing policies which targeted people of color (Guerrero, 2019).

Figure 1

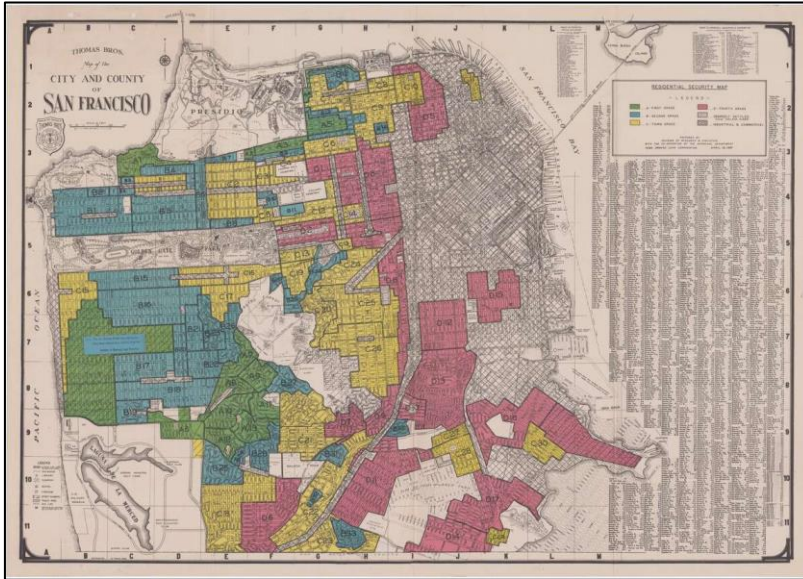
Redlining Map of Los Angeles



Note. This figure shows a redlining map of Los Angeles. From *New Study Finds Formerly Redlined Neighborhoods Are More At Risk For COVID-19*, by Kim, Christina, 2020, September 14, from <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2020/09/14/redlined-neighborhoods-coronavirus-study>

Figure 2

Redlining Map of San Francisco



Note. This figure shows a redlining map of San Francisco. From Guerrero, Susana. (2019, June 3). *How Bay Area maps drawn 80 years ago still impact residents' health*. SFGATE. From the University of Richmond's Mapping Inequality project <https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/bay-area-redlining-maps-asthma-health-oakland-sf-13923112.php>

The passage of policies that coddle and reinforce white supremacy through segregation, redlining, and racial housing covenants continues to impact generations of non-white communities (Sztó, 2013). Historically, these policies have restricted where communities of color could reside. Figures 1 and 2 present redlining maps of Los Angeles and San Francisco that were used to determine housing and loan opportunities that limited people of color from desirable areas. The impact of these policies continues to persist in reproducing the limited opportunities for these residents to move from these issue-ridden neighborhoods. These areas are concentrated with environmental hazards, remnants of catastrophic development such as urban renewal projects or freeway construction, and government divestment (Sztó, 2013).

In response to discriminatory practices and policies, in addition to the interpersonal

violence experienced, many communities began to congregate together, naturally creating ethnic enclaves (Yoshiko Kandil, 2019). Compounding factors of racially exclusionary policies and active forms of discrimination on the basis of race at institutional and interpersonal levels encouraged the formation of urban Chinatowns. Along with providing safety from discrimination and violence, this “strength in numbers” tactic allowed people to create communities with those who shared the same background and lived experiences as them.

Historically, ethnic enclaves have been created by multiple actors creating conditions that respond to the circumstances around them. For the Chinese, dominant forces of government and other powerful entities have intentionally corralled what they see as “perpetual aliens” into particular spaces. In response, the Chinese have addressed these forces to change the conditions of their existence. In its founding, these sites can be viewed as a method of coping and resistance to attempts of forced exclusion, cultural protection, and finding unity through the congregation of something familiar in a foreign land.

Constructing ethnic enclaves such as Chinatowns has been a deliberate and intentional process of multiple entities asserting their agency to achieve their individual definitions of “community”. Discrimination and violence by various hegemonic and interpersonal actors along with internal desires for a sense of familiarity and safety spurred the founding of many of these enclaves. While understanding that these are constructed sites, they must also be recognized as dynamic spaces of history, creation, and change (Park and Leong, 2008). These sites are both historic and contemporary in their constant change and relevance (Lin, 2011). As enclaves like Chinatown have existed, their roles have changed and transformed depending on the needs and populations that interact with the space it occupies, both theoretically and materially.

Importance of Ethnic Enclaves

With changing immigration policies, specifically the 1965 Immigration Act, the growing ethnoburb in the suburbs of LA attracted higher numbers of immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia to immigrate (Li, 1998). America's historic and present influence around the globe has undoubtedly shaped local ethnic enclaves like Chinatown. The history of America's influence in other parts of the world has led to a diverse community with varying impacts. These immigration patterns are connected to class and labor identity, which has been impacted by imperialism and colonization led by the West. Immigrants coming from Taiwan, Hong Kong, or other places that were colonized were often granted more opportunities due to their previous exposure to Western influence and the similar structure of education in their home country (Li, 1998). These opportunities offered more stable lives here in the US for those who were able to achieve them (Li, 1998). Meanwhile, many coming from Southeast Asia did not intend on immigrating but were forced to by the circumstances of American imperialism and war efforts to infiltrate their home country (Hsu, 2017). As seen with residents of LA Chinatown, many refugees work primarily blue-collar jobs and earn less stable incomes than other immigrants (Li, 1998).

Ethnic enclaves have supported the development of "ethnic economies" that have allowed minoritized populations an additional avenue to make a living (Lin, 2011). Scholars also reiterate that although ethnic economies have supported building economic stability for some, they have also allowed avenues for the exploitation of labor through sweatshops and other means (Lin, 2011). Ethnic enclaves host a unique intersection of the labor market that responds to immigration trends, connecting the local with transnational patterns and changes. In addition,

ethnic economies attract visitors who want to grasp a glimpse of a particular culture exposing tourists to new experiences whether food, art or an event. This process of advertising selected aspects of culture in a palatable way to appease and invite outsiders can be a delicate balance to achieve, if at all (Terzano, 2014). Cleansing and commodifying culture to be sold for the purposes of economic gain can be in direct opposition to the values held by some members of the community and the authenticity of their culture (Terzano, 2014). Catering to an outside audience can also lead to gentrification and displacement as outside developers are encouraged by and see investments into ethnic enclaves and economies being profitable decisions (Lin, 2011). These challenges exist and often lead to tensions between stakeholders in a community.

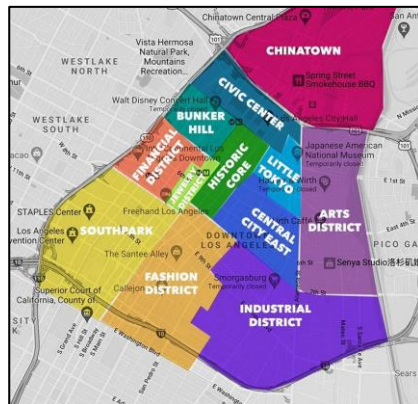
Geographer Kay Anderson presents a concept of ethnic enclaves that transcends the material into the theoretical realm (Anderson, 1989). Anderson offers a perspective that integrates the views of planners, sociologists, and fields in between. This idea recognizes Chinatown's material and social imaginative importance. The physical conceptions of ethnic enclaves as the built environment which hosts living spaces, commercial buildings, and covening sites provide a foundation for community to be built. Moving beyond, Anderson presents the concept that relationships developed in and with Chinatown signify its importance beyond the built environment (Anderson, 1989). Individuals' relationships with others, with the site, and with their memory allow for a "social imagination" to be created. This social imagination highlights the relevance and value of ethnic enclaves to the self and to the collective community (Anderson, 1989).

A Sense of LA Chinatown

Ethnic enclaves like Chinatown are often known for their history as a safe haven for the particular ethnic community it was created to support. Figures 3 and 4 locate Chinatown close to the downtown core of Los Angeles. LA Chinatown is both similar and different in that it has a long history of supporting Chinese immigrants and beyond. Chinatown separates itself from other ethnic enclaves because it has supported a broad community of low-income working-class immigrants from all across China, Southeast Asia, and Central and Latin America (Lin, 2011). Chinatown has a unique position in creating a community to serve this wide spectrum of people from various ethnic backgrounds, many of who identify as working-class and low-income (Chen & Mai, 2013).

Figure 3

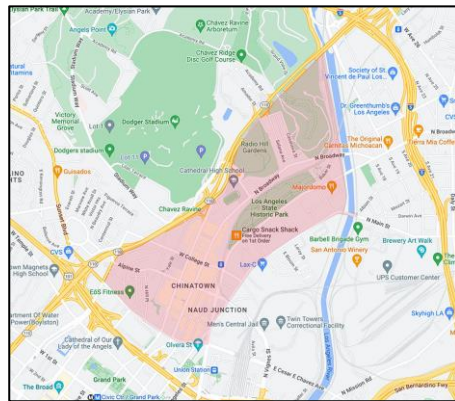
Map of districts in downtown core of LA



Note. From Lee, M. (2022, May 21). Is Downtown LA Safe? *Van Life Wanderer*. <https://vanlifewanderer.com/2022/05/21/is-downtown-la-safe/>

Figure 4

Map of LA Chinatown



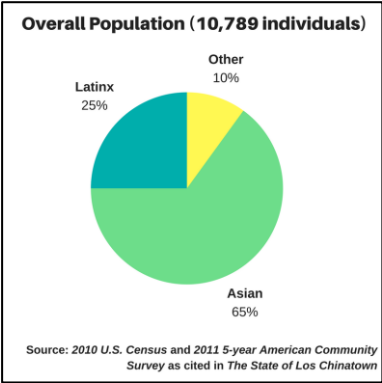
Note. Highlighted in red is the location of contemporary Chinatown. Dodger Stadium is above, LA Metro's Union Station is below, and the LA River is to the right. From *Chinatown LA / Business Improvement District*. (n.d.). Chinatown LA. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://chinatownla.com/>

Los Angeles has one of the oldest Chinatowns in the nation with a unique history highlighting the resilience and strength of this community. Originally founded in the 1870s, the untold history of this site continues to repeat itself, and contemporary issues have yet to be widely seen or acknowledged by most outside of the community (Luong, 2007).

The history of LA's Chinatown is rooted in violence, discrimination, displacement, and resilience. One of the deadliest massacres happened in 1871 when almost 20 Chinese immigrants were murdered in Old Chinatown (Moy, 2017, 01:17). Asian immigrants experienced similar events throughout American history (Mineo, 2021). Forced migration was imposed upon half of the Chinese population in LA during the 1930s, displacing them when developers decided to build the present-day Union Station where it stands today (Moy, 2017, 07:30). Still, the community has remained a space for many low-income, working-class, immigrants hoping to build a life for themselves in the US, with Chinatown as their starting point (Lan, 2016).

Figure 5

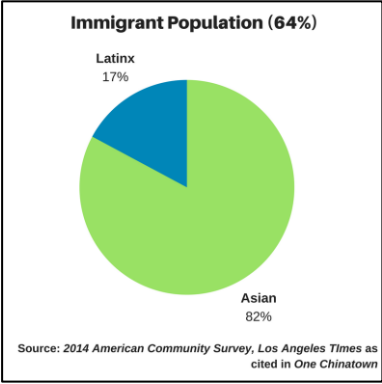
Chinatown Population by Race



Note. Figure breaks down Chinatown population by race according to the 2010 Census and 2011 American Community Survey. From Huynh, F. (2019, February 14). *The Gentrification of Los Angeles Chinatown: How Do We Talk About It?* *Medium*. <https://medium.com/@hifrankiehuynh/the-gentrification-of-los-angeles-chinatown-how-do-we-talk-about-it-26f459a241c1>

Figure 6

Immigrant Population in Chinatown by Race



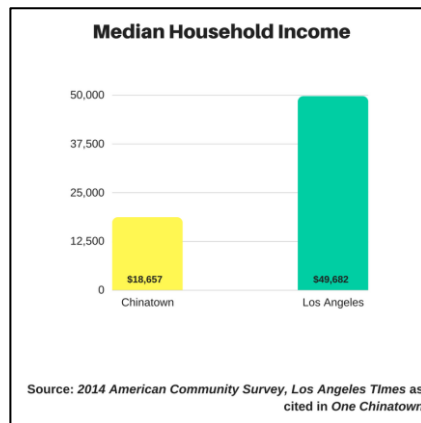
Note. Figure breaks down Chinatown immigrant population by race according to the 2010 Census and 2011 American Community Survey. From Huynh, F. (2019, February 14). *The Gentrification of Los Angeles Chinatown: How Do We Talk About It?* *Medium*. <https://medium.com/@hifrankiehuynh/the-gentrification-of-los-angeles->

chinatown-how-do-we-talk-about-it-26f459a241c1

The 2010 Census recorded 15,907 residents in Chinatown, with a significantly higher concentration of Asians more than four times the amount compared to the rest of LA County (Chen & Mai 2013). Figure 5 highlights that racially, the majority of Chinatown residents identify as Asian (62%) while Latinos compose the second largest group (25%). The elderly population in Chinatown is much higher than compared to the rest of the County suggesting the different needs this community host. The overwhelming majority of residents above the age of 18 in Chinatown are immigrants (91%) and Figure 6 shows that more than half are US citizens (64%) (Chen & Mai 2013). Figure 7 shows LA County’s median income hovers around \$50,000 while Chinatown’s median income does not reach \$19,000 (Huynh, 2018). Poverty levels in Chinatown are more than triple the levels in LA County (41.1% and 13%). Figure 8 shows 95% of residents in Chinatown are renters compared to 46% in LA County (Huynh, 2018).

Figure 7

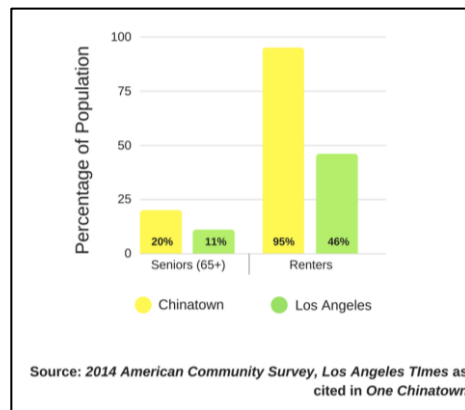
Median Household Income of Chinatown and Los Angeles as a whole



Note. Figure breaks down Chinatown immigrant population by race according to the 2010 Census and 2011 American Community Survey. From Huynh, F. (2019, February 14). The Gentrification of Los Angeles Chinatown: How Do We Talk About It? *Medium*. <https://medium.com/@hifrankiehuynh/the-gentrification-of-los-angeles-chinatown-how-do-we-talk-about-it-26f459a241c1>

Figure 8

Median Household Income of Chinatown and Los Angeles as a whole



Note. Figure breaks down Chinatown immigrant population by race according to the 2010 Census and 2011 American Community Survey. From Huynh, F. (2019, February 14). The Gentrification of Los Angeles Chinatown: How Do We Talk About It? *Medium*. <https://medium.com/@hifrankiehuynh/the-gentrification-of-los-angeles-chinatown-how-do-we-talk-about-it-26f459a241c1>

These statistics provide context for the concentration of low-income residents in Chinatown. Even further, “the median income for Asian householders in Los Angeles County is approximately \$65,000 while the median income for Asian householders in Los Angeles Chinatown is just merely \$17,000” (Chen & Mai, 2013). Researchers believe that this income disparity can be attributed to elders that are retired and may rely on Social Security Income rather than a consistent income (Chen & Mai, 2013). Actual unemployment rates are speculated to be higher due to the role of informal economies, temporary workers, or the unaccounted in this statistic, including those unemployed for more than six months (Chen & Mai, 2013). The differences comparing LA County and Chinatown are distinct in a variety of areas. In some,

Chinatown is overrepresented in the numbers of seniors, limited English-proficient speakers, and tenants, while there is simultaneously a disparity in economic prosperity and general features of stability (Chen & Mai 2013).

Just as important as the issues themselves, scholars propose that the framing of these issues in media and conversation describing it as “fading, dying, or aging” perpetuate a narrative of Chinatown that “frames the neighborhood as something that can then be exploited, conquered, and controlled” (Huynh, 2018). Huynh writes, “these descriptions are extensions of Orientalist narratives that dehumanize and hypersexualize Chinatown as a dirty and backwards yet captivating tourist destination” (Huynh, 2018). Huynh’s perspective on the framing of Chinatown align with Anderson’s view that in addition to the material importance of the site, the social imagination of Chinatown holds significance to also be protected.

As seen through efforts to organize and resist a host of threats throughout Chinatown’s history, members of the community are committed to continuing the legacy of Chinatown (Lan, 2016). Issues and actors who threaten the legacy of Chinatown supporting low-income, working-class, immigrant populations are often met by community activists and organizers as seen through the introduction of Walmart into Chinatown in the early 2010s (Lan, 2016). Collaborations between the Chinatown Public Library’s Teen Council and Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement (APIFM) to deliver groceries to seniors in Chinatown showcase the commitment from within to keep the community sustained as seen in Figure 9 (*Chinatown Branch Library (@chinatownlapl) • Instagram Photos and Videos*, 2023).

Figure 9

Chinatown Teen Council during their Grocery Distribution



Note. Photo by Lynn Nguyen, Chinatown Young Adult Librarian during Grocery Distribution on 12/11/2021

These statistics highlight the vast differences between Chinatown against areas beyond. The demographics and statistics of Chinatown alone can not reveal the issues, ongoing changes, or tensions within this site to the fullest extent. While there are unique challenges to living and tending to the needs of the community in Chinatown, this and other ethnic enclaves provide environments uniquely designed for specific populations to build and form a sense of community and belonging (Qadeer & Kumar, 2006).

Methods

This community-informed research project examined strategies to integrate more community members into organizations working to empower, serve, and sustain sites of community and the sense of belonging within ethnic enclaves. Social and cultural organizations, non-profits, and government entities informed my research project. Affiliates with Kow Kong Benevolent Association, Chinatown Service Center (CSC), and Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED) participated in my project. Once connections were made, some individuals shared other individuals to contact for an interview. This section provides details about the study participants, the selection of participants, and the data collection process. This research will benefit social and cultural organizations in ethnic enclaves to collect various perspectives and invite further collaboration to benefit community solidarity across race, ethnicity, age, immigrant status, language, and more.

Study Instrument

This case study focused on Los Angeles' Chinatown that examined place-based issues that may be used to understand similar issues in other urban ethnic enclaves. The focus on Los Angeles Chinatown was chosen based on its long existence as a major hub for immigrants from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Cambodia, and more, starting in the 19th century. While it has a long and vibrant history, LA Chinatown continues to struggle with contemporary issues of housing insecurity, gentrification, and a variety of competing interest groups (Chen & Mai, 2013). These pressing issues were factors in determining the location of this research project. This case study will be explored through the following methods.

Semi-Structured Stakeholder Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to connect with two groups of interviewees.

Organizational Interviews

The first set of individuals are affiliated with organizations working with the Chinatown community. These interviews helped to understand how different organizations' roles in Chinatown have adapted to the changing demographics and issues of the community. The second set of interviews included individuals with a relationship to Chinatown in any capacity. Most interviewees fell into both of these categories which helped to inform both areas of the study.

Attempts were made to connect with three organizations that were founded at various times in LA Chinatown's history. These organizations represent a small subset of the various types of organizations within LA Chinatown and provide a snapshot of the variety of organizations and time periods. The LA chapter of the **Kow Kong Benevolent Association** founded in 1954 represents long ties to the site and is traditionally a group with limited entry based on village, regional, or familial affiliations. **Chinatown Service Center** (CSC), a larger non-profit organization founded in 1971, currently services the LA Chinatown and San Gabriel Valley areas. **Chinatown Community for Equitable Development** (CCED) is an all-volunteer organization founded in 2012 with fiscal relations to a non-profit organization, though it has not sought out a non-profit classification for itself. These organizations provide insight into the spectrum of services and assistance that target the Chinatown area. These organizations also showcase their unique perspectives on building community and belonging within LA Chinatown.

Interviewees who identified affiliations with these organizations were asked how their group had adapted its practices and purpose to the changing needs and issues of Chinatown. These conversations provided a chance to understand how each of their organizations attempts to maintain support, remain relevant, and support the Chinatown community.

Participant Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted to consider Chinatown from a variety of perspectives and relationships with the community. These interviews helped to create an understanding of the sense of belonging and community one can feel in the people and place of Chinatown. 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted with Chinatown community members to better understand their relationships to the place and their idea of community and belonging to Chinatown.

The relationships that individuals had with the Chinatown community ranged from visiting, residing, or working in the area at one point or another. Table 1 outlines some of the various details and demographics of the participants in this study. This study focused on recruiting individuals that had a connection to the Chinatown community in any capacity. There was no baseline for this relation to Chinatown that disqualified anyone from participating in my study as I was interested in not only the specifics of LA's Chinatown but also in the social imagination of ethnic enclaves in similar positions and the future of their existences (Anderson, 1987).

As a volunteer with Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED), I utilized a listserv that included a subset of their supporters and volunteers in order to reach a

number of participants in this study. Another group of participants came from previous those in my network who referred me to others with connections to Chinatown. Due to this convenience sampling method, a set of my interviews were conducted using the snowball sample recruitment method.

Semi-structured interviews with participants were conducted over online conference platforms with one interview that was conducted via written responses. Interviews ranged from about 25 minutes to 2 hours in length, with the average being 30 to 45 minutes. Some participants were provided with a pseudonym to protect their anonymity. Typical questions from interviews can be referenced in Appendix 1.

Data Analysis

Written interview transcripts were edited to remove any typos and inconsistencies. Each interview was scanned to identify trends across all study participants. Once preliminary themes were created, quotes relating to each of these themes were then selected from each interview as seen in Appendix 2 (Meissner et al., 2011). Data shown in Appendix 2 are direct quotes from interviewees with as few modifications as possible to attempt to remove the influence of the researcher (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012).

Table 1: Organizational Profiles

Organization	Founding Year	Classification/Filing Status	Mission Statement	Interviewee
Kow Kong Benevolent Association (KKBA)	1954	<p><u>501(c)(4) organization</u></p> <p>Classification: Cultural, Ethnic Awareness (Arts, Culture and Humanities)</p> <p>Defined as: Civic leagues, social welfare organizations and local associations of employees, created to promote community welfare for charitable, educational or recreational purposes. (ProPublica, 2023)</p>	<p>“The mission of the Kow Kong Benevolent Association of Los Angeles is to foster an understanding and appreciation of our rich cultural heritage – our family histories, traditions, and values – by bringing together the members and our communities to share, preserve, and promote our legacy and continued contribution.” (KKBA Website, 2023)</p>	Dore, relatives helped found Kow Kong LA
Chinatown Service Center (CSC)	1971	<p><u>501(c)(3) organization</u></p> <p>Recent annual revenue: \$22,061,898 (2020-2021)</p> <p>Defined as: Organizations for any of the following purposes: religious, educational, charitable, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering national or international amateur sports competition (as long as it doesn’t provide athletic facilities or equipment), or the prevention of cruelty to children or animals.</p>	<p>“Our mission is to provide outstanding services and advocacy that promote better quality of life and equal opportunity for immigrants and other communities.” (CSC Website, 2023)</p>	Kenny, former employee at CSC Larry, former CSC employee

		(ProPublica, 2023)		
Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED)	2012	<p>CCED’s fiscal sponsor is Pilipino Workers Center (PWC), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization</p> <p>PWC’s Classification: Community Service Clubs (Community Improvement, Capacity Building)</p> <p>PWC’s recent annual revenue: \$5,015,376 (2020-2021)</p> <p>Defined as: Organizations for any of the following purposes: religious, educational, charitable, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering national or international amateur sports competition (as long as it doesn’t provide athletic facilities or equipment), or the prevention of cruelty to children or animals.</p> <p>(ProPublica, 2023)</p>	<p>“Chinatown Community for Equitable Development is an all volunteer, multi-ethnic, intergenerational organization based in Los Angeles Chinatown that builds grassroots power through organizing, education, and mutual help.”</p> <p>(CCED Website, 2023)</p>	<p>Sophat, founding member of CCED, Small Business Co-Chair</p> <p>King, founding member of CCED</p> <p>Kenny, CCED tenant organizer</p> <p>Kris, CCED organizer</p>

Note. Data from websites of organizations and databases with publicly accessible tax documents. From *Kow Kong Benevolent Association Los Angeles: Welcome!* (n.d.). Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <http://kowkongbenevolentassn.org/Nonprofit Organization | Chinatown Service Center | Los Angeles>. (n.d.). Chinatown Service Ce. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://www.cscla.org/About Us>. (n.d.). Chinatown Community for Equitable Development. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://www.ccedla.org/about-us.html>

Table 2: Participant Demographics

Name	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Connection to Chinatown	Other Salient Details
Paulina*	Mexican American	female	middle-aged	Lived in and around Chinatown for decades, involved in organizing spaces in Chinatown	Working-class, first-generation Mexican immigrant, activist, mom of 2
Sophat		male	young adult	Grew up in Chinatown, mom runs a small business, helped create CCED	Organizes with small businesses in Chinatown,
Kathy	Chinese	female	young adult	Current Chinatown resident, involved with CCED	Attended Oxy, international student from mainland China, grew up in a “middle-class bubble”, journalist, writer, aspiring community organizer
Larry	Chinese American	male	elder	Born and raised in Chinatown, connected with a variety of community groups that serve Chinatown population, previously worked for a large organization that serves Asian community across LA	
Dore	Chinese American	female	elder	Family helped to create Kow Kong Benevolent Association, attended and worked at Castelar Elementary School, involved with the Chinese American Museum	Expecting a great grandchild in June
Eugene		male	elder		
Kris		male	young adult	Went to Chinatown as a kid, involved	Grew up in Highland Park/Eagle

Commented [1]: add organization that they helped found

Commented [2]: add!

				with CCED for past 5 years,	Rock, attended Oxy
Kenny		male	young adult	Connected with Chinatown through Asian American Studies program at UCLA, involved with CCED for past 8 years, tenant organizer with CCED, currently lives in Chinatown, previously worked at Chinese American Museum and CSC	Grew up in Singapore, participated in UCLA's Asian American Studies program
Xiaoling		female	young adult	Involved with CCED,	International student from China, currently completing graduate studies in heritage preservation at USC
Annie	Vietnamese-Chinese	female	young adult	Grew up coming to Chinatown with brothers and aunt for haircuts, to go shopping, and to run other errands, involved with CCED	Grew up in the SGV
King		male	elder	Worked in Chinatown in the 70's, helped to create Asian Americans for Equality, a nationwide organization fighting for workers and residents. Helped create CCED	Met wife in Chinatown
David*	Taiwanese	male	middle-aged	Previously frequented Chinatown during a year-long fellowship	Taiwanese immigrant, works at an API-focused organization based in the SGV, current resident of SGV
Frances		female	young adult	Went to Chinatown growing up, found community being involved with CCED	Grew up in the SGV, participated in UCLA's Asian American Studies

					program
Connie		female	middle-aged	Born and raised in Chinatown,	Mother of 1, enjoys bringing daughter to Chinatown to share new experiences together
Lynn		female	young adult	Young Adult/Teen librarian at Chinatown Library, current resident of Chinatown, collaborated with Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement (APIFM) to deliver groceries to Chinatown elders	
Jenny		female	?		
Iris*		female	young adult		
Jackie*		female	young adult	Current resident of Chinatown, previously lived with grandma in Chinatown as a student at Oxy,	Attended Oxy, grew up in the Bay Area, mixed race Chinese-American (half Asian, half white),

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Note. Data from participant interviews and email correspondence.

Findings and Analysis

How do we serve the community?: Social Institutions, Direct Services, and Organizing

Limitations of Intention and Organizational Classification

Each organization that was interviewed for this study serves Chinatown in distinct ways. Their differences represent the ways that some organizations are limited or constrained by their classification or filing status and their intended mission. Kow Kong Benevolent Association showcases the long-standing role family associations and benevolent organizations have played in acclimating new immigrants to the US to currently acting as social institutions for those they cater to. When asked about benevolent associations and their role in politics, Dore responded:

I can't say that the Associations gave them their blessing to do it, but there were people in the Association independently doing it on their own. Independently, they became political... I think **they wanted to stay apolitical just so that they could service all their supporters or partners**. You don't want to pit a Wong against a Wong. And yet, you might get that when you have a political party.

For family associations, their role as social and cultural organizations constrains their involvement in the political sphere. In a similar way, the influence of direct service organizations is often confined to areas where they specialize. It is clear from the structure of direct service organizations and family associations that they are less inclined to build community power as Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED) intends to do, due to their mission statements leading elsewhere. Discussing the differences between organizations, Kenny says, "They're not necessarily interested in building in community power the way CCED is... Because our values don't align that way, we don't necessarily work together that often... we're trying to push for and challenge community power... the way that Chinatown Service Center is set up, they're not going to challenge their politician to meet people's needs because they get funding

from those folks, right?”

Adaptability of Chinatown and CCED

In contrast, because CCED does not have non-profit status and operates fully through volunteers, the organization has the flexibility and agency to act more assertively compared to other organizations. The opening and presence of Walmart in 2012 had widespread repercussions on the community, one being the creation of CCED which brought the community together to organize against self-serving actors in Chinatown (Lan, 2016). CCED's deviation from other organizations is recognized through its active demonstrations and confrontational actions toward politicians and community leaders (Yu, 2022).

For CCED, their reliance on the capacity of volunteers and unreliable sources of funding poses challenges for the organization. However, despite the challenges, CCED's impact on Chinatown is certainly recognized. Within the organization, Sopath discusses the changes that have taken place within CCED, mentioning that after conducting outreach to tenants, residents, and small businesses, organizers were made aware of the dire housing issues. In addition, he mentions the numerous issues the organization tried to address in connection with member interest and capacity. Sopath says:

Over time, we gained a lot more members and **as we're growing and have been more experienced, we were able to expand our work.** Our mission is always about empowerment and mutual help... we're working on getting the community altogether, as there are still, anti-unhoused sentiments within our community. We strive to empower folks... we're not a service organization and we're all volunteers... our work with folks is to build that relationship and continue our efforts together hoping that we will work to help each other.

The differences in CCED's mission and its ability to make an impact parallel Chinatown's ability to adapt to various populations. The mission statements in Table 1 highlight

how each organization intends to support the community in different ways, correlating with the era each was founded in. Kow Kong's focus on social and cultural connection can be linked to the early trends of Chinese immigrants who were subject to physical and verbal forms of discrimination and violence (Young, 2022). CSC's priority to deliver services to the community showcases the disinvestment and deregulation of government processes in providing public goods and services following the 1960s (Lin, 2011). CCED's intention to organize and build community power recognizes the multitude of issues in contemporary Chinatown and the lack of agency that those without economic, political, and social capital often bear (Lan, 2016).

While these organizations may share similar goals in their desire to support Chinatown, not having a clearly defined understanding of "community" can lead to antagonistic work leading to adverse consequences. Further, each approach caters to a different population and is operationalized independently from the others. While having various purposes and intentions is expected, the lack of cohesiveness in the direction of Chinatown leads to adverse challenges. Intragroup conflict exists as identity and background distinctions are defined through differences (Lin, 2011).

Positionality as Indication of Intentionality

Differences amongst participants arose when discussing who the Chinatown community should cater to. Interviewees identified actors in the community who are associated with self-serving habits such as maintaining slums and participating in real estate development and speculation to make a profit. Eugene, an elder with various ties to organizations in Chinatown shared:

There are different segments of the community... one of [the family associations'] goals is to perpetuate the legacy... that the organization has a proud heritage... in the business community, entrepreneurs are trying to make money or to just simply survive. And maybe there are more at that threshold of barely surviving right now. **They're not thinking of the larger community, they're just thinking about themselves, you know, can I pay my rent next month?** So they don't really think, how long is Chinatown going to survive? The demographic breakdown has been shifting... becoming a plurality, we're not the majority community anymore. So, what does that mean? *Well, there's not a strong voice in terms of leadership.*

Eugene reiterates previous analysis that Chinatown currently lacks a singular cohesive sense of direction or community. Further, his perspective relates to the different positionalities and roles people identify with such as being an entrepreneur or businessperson influencing a person's intentionality toward the community. There are obvious exceptions as the critique is not on those who are barely surviving to make rent month to month. Instead, the emphasis is placed on those that have class privilege and class comfortability instead of those barely scraping by.

Individuals are driven by personal values similar to how the organizations above are both limited and guided by their missions. As shown with different organizations, different actors can take on different ways of achieving the same goal based on positionality, identities, and values (Berkman et al., 2017).

Who Belongs to Chinatown?: Idealizing, Realizing, and Making Meaning of Belonging

Belonging Through Instinct, Familiarity, and Experience

It is difficult to fully grasp and articulate tangible attributes that a sense of belonging and community can provide (Yao, 2015). Participants detailed feelings of belonging and not belonging based on their connection to Chinatown. Some mentioned they had previously visited and were familiar with issues in Chinatown while some were born and raised in the area, illustrating the variety of lived experiences across participants. Connie, who grew up in

Chinatown shared, “We’d walk through it as part of just living. It wasn’t a tourist destination. It was our community... even though we were very aware it was a tourist destination. But for me and my siblings, it was just growing up going to school, being in the community, and whatever that meant... so I really felt that it was my community. *I didn’t feel not a sense of belonging.*” Connie highlights the unique perspectives people have toward this space. Chinatown wasn’t a tourist destination for Connie or her family, but there was an awareness that for others, it was as a tourist destination.

Participants recognized this tension of positionalities across the community. Paulina shared, “I’m always drawn back for economic circumstances or personal circumstances... [Chinatown’s] always had this low-income solidarity, we’re looking for deals and that’s fine. No one’s going to shame you... it really makes me a lot more free to behave the way I am, in a natural way.” Others share Paulina’s outlook of Chinatown being known to many who identify as low-income working-class immigrants. Further, there’s a sense of solidarity that comes from being in a space that does not pressure people to change their behaviors in order to fit the norms of the community. Paulina expresses comfort knowing that others in the community are in similar circumstances and won’t judge her for that. Despite not having lived in Chinatown, Annie shares this sense of familiarity:

I grew up going to dim sum and supermarkets in San Gabriel, Alhambra, Rosemead, and going to Chinatown didn’t feel that much different. It felt like, oh, we’re driving longer, and shopping is more condensed... thinking back now as an adult reflecting back, I’ve never seen so many people that looked like me or spoke my language. I would get my haircuts... and the vendors, they were immigrants from Vietnam as well... my family speaks Ngái, a dialect of Chinese, and when we speak to these vendors, they use the same Canto dialect that my family uses... it’s so familiar. **It’s almost as if we’re speaking to family members rather than strangers.**

Rather than proximity to the space, Annie’s sense of community comes from having frequented Chinatown to get haircuts and to run errands with her brothers and aunt growing up.

Annie's ability to connect through speaking Ngái helped her feel a shared Vietnamese-Chinese identity with Chinatown community members.

An interesting trend among elder participants, in particular, was to contrast the collective identity of Japanese Americans against Chinese Americans. Larry mentioned that despite the trauma from internment camps, the experience "brought them together" (Brokaw, 2017). His conception of Chinatown references those who are ethnically Chinese rather than the community expressed in this study. Larry's perspective reaffirms that identifying and defining "community" is a complex issue at multiple levels beyond the local.

Like Annie, Jackie, who was raised in the Bay Area and currently lives in Chinatown describes the internal conflict of recognizing her individual positionality (Berkman et al., 2017). Jackie acknowledges being perceived as a "millennial kind of yuppie gentrifying Chinatown" while also considering her "historical connection and roots" to the place through her grandmother and mother who previously lived in Chinatown.

Complicating Belonging

Defining one's relationship with a community and place can be complicated and confusing. Kathy, an international student from mainland China and current resident of Chinatown, recognizes the complicated nature of claiming to belong to Chinatown:

I'm still struggling with my relationship to the place because I am very much a visitor, but after involving myself in CCED and because I like to talk to people, they start to say, 'Oh, no, you're local,' but I know, like, 'No, I'm not.' I think it's a welcoming space for migrants or travelers, if you really try to understand the community or try to engage with it. But I also think... **there's so much politics in that.** But yeah, I see myself as a visitor.

Likewise, other participants referenced the pressures to stand in solidarity with community members who identify as low-income working-class immigrants while also trying to

understand their claim to being in a community with Chinatown. There is importance in this discussion of semantics and understanding who can identify with Chinatown as Kathy's struggle to position herself mimics broader perspectives asking: *Who belongs to Chinatown?* and potentially more important, *Can I claim belonging to the Chinatown community?*

Theoretical and Material Understandings of "Community"

Chinatown is a physical site made up of restaurants, rental units, dragon sculptures, and street signs translated into Chinese. Chinatown is also a socially imaginative place made up of relationships, memories, and connections (Anderson, 1987). Both remain true. Chinatown's history as will be discussed later, Chinatown has existed as a fluid community that has adapted to numerous populations and issues. While geographically Chinatown can be identified through physical objects or coordinates on a map, it exists as more than a singular place and encompasses those beyond Chinese immigrants and descendants (Chen & Mai, 2013). It is a community of people and can be troubled when forced to confine within a specific location or site (Anderson, 1987).

People's connections to organizations, establishments, and other people are how Chinatown is given importance and significance. Chinatown is made through the previous, current, and future connections people have with the site and each other. Moreover, while some may reside within the geographical definition of Chinatown, differences in lived experiences, values, or positionalities can pose challenges to finding community (Berkman et al., 2017). Belonging, when not tied solely to a particular location can be expanded to encompass shared identities, languages, experiences, connections, values, and politics, as seen through participants

in this study (Hall & Panarese, 2016).

The Chinatown community is both a physical and theoretical creation, having material and relational existences (Lin, 2011). Defining and making meaning of community is a difficult task, but realizing the importance of a place that exceeds physical boundaries and limitations presents opportunities for further creation and imagination.

What's Happening and Who's to Blame?: Struggles of Chinatown

Lacking Livability: Living and Existing

Contemporary issues participants mentioned included: gentrification, displacement, absence of general amenities, limited culturally-specific resources, low-income affordable housing, housing habitability, and the lack of investment in Chinatown. Though similar issues were brought up, there were varying perspectives regarding the roles that different people play and how to go about addressing issues.

Previous analysis revealed that the sense of community one can feel toward Chinatown connects both the physical to the social imagination of connections and relationships (Lim et al., 2017). Frances believes that the loss of community in the social sphere is an aspect that is often overlooked when considering issues to be addressed stating:

A lot of seniors share [that] one of the reasons they love living in Chinatown is because it's familiar and comfortable. They can walk around and go to a store that sells food they're comfortable eating. They can see their neighbor and play mahjong... those are things we don't think about or see, but relationships that get torn. **Those connections and social networks get lost because of these big issues being displaced, whether residential or commercial tenants.**

The non-material aspects of community are just as important to preserve, as Frances suggests. More thoughtful consideration about the impact of larger processes such as

gentrification and displacement should be implemented to audit cultural resources, physical sites, and loss of connections (Huynh, 2018).

Real estate is a major concern for residents, both residential and commercial. The speculation of real estate is one factor that can lead to the maintenance of slums and the loss of community amenities, such as Ai Hoa Supermarket, the last big supermarket in Chinatown (Shyong, 2019). The cycle of real estate speculation and developers continuing to purchase property, flip it by huge margins, and continuing to ignore the needs of Chinatown community members, both commercial and residential is deplorable (Zahniser, 2022). Kenny, a CCED tenant organizer and current resident of Chinatown believes that the most immediate issues are:

Housing, housing affordability, housing habitability... worst housing conditions I had seen before... single-room occupancy buildings with extremely poor conditions, pest issues, really awful things, and folks were getting like rent increases in these buildings... once you join [CCED], you start talking to people and seeing things and making connections to your own history or experiences with housing and these issues. The gentrification problem... *it's a battle against, capitalism, developers, and real estate speculators. It's also a big fight against government and a big fight against the city that continues to not invest in Chinatown... In a city that doesn't support working-class Chinese-speaking folks, working-class folks in the area in general.*

Kenny conveys the severity of problems and the importance of housing to Chinatown's identity as a working-class community. Like Kenny, other interviewees also spoke to the lack of government support and investment, many of whom interpreted the inaction by the government as neglect toward the many low-income working-class people in Chinatown.

"Two Worlds" of Chinatown

Xiaoling, an international student studying heritage conservation examines how these offices, fancy residential buildings, and luxury apartment developments will impact the already established businesses in Chinatown. Xiaoling's curiosity about "how these components are gonna coexist with existing Chinatown facilities" deviates from others who have not yet seen

coexistence achieved. King, an elder and long-time organizer in Chinatown observes, “**There are two worlds in Chinatown.** You have the long-time working-class, immigrant community with their stores and restaurants. And then you have the people who live in... market-rate housing who have their own upscale restaurants, stores, banks—they don't mix together... with the new addition, *it's just gradually eating away the immigrant community.*” King succinctly outlines the impact of gentrification and illustrates the “two worlds of Chinatown” that he sees existing. While the people who have the means and leisure to live in luxury apartments have separate amenities and stores, their presence has infringed on the already established community in Chinatown, whether intended or not (Huynh, 2018).

Pressures of Capitalism

The role of capitalism and class can't be understated. As seen through previous quotes, class awareness and the visibility of those with class comfortability is noticeable. Capitalism continues to exert its influence through real estate speculation, considerations of “adequate” living conditions where elevators and laundry facilities do not function for elders, and the displacement of community members (Huynh, 2018). These highlight the dominance of capitalism in Chinatown and those within it. The looming pressure to build economic capital to maintain grounded in the community is a constant threat for most in Chinatown (Huynh, 2018). More often than not, losses are more common and frequent than wins to keep establishments and people in Chinatown.

Paulina shares, “**We're losing so much** and I don't feel things have historically evened out... **we tend to lose, and lose big time.** If we ever recoup... it's not the same and it's not good

enough... **There are too many things against us and we fight for all of it, but we get a sliver.**" The disappearance of stores, businesses, and residents from Chinatown has left the community in a constant state of flux. The "things" that Paulina references can be anything from individual landlords and developers to larger systems such as government or capitalism.

Class Distinctions

When discussing the tension between racial and ethnic identity and class status in Chinatown, participants framed the issue around intentionality, critical awareness, and individual comfort and security. On a micro level, some in Chinatown have class privilege and class comfort without having to worry about everyday challenges many in the community often have to endure (Huynh, 2018).

This class privilege is obviously apparent in individuals such as Jerome Fink, Tom Gilmore, George Yu, and Victoria Vu, who literally profit off of others' struggles just to remain in their community (Chaplin, 2021). Dissecting further, intersectionality clearly matters in these issues as previously mentioned. It is hard to fathom Asian-identifying individuals who make their income off of Asian elders surviving on Social Security Income or whatever little they may have. Annie shares, "At the end of the day, **people who look like us can also be the very own the very people that are causing the issues.** So it really doesn't matter... [Victoria Vu] owns like 30 properties all around LA, and her mom looks just like my mom, you know, they're Asian, they're from Vietnam and they don't care about tenants and humans, they only care about money so it really doesn't matter. ***It has only shown that maybe money and capitalism is the greater issue.***" The awareness that people who are Asian can and do perpetuates the very things that we

see non-Asian developers and gentrifiers doing. But further, that maybe capitalism and the monetary value system we use is insufficient when discussing the state of people's homes and lives (Huynh, 2018).

For those with class comfortability, their presence is also apparent through the opening of establishments that are seen as "gentrifying" the community space. Maybe the most visible and well-known are the celebrity chefs who are opening up restaurants and the art galleries that have settled into the area (Huynh, 2018). Frances mentions the need for more critical reflection of class, especially for those with class comfortability:

A lot of people don't think about class in a critical way... for those folks it feels really important to be able to have a business or to sell things or to be in Chinatown. Chinatown means something special to them in a different way and what gets challenging for me and a lot of folks in CCED... you're complicit because you're not thinking critically of what it means for you to have a business in Chinatown while so many low-income folks are being harassed and facing economic issues. I wonder... is it because they're just not actively thinking about class? Or *is it because they'd rather prioritize their own comfort and ability to explore their culture or ethnic identity over all these other things*... I wonder what makes it challenging for folks to think beyond their own cultural and ethnic identity... I really do hope they think about their relative class privilege as people who are able to open shop there and, I think they're complicit in gentrification... I just hope they think more critically about their position.

Attempting to parse through ethnic and class identity in relation to contemporary Chinatown issues is difficult to consider. While holding space for folks to build economic wealth, there is often a lack of reflection on class identity or a disconnect that does not manifest in the actions of these individuals.

Actors and the Authenticity of Actions

David, a Taiwanese immigrant, and Alhambra resident shared his thoughts on his understanding of Chinatown stating:

[It] is not a place of economic prosperity, unfortunately... [Little Tokyo] certainly catered to tourists... selling anime stuff [and] teapots that are keeping up the trends to bring in people. I feel [Chinatown] chose not to go towards that trend... to some extent, there is a level of authenticity to keep it as is... I know CCED doesn't want Chinatown to become a playground. It's a place for residents who have lived there for

generations to continue existing and do what they can to survive... they literally just had their last grocery store go... where are they gonna go? **[Chinatown] is not as conducive to the trends and desires of tourists who may want to come and check it out.** But I certainly see the trend going towards that way with George [Yu] from the Chinatown BID and Chinatown Summer Nights.

David was not alone in his comparison of Chinatown and Little Tokyo observing perceived “activity” in the different neighborhoods. The Chinatown Business Improvement District (BID) and George Yu, the head of this group are often seen as one of the most active proponents of gentrification and perpetrators of displacement within the community (Huynh, 2018). The Chinatown Summer Nights is a perfect example of how different actors utilize their positionality to simultaneously further their personal agenda and their vision for Chinatown. Kris states:

It's all class-based. It's this lack of investment in working-class communities. Chinatown Summer Nights, why do they bring food trucks when there are restaurants in Chinatown? It's obviously not to support restaurants in Chinatown. It's to Orientalize the aesthetic of Chinatown and this constant need for tourism, and like oh, Chinatown is dying so we need a new chicken place that will *definitely* save Chinatown. ***These organizations and associations care more about either making a profit or their own individual safety rather than the needs of the community.***

This theme of individual security and safety harms the community due to complacency or active pursuit to further personal gain usually in the economic sense. Kris ties the individual desires of folks like the Chinatown BID who organize the Chinatown Summer Nights with their intent to bring in tourists and further mark Chinatown as a destination for visitors. David mentions Chinatown's authenticity in “deciding to keep with what they know” when examining neighboring enclaves' success in hosting steady “activity” through keeping with contemporary trends. This same comparison of authenticity can also be applied to individual actors in Chinatown.

The authenticity of actors within Chinatown, or the lack thereof, has material implications for the community. They manifest through the dearth of amenities in Chinatown

seen by the missing laundries, pharmacies, medical centers, and grocery stores. Annie shares similar sentiments about the poor quality of housing and the impact on the elder community in Chinatown stating:

It seems no matter how much we do... developments will still be built... it's sad and disheartening because it feels like, when does it pay off?... It's clear that affordable housing is a big issue only affecting people of color, older folks, and low-income people. Across the street, the Jia apartments are probably two-three thousand dollars. They have a bunch of empty units that none of these unhoused or low-income families can even afford because they don't even make that much. And their landlord is kicking them out. **Where are they going to go? What's going to happen in a year or two years? [These apartment buildings are] so old... are we just going to slowly let these buildings crash and burn until tenants are just kicked out or [wait] for these tenants to die off?...** **It's affordable housing for older folks and without proper elevators and laundry, they're gonna have to work so much harder to just live the end of their lives.** It's just really sad and difficult.

Considering the poor living conditions in Chinatown, there is a genuine concern that if someone is being displaced because of rent or for whatever reason, there is nowhere else for them to go. Paulina acknowledges, "Losing services, losing identity, losing everything. It messes with people's minds, and it really affects them... Overall, they're seeing places they know disappear... **it's losing identity, your personal identity. It's losing yourself. Chinatown is losing its overall identity.** I'm unconsciously losing places to take my kids. You know, there's not a 'what do I do next?' *There's nowhere else you know, there's nowhere else you can have this... there's nowhere else.*" People's sense of self and community is obviously affected by both material and social losses (Young, 2022). Annie's honest acknowledgment and her commitment to grappling with the issues facing Chinatown were present among many participants. Many affiliated with CCED mentioned realistic expectations to make an impact while also working towards meeting the community's basic needs.

There are clear distinctions between those committed to supporting Chinatown's low-income working-class population versus those who are interested in making a profit. It should be stated that while some choose to prioritize those most vulnerable in the community, it often does

not harm anyone. In contrast, those with the privilege to remain true to themselves as greedy and self-interested individuals affect harm to those primarily from marginalized identities (Huang, 2020). Participants reflected that some landlords and developers get away with “heinous acts, thinking they can make a buck, not caring about tenants or even treating them as humans”. The lack of care shown by landlords and developers often observed via maintaining poor living conditions for tenants, actively or being complicit in displacing both the unhoused and housed, and accepting the notion of profit over people reestablishes where their true authenticity lies, only to themselves and their profits (Huang, 2020).

Accountability

All actors who conduct business with and in Chinatown must be held accountable for their actions and inactions. Ensuring that a certain level of accountability is enforced shows a commitment to community members that Chinatown is not something to be played with. This study reinforces previously conducted research that privileged individuals, in particular, those with political leverage and hefty amounts of economic capital can alter community conditions in their favor (Lan, 2016). Frances framed it as a desire to “demand accountability, from the government, people in power, and people with more social and financial capital.” This includes accountability from developers, government officials, corporations, and generally those working against the best interests of the Chinatown community (Lan, 2016).

Making connections between material conditions, issues, and those responsible remains necessary to address and remedy injustices in the current state of Chinatown. Observations of Chinatown highlight its struggle to merely exist. The absence of essentials in Chinatown is

dramatically pronounced by the minimal services offered to the community. Laundry facilities, adequately affordable and in-language health care and social services, and a full-service grocery store selling culturally relevant foods, are just a few of the amenities that do not currently exist in Chinatown (Huynh, 2018). The lack of proper amenities reflects the inhabitable site the Chinatown community experiences every day.

What's to come?: Realizing and Idealizing the Future of Chinatown

Significance of Chinatown

Chinatown is important for peoples' material, theoretical, and social imaginative purposes (Anderson, 1987). The physical site of Chinatown needs to be protected to continue supporting the various populations of individuals that inhabit and build relationships with the space. Chinatown holds theoretical significance as a space for building community across ethnic, class, immigrant, and language backgrounds. Further, the concept of community is inherently exclusive while at the same time inclusive (Zhao, 2018). The duality of community transcends spatial coordinates and can be formed through shared language, experiences, and more. Lastly, Chinatown holds a purpose to uphold individuals' social imagination of the space beyond the visible buildings and structures. The relationships, memories, and encounters people have with the material and conceptual community of Chinatown hold significance for people's social imagination (Anderson, 1989).

For many participants, the role of Chinatown as a host to many low-income working-class people is an important feature of the community that remains meaningful. Frances shares:

I see Chinatown as a site for low-income working-class folks, particularly tenants and immigrants, the

political part is to organize and to be able to have basic needs met and demand accountability from the government, and people in power and people with more social and financial capital... for the Asian American immigrant coming in, Chinatown is a really special place... **given that Chinatown is a low-income neighborhood I think that's really key for me**, like what does it look like to have these in-language resources and cultural institutions and stuff to primarily serve low-income folks?

The legacy of Chinatown having specific resources tailored to the demographics of the community is important for community members. Similarly discussing the identity of Chinatown, King shares, "I see it continue to be **a place where residents, immigrants, [and] working-class people continue to live and have business**... I think that we will continue to push for low-income, affordable housing and helping small businesses, immigrant businesses hopefully continue to survive." Frances and King both touch on keeping Chinatown a place for people to reside and do business. The reiteration by many participants regarding limited housing available and in adequate condition speaks to its importance in serving the community.

As touched upon, other participants see the survival of Chinatown as a site for low-income working-class immigrants as they previously have. The material conditions of the community and the people that make up the community are inextricably connected (Lin, 2011). Simply put, if material conditions are not conducive to allowing people to first and foremost live, there's no room to develop community. Currently, residents and community members barely get by with the existing conditions and resources available, which can be linked to the struggle to build a cohesive Chinatown community identity and voice.

Similarly stated, Eugene hopes there is "a future ahead of me where we can get housing built in Chinatown that is for the people, we want to protect legacy businesses [and] institutions. We want it to not be an upper middle class, high rise urban enclave but ***we want it to be what has made it.***" Eugene echoes calls to keep Chinatown consistent with its historical significance.

Rather than becoming a community that seeks to become the newest and hottest area in

town, community members want the space to remain accurate with historic values and trends it has upheld and supported. The legacy of Chinatown has been one that has adapted and hosted many populations with a particular emphasis on immigrants, the poor, and working-class communities (Chen & Mai, 2013). While previous analysis considered the authenticity of individuals and organizations, *what is the authenticity of Chinatown?; and does it have the political, economic, and social capabilities to remain true to its authentic existence?*

Community Organizing as Authenticity, Resistance, and Solidarity

Within Chinatown, community organizing has offered a mechanism to remain true to its values, acted as a form of resistance against those hoping to change its identity, and encouraged unity across multiple backgrounds and identities.

Holding true to Chinatown history, King recalls founding Asian Americans For Equality (AAFE) when the local government did not invest in Chinatown. More recently, when established organizations did not focus on issues of housing, gentrification, and displacement, CCED was created to fill that void (Lan, 2016). This legacy of resistance to whatever forces may be and the commitment to amassing community power despite the lack of resources and support is an ingrained component of Chinatown's history.

The role of CCED has proven that community organizing in Chinatown can be a mode of resistance, solidarity, and a path of fighting for the community's continued presence. Kris connects the work that CCED is doing with building solidarity beyond Chinatown:

I was in this gondola meeting... and supporters were saying the same thing back from 2014. 'Chinatown is dying, Chinatown needs to be revitalized'. It's like the support of gentrification has not changed their messaging at all when we have just gone towards thinking beyond a single building... Like, yes, 651 [Broadway] needs their material necessities met, right? It's one of the poorest conditions I know regarding habitability. But it's not just that one building. It's several buildings in Chinatown and possibly out of LA...

look at 920 and [Victoria] Vu [Jerome] Fink, several of the slumlords either on purpose or accidental... [maintain] such neglectful housing conditions to force tenants out of their homes... *I feel like CCED has been expanding our demands that reflect not just Chinatown's needs, but Los Angeles' working-class people's needs...* how do we move creatively and beyond just, oh, that building that has six units. How are we solving our unhoused neighbors' crises, and these battles with real estate developers and government officials who don't care about investing in communities and would rather pour money into LAPD.

As a community, Chinatown has historically adapted to populations across race, ethnicity, language, immigration, and class backgrounds. In an organizing context, there is a commitment to expanding individual issue-based fights in Chinatown to a larger solidarity for low-income working-class people. CCED strives to build “grassroots power through organizing, education, and mutual help,” including creating habitable communities for people to thrive beyond mere existence. The community organizing that has existed in Chinatown strives to meet individual needs while having the energy and capacity to prioritize the movement for working-class people (Lan, 2016). The intentional efforts by community members along with organizations like CCED establish Chinatown as a community grounded in its values, show others Chinatown’s ability to fight back, and develops solidarity within and across the community through shared values and politics (Lan, 2016).

What Could Be?

Moving from the present conditions of the community, participants shared their conceptions of Chinatown and their visions for the future. Participants commented on the lack of a supermarket in Chinatown and wanting markets to serve all populations of the community. One asks, “Why can't we please everybody? Why can't we serve the people who are gentrifying the community but at the same time, serve the folks who have been there for a long time and live six people in a one-bedroom house? Why can't we find a way?” While different perspectives are

valid in their own right, it can be argued that rather than letting low-income communities conform to insufficient resources and environments, everyone is entitled to a standard of living that is not being currently met in Chinatown. Families should not be expected to or accept living in a single room, as it is not conducive to building a thriving environment (The San Francisco Standard, 2023, 3:17). To change these perspectives and expect more for all, community organizing and coalition building provides a method for making change. The work that CCED and other groups have been involved in helps to challenge notions of acceptable standards for the issues previously mentioned in this study.

Participants mentioned the role that accountability can play to rectify or ameliorate some of the conditions in Chinatown. Calls for those in positions of power with the ability to institute change from existing conditions to ones where prosperity is attainable for all (Huynh, 2018). Moving toward more community control and power may have the ability to change the current dynamics further than limiting comfort to those who have the economic, political, and social capital to afford it.

Kris shares his vision for Chinatown beyond borders, capitalism, rent, and money. Where material needs are met, where oral histories of Chinatown stories are intact with an emphasis on the working class, where peace and safety are achieved, and where there's solidarity in creating a future together (Hevesi, 2003). He says:

People just want to live safely and peacefully. People are tired of having to fight against everything... They don't want to deal with asshole landlords who refuse to fix their plumbing or electricity they want to live safely so that a fire doesn't fucking happen in their home... Chinatown's history of already being displaced... **home is about the relationship and connections made, not necessarily just a singular place.** I want to work towards a world where people have a safe place to live, eat, drink, have fun, and have joy, because that's what we deserve. If Chinatown is to be this space of building working-class solidarity so people can have joy, then that is what I want to work towards... Imagine if Chinatown had several laundromats. It's like, really? You know, there's a lot of hills in Chinatown, so I'm always thinking, wow, it must be terrible to walk with a bunch of laundry, right? So what if it was a bunch of laundromats? Wow, functioning grocery stores with, actual meats and seafood? I think about those amenities as well [as] this

dream of home ownership. People who live in the community, have a say in what their homes are. If they have to rent, then it's actually affordable rent not driven by greed. In a more ideal sense, abolish rent... maybe just get rid of property. What does ownership actually mean? Maybe we should redistribute land... I mean, abolish capitalism, right? Let's just get rid of money. How do we get to those and **beyond just relying on and begging for people with money and the government? And, what can the community do for you? I think beyond services, so it'd be a very hopeful self-determining community. That is Chinatown.**

The current state of Chinatown is interwoven with challenge, hardship, determination, and a continued sense of community. While Chinatown would not deny that it exists in a struggle with multiple individuals, organizations, and structural issues with material implications, this community has always dealt with change and opposition as the times and people have shifted. Chinatown's identity as a space created by and for immigrant, low-income, working-class people has been repeatedly challenged, and the community has fought back against the emergence of whatever kind of opposition. The struggle has allowed community organizing to recognize authentic actions and people, act as a form of resistance, and support movements for solidarity within and across the community. The value of Chinatown goes beyond its physical presence into the theoretical and social imaginative state of its community members (Anderson, 1987).

Participants introduce the idea of imagining something different for Chinatown, something beyond trauma and harm that has been and is currently being experienced. Taking logical constrictions and time restraints out of this metaphorical equation, *thinking about what could be rather than thinking about what may or will be in the future.*

Recommendations

Invest in Chinatown
<i>Government Intervention and Support for Local Amenities and Resources</i>
Community Preservation
<i>Support for Local and Historic Establishments</i>
<i>Protective Zoning Policies</i>
Sense of Belonging
<i>Community Asset Mapping</i>
<i>Inter- and Intra-Community Collaborations</i>
Housing Protection
<i>Ensuring a Standard of Living</i>
<i>Rent Stabilization and Tenant Protections</i>
Accountability
<i>Bad Actors</i>
<i>Community Oversight Board</i>
<i>Community Benefits Agreements</i>

From the data gathered through interviews with community members, Chinatown clearly understands the issues in the community. Below, a few recommendations are provided to address each of these defined areas.

Invest in Chinatown

Government Intervention and Support for Local Amenities and Resources

The imbalance in the investments made into Chinatown by actors has had consequences on the community as seen through the issues present. Developers have taken advantage of the absence of local government presence by utilizing Chinatown as their playground to experiment with new strategies to make a profit. Amenities that all communities need to function such as grocery stores, laundromats, and healthcare facilities have disappeared from Chinatown. While not solely the government's responsibility to provide these resources, there is a standard of living that the government should have a role in maintaining for all people. If not directly providing services and amenities, local government should ensure that another entity is providing quality resources that are culturally relevant, affordable, and serve all those who require them.

The local government can show its investment in Chinatown by presenting subsidies to businesses that want to open or reopen in the neighborhood and cater to the diverse demographics of Chinatown. This process can be a collaborative effort between the local government and the Community Oversight Board referenced below.

Community Preservation

Support for Historic and Legacy Establishments

In order to preserve the legacy of the community, mechanisms need to be implemented for those established in Chinatown to anchor themselves to weather rising costs of rent and gentrification and the increased threat of displacement. With the initial rollout of LA

Conservancy's Legacy Business Grant Program, it is essential that this and similar programs continue and that consistent improvement is made to support legacy businesses (LA Conservancy, 2022). Looking to other cities and programs for models of what is attainable, the Legacy Business Grant Program can look to San Francisco's investment in community preservation (San Francisco Legacy Businesses, 2023). In addition to monetary support for businesses and establishments, non-monetary resources should also be offered. These can include professional development, advertisements, or the creation of events such as street fairs or community festivals at the neighborhood level to invite participation from local businesses and establishments.

Protective Zoning Policies

The city needs to adopt zoning policies that protect historic areas against developers attempting to further their personal gain. Procedures have been approved and proposed in other cities such as San Francisco's Rent Stabilization Grant which offers incentives to landlords who commit to long-term leases with legacy businesses (SF Gov, 2022). Another consideration is overlay zones that are sensitive to centering the needs of those in the community (American Planning Association, 2022).

Sense of Belonging

Community Asset Mapping

To ensure that the plans to support the preservation of and investment into Chinatown are centering on the needs and lived experiences of community members, an audit of establishments,

organizations, and spaces in the community should be conducted. A trusted community organization such as CCED can lead Chinatown through a process of community asset mapping to assess what areas are valuable to community members and why. This mapping project can also invite community members about the specific aspects of particular physical sites or organizations that facilitate a sense of belonging to Chinatown. This community process will leave the community with a better sense of what they view as significant. This process can also provide local organizations and the government with data on where the allocation of resources needs to be maintained or differently distributed.

Inter- and Intra-Community Collaborations

Despite ethnic enclaves catering to specific demographics and populations, collaboration across these sites can cultivate a sense of belonging and community beyond the physical place. For example, participants mentioned the creation of partnerships across Chinatowns such as the organization Coast to Coast Chinatowns Against Displacement (C2C) which help to bridge similarities between spaces vulnerable to gentrification and displacement of community members (Yu, 2022). These connections that are built across places can deepen relations with individuals who share common values and politics and are committed to seeing Chinatowns flourish beyond existence.

More locally, relationships and collaborations can be explored and continued within the LA area. If the objective is to prolong the presence of ethnic enclaves within LA, a coalition between sites such as Thai Town, Little Bangladesh, Little Ethiopia, Cambodia Town, Historic Filipinotown, Koreatown, Little Tokyo, Chinatown, and more, is ideal to reach this goal. Members of CCED mentioned that interestingly, most of their strongest allies are located outside

of Chinatown. For organizations, collaborations with those who share similar missions can provide frameworks to conduct their work or attempt new strategies to achieve similar goals. Especially for organizations that may feel like an outsider being told that they are “making too much noise” within their community, these relationships across communities can ensure they feel supported by similar organizations.

While organizations within Chinatown may not share the same approach to achieving the same or similar goals, collaborations where possible can help to cultivate a presence that the community has the ability to be aligned. One example of this was seen when CCED and CSC collaborated to distribute food to community members during the pandemic. Having collaborative projects have the potential to strengthen a sense of individual, interrelational, or community-level community.

A campaign to belong could be initiated at the community level by asking a simple question, “*What does it mean to you to be a part of the Chinatown community?*” Organizations can utilize this and create media to build community through this project. Projects like such are flexible in scale and detail as organizations can vary the scope and level of components based on their capacity and need.

Housing Protection

Ensuring a Standard of Living

To address the lack of housing in Chinatown that is affordable and functional, the local government must step in when slums are created and when basic upkeep on housing is not being conducted. Just as the LA City Council employed eminent domain on the Hillside Villa

Apartments that were maintained in a state of disrepair on top of the landlord requesting a 300% rent increase, equivalent procedures should be executed within and beyond Chinatown (Michelson, 2022). If the government does not take appropriate action to address the housing crisis, LA will be left with housing that is exorbitantly expensive, poor in quality, and lacking in community continuity because current residents will continue to be displaced.

Although the circumstances of the Hillside Villa Apartments should be celebrated as a win, for the thousands of units within LA set to lose their status as affordable housing “covenants” in the coming years, will the City Council utilize the powers at its disposal (Chi, 2022)? Communities in similar circumstances as the Hillside Villa tenants hope so. Community and tenant organizing to apply political pressure can ensure that the government fulfills its duties to protect tenants and create habitable living conditions for all.

Rent Stabilization and Tenant Protections

Another way that protections for Chinatown residents can be maintained is through the Los Angeles County Rent Stabilization and Tenant Protections Ordinance (RSTPO). Regular maintenance on this policy would guarantee that buildings in and around Chinatown are tracked ensuring that tenants are not receiving unlawful rent increases or eviction notices.

Accountability

Bad Actors

Bad actors need to be held accountable for their actions in gentrification and displacement disrupting the sense of community in Chinatown. Slumlords and the Los Angeles

Housing Department (LAHD) have been allowed to create near uninhabitable living conditions without consequences. Despite LAHD having published building codes and standards on its website, their lack of enforcement for landlords to meet these codes and standards needs to change (LAHD, 2022). For LAHD, their lack of action to ensure habitable living spaces for all is abundantly clear when observing the conditions for many in Chinatown. The local government needs to monitor LAHD's work and take the burden off of the community to feel like watchdogs over this public agency's terrible efforts.

With a revamped LAHD that takes action against landlords not meeting the code or who maintain slums, LAHD could potentially implement fines, acquire units or buildings for a limited time, or effectively take away all properties under the ownership of a person or company.

It should be expected that landlords provide a laundry room and an operating elevator, especially if it is stated that they will provide such amenities. Further, in-language communication is essential when many tenants are elders and seniors who are limited English proficient.

Community Oversight Board

Currently, Chinatown maintains a multitude of voices and perspectives, and having a designated Chinatown Community Oversight Board (CCOB) afforded certain privileges would be a step toward practicing accountability for individual actors and organizations. The CCOB would not only be a space to assert accountability on behalf of the community, but it would also be a regular meeting place for community stakeholders to convene. The CCOB would prioritize long-term stakeholders' perspectives with representatives being residents, business owners, tenants, workers, youth, and others who make up the diversity of Chinatown.

The CCOB would move current levers of power in Chinatown to instituting tangible community power and control. This would be achieved through a partnership between local government officials allowing certain responsibilities to be delegated to the CCOB body. This could include negotiating CBAs, referring landlords in violation of housing codes to the LAHD, or overseeing programming and projects in the community. If the local government agrees to supply an annual budget from the local City Council person's office, this could be a resource to institute changes that are community-driven and directed.

Community Benefits Agreements

To combat greedy developers, policies need to be set to ensure that actors are not pushing developments through without the community's input and approval. Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) that are created with new incoming businesses should be evaluated on their merit following standard procedures with the addition of qualities in serving the community, impact on gentrification and displacement, and maintaining community identity. Although some developers in the past have gotten away with bribery, this kind of action should be discouraged and punished (Lan, 2016).

For future CBAs, the process should include involvement from other community members besides the Chinatown Business Improvement District (BID). These CBAs could invite developers to see the Community Oversight Board to negotiate terms and agreements of community impact and the actor's authenticity to Chinatown's legacy.

Conclusion

Research on ethnic enclaves is seen across a variety of fields, though community-informed research to address current and ongoing issues in these communities is less commonly conducted. While this research explored issues faced by Chinatown, it is clear that action needs to be taken to hold members accountable and to create change for the betterment of the broader community. This research highlights the importance of Chinatown for a variety of stakeholders past and present in forming their identity, being in some place familiar, or somewhere to find community. Chinatown will continue to hold an important role moving forward and will have defenders of its legacy as a low-income working-class community.

This study was limited by the few connections I had with Chinatown, time constraints, and capacity. Due to my previous connection organizing with CCED, a large portion of the interviewees in this study were also affiliated with the organization. While I am proud of the study presented, this project is only a portion of what I would have wanted to conduct with unlimited time and capacity.

This research highlights the importance of LA Chinatown as a site of community and the role that it continues to play in community members' upbringing, identity formation, and sense of community and belonging. This study affirms issues faced on a daily basis as some individuals struggle to make ends meet with the bare necessities in the community. At the same time, support and care for comrades and community members echoed the legacy of community advocacy and organizing in Chinatown. Our collective and constant determination will get us to a Chinatown that is habitable, livable, and thriving for all.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Interview Questions

Hello, thank you for making time to speak with me regarding my research project. I'm currently conducting my undergraduate thesis at Occidental College in the Urban and Environmental Policy Department. My project is exploring sites of community in urban ethnic enclaves and their impact on community members' social imagination of Chinatown and their sense of community and belonging. Your participation in this interview will help me better understand the latter part of my project gathering a sense of different people's relationship to Chinatown and their sense of community and belonging. The questions will be focused on your idea of community, the social imagination of Chinatown, and its future. This interview should take roughly 30 to 45 minutes.

Personal History, Place, and Belonging:

1. Please share the name and pronouns that you prefer to use.
2. How do you identify? (i.e. racially, ethnically, generation status, etc)
3. Can you tell me about where you grew up?
4. When and where were you able to feel a sense of community?
5. Were there any particular people, places, or organizations that were prominent in your upbringing or helped provide that sense of community and belonging?
6. What are your most memorable experiences from that place?

Connection and Change:

7. Were there cultural enclaves that you visited in your hometown?
8. Can you tell me more about your connection to these places?
9. As you've grown up, has your connection to this site changed (i.e. number of occurrences, where you go, or your purpose for visiting)?

LA Specific:

10. How would you describe your connection to LA's Chinatown?
11. How and why did you get connected to CCED?
12. Why do you think the work that these organizations are doing is important?

Crisis and Change:

13. How do you think ethnic enclaves like Chinatown are changing?
14. What are the biggest issues that you think these areas face?
15. With recent violence within Asian communities, how do you think we should build community?

Appendix 2: Statements Describing Community

I think, because I grew up in SGV, because I grew up going to dim sum and supermarkets in San Gabriel, Alhambra, Rosemead, going to Chinatown didn't feel that much different. It just felt like, oh, we're driving longer, and shopping is more condensed. And, you know, there's more people it's more city-like rather than, suburban, I guess. So thinking back now as an adult looking, reflecting back, that's what it would have felt like. I never felt like where I've never seen so many people that looked like me or that spoke my language. I mean, like I mentioned earlier, I would get my hair cuts and things like that. And the people that the you know, the vendors they they were immigrants from Vietnam as well. So talking to them, my family speaks Ngái, which is the dialect of Chinese. But when we speak to these vendors, they use the same Canto dialect that my family uses, as well, because my family also speaks Canto. So it just it's so familiar. It's almost as if we're just speaking to family members rather than strangers, if that makes sense.

-Annie

I remember as I got older thinking I could recognize the difference between someone who grew up and lived in Chinatown versus someone who grew up and lived in a distant suburb. Now I can't do that because everybody's so different and diverse. And so I think I really felt that it was my community. I didn't feel not a sense of belonging. When you know, keep in mind I grew up in a very Chinese traditional family, so I belonged already. So Chinatown was really just an extension of that. All my friends had similar families with grandparents living with them. So there wasn't any sense of not belonging.

-Connie

I guess with the Youth Center experience it was like being a part of a lot of these students' lives and then a lot of the parents would kind of interact as well. So... it kind of really felt like I had a position in the community as someone who's tutoring and they called me teacher all the time even though wasn't actually a teacher or anything. So yeah, that for me, that was that was big. And the other thing is probably like the tenant organizing work. So when I did move, move into the neighborhood, that's when I got more involved in the tenant organizing. It made it a lot easier for me to do house visits or like go knock on doors outside of the CCED outreach schedule. I could kinda of go on my own or go with a couple other folks to go talk to people or go to the tenant meetings. I think it's been in those spaces where I really feel part of the community to like as a CCED person, but I'm also like a tenant in that space, or

I'm also a tenant organizer in that space. So that's been really great for me to connect and a lot of the folks that I organize alongside are actually Southeast Asian, or Latinx folks. So a lot of folks who, because I don't speak Chinese, so a lot of the folks I organize with are actually not Chinese, and also English speakers so that's kind of helped me kind of find that community too in that way.

-Kenny

I think when I was still in the beginning of CCED, I felt like an outsider, someone that didn't really grow up physically in Chinatown... I think, because I'm in two buildings I organize with, one is Hillside Villa and the other is 651 North Broadway. And I think what really hit me was whenever like, I didn't go to meetings. So for Hillside Villa, it's a bit irregular, not irregular, it's unique in that we meet every week. Not every tenant association needs to meet every week. But then, the times where I don't go, and then next week, I will come back, and then all the tenants there will be like, Where were you? Why were you gone? It's like, oh, yes, in a way of feeling needed, and having that role. It's not something I kind of agree with, but it's also like, I guess it's that feeling of, Oh, you were missed and needed. And that's why you're in this fight. And it's hard to grapple with because we also acknowledge, like, we are obligated here, our own will, we're not paying people to be with us, we don't want to associate such negative emotions for you to be in our org. So sometimes we worry about this, like, retainment sort of thing. And kind of, like, how much to put yourself into organizing. And so, I've been having such, I've been trying to grapple with these feelings of, oh, it's like, part of the community, but also there's so much work, and it's like, how do you deal with that in a meaningful way, but also, I guess, it's also feeling like the pressure of like, your shoulders, and when the point of like being in community is that, like, everyone has it together and it's not just one single person to have this pressure. Um, and then this misnomer as well, that Chinatown is only full of Chinese people, when, our community is much more diverse. And it's also like, just because you can speak Cantonese doesn't mean you can, speak to everyone in Chinatown.

-Kris

It means knowing who you gather around when sh*t hits the fan. CCED was really important to me because it was a group of people who held the same values as me, and wanted to make a positive difference in the world, and was down to make good trouble. While everyone had a different way of approaching the "problem" (problem being gentrification, social issues, housing rights, black lives matter), our shared values kept us together. We definitely went through our share of conflicts (interpersonal, structural, etc), and belonging was also a by-product of growing through those changes. There were also people who didn't feel a sense of belonging,

and brought it up as an issue. We needed to work through those, learning how to heal, and had to invest in our ability to be together through tough times (and not conflict-avoidant!).

-Jenny

I definitely feel that many of the residents or the original residents of West San Gabriel Valley, and that's a loaded term—but a lot of the residents, the older generation of folks have moved from Chinatown to Monterey Park/Alhambra, because that was like, Oh, we can get out of this like densely populated area to finally getting the “American Dream”. A single family house with a yard so I think there's still a lot of connections from West San Gabriel Valley residents to Chinatown. They just feel like that's where I grew up. That's where my community was for so long, but my family decided to go take a risk and buy a home in the West San Gabriel Valley. And they could speak on fond memories of when they would go out to restaurants or go to grocery stores or the corner shops in Chinatown... so there's definitely good views from nostalgia back in Chinatown for some of these residents. But I know that they were also some of the older generation folks were concerned more about crime. They were very concerned about crime that happens in Chinatown and homelessness, unfortunately. And they feel the new suburb I've moved into is much more safe and I don't feel crime. There's less “undesirables” in Monterey Park and Alhambra compared to Chinatown. So there is that side of the coin. Unfortunately, when it comes to like the view of Chinatown is like, Oh, this is an old place I've left and I've moved on to better things to some extent. But I think for the younger Asian American crowd who are after that generation, view that place with like nostalgia, like that was a place where I grew up going to restaurants and I walked through this place and I remember this. And there's definitely a generational divide there as well.

-David

Appendix 3: Statements Describing Issues

throwing numbers you probably might know, of like Chinatown, second poorest city, in LA, median income is, according to the LA City, but then like the average median income in Chinatown is actually like 19k to 20k, right? Probably even lower now. Um, what I was as like, housing, housing stock is like definitely the biggest thing besides like, just general amenities like, hospital, supermarket, laundromat. It's just that like, so when I first joined, like, in 2018... CCED is really different in that, like, we're not just, I think, like, people think we're like a tenant rights org, which is true. But we're like, we're an organization that fights a lot of things. And for the, like, preservation of affordable homes, and for the habitability of these homes, but also like this leg of our like, small business, the Small Business Development. Like, again, like our origins in fighting against Walmart, right, because that was going to hurt small businesses. So it's just funny because like, I was a couple of CCED members were in this gondola meeting. I don't know if you've heard about but right, they're trying to build a gondola and like, the supporters were just saying the same thing back from 2014 back from 2018 Chinatown is dying, Chinatown needs to be revitalized. And it's like these these the support of like gentrification has not changed their messaging at all when I feel like we have just gone towards more like oh, like, **we need to think bigger beyond just like a single building, right?** Like, yes, 651 needs their, like needs their material necessities met, right? One of like, the poorest conditions I know of regarding like habitability. But there it's like not just that one building. It's like several buildings in Chinatown several buildings possibly out of LA look at like the work that Kenny has been doing with 920 and (Victoria) Vu (Jerome) Fink were like, several the slumlords are either like on purpose or accidental, I can't tell, just such as like neglectful conditions, neglectful housing conditions to force tenants out of their homes, so that they can flip the property, and then charge them to like 3000 3000 rent a months. And it's kind of like, **I feel like CCED has like been expanding sort of like our demands into such like a wider amount that like reflects not just Chinatown's needs, but really like Los Angeles' working-class, people's needs.** So those are just like, things that my brain was like, really reflecting on? And like, how do we move creatively and beyond just like, oh, like, you know, that that building that has only like six units? Well, you know, it could just go empty when it's like, how are we solving our, like, unhoused neighbors' crises, and like, these these battles with, like real estate developers and like, again, government officials who don't care about investing in communities, and would rather pour money into LAPD.

-Kris

I noticed that a lot of the places that I remember as a child were still there. So the temple at the time, the shop was still there, Ai Hoa was there, I think my understanding of Chinatown also expanded, because as a child, I do remember, those key places that my family would go to a lot. And then when I went back to Chinatown, when I was older, I was able to see wait, it's not just a temple and jewelry shop, there's all these other commercial businesses and spaces but also the residential side of Chinatown. I think the residential

neighborhood I didn't have a sense of growing up, because I didn't personally know folks at the time who lived in Chinatown or who had family in Chinatown. I really did have an expanded perspective on Chinatown. And then over the years, it's been seven or eight years since, I've gotten more involved in CCED. I have seen a lot of the places close down because they've been displaced or evicted or are, you know, forced to close down because of the circumstances of real estate speculation and gentrification. And so I think that's been really heartbreaking to think about how Chinatown used to be and what it is now.

-Frances

Appendix 4: Statements Describing Perception of Chinatown

I love seeing life on the streets. I love people out of their brick and mortar places, even just, Chinatown has always been those kind of little side, not quite the sidewalk, but more where the street lamp is and people there. And whether they're doing something that doesn't cost money or something that you know, you're there selling fruit or they're... I think you'll find in Chinatown LA, that both, you'll always find every kind of person selling whatever, right or playing games or talking and I think that's that kind of, you know, you can always go out, go outside your house and find that. And that's something you can't really make, like from top down a city can't implement the things that are precious to a community. And so when they try to I think it always backfires because either they don't really want it or they actually like they don't, they don't listen to the community and then they don't want it the way we want it. You know, they consider it dirty or whatever, you know that there's all kinds of like they can go the legal route and say that there's you know, a, like food violations or something. So whether it's Broadway that I always go back to, or even if my favorite restaurants shut down, I'll find another one. It's just kind of the life on the street.

-Iciar

And yeah, it wasn't until like, being there and like, having to, like, show my coworkers around and being like, oh, yeah, we should go here, we should go there. And you know, just walking through the streets. It just felt weird because like, I felt like we were, I felt like I was going to Chinatown as a tourist, even though I, I've always been there, I think it was because I was with coworkers that they were like, Oh, what's this? What's that? Like? Or ew! What is that? Or like, this is dirty, you know, things like that. So, and then it wasn't until then also, like just going back to work and being more like cognizant of comments made around like Asian culture, or like, we had a campaign with this, this Victoria's Secret model, she's Chinese. And comments like that, also, from my manager, about just Chinese culture, just really rubbed me the wrong way. And that's when I was more aware of like, these types of cultural things, because, you know, growing up in SGV, going to college where I, it was so diverse, I never really dealt with these micro aggressions. And it wasn't until like, my professional career that I experienced it.

-Annie

Yeah, my feeling of Chinatown is that it's not a place of economic prosperity, unfortunately. Like, I feel like someone who's outside of LA would prefer to visit Little Tokyo, where there's a lot more activity. They've certainly catered to new tourists and I feel that have adapted to the change in markets and times. Like a lot of the Little Tokyo areas like selling some anime stuff tea pots that are keeping up the trends to bring in people outside of LA to their area. Chinatown, I feel that they chose not to go towards that trend. I

don't know the reason exactly, and I think that to some extent, there is a level of authenticity for their desire to keep it as is. And I think to some extent, I mean, I know what CCED does where they don't want Chinatown to become a playground. It's a place for residents who have lived there for generations to continue existing and do what they can to survive what the current conditions I mean, they really I mean, they literally just had their last grocery store gone. And it's kind of sucks for them. It's just like, where they gonna go? It's only like small local stores now for produce and vegetables and stuff. But yeah, my impression of Chinatown is that they--it's a place where they decided to keep with what they know. And it's not as conducive to the new trends and desires of tourists who may want to come and check it out. But I certainly see the trend going towards that way with I think his name's George from the Chinatown BID. Yeah. Like Chinatown Nights or something Chinatown Summer Nights.

-David

I stayed in Chinatown up until up until I graduated from college and got my first job, because that's what you know, Chinese American kids, do you stay until forever. And I actually recall offering to my parents who didn't want me to move because it was very traditional, offering to them that I would just find an apartment in Chinatown. And I distinctly remember them thinking, No, we don't want you to live in Chinatown, we'll find you a better place. Which is weird to me because I felt sort of perfectly fine in Chinatown. And so they felt like this is just you know, you shouldn't stay here unless it's with us. So if you're going to move, let's go. Let's find you someplace that's, you know, looks like you're moving up or something. They said we you know, why don't you try Pasadena. And so I lived in Pasadena for a while, but you know, I was still very clearly you know, because my family was in Chinatown very clearly still there. And then as I got older and you know, continued to work, I moved from Pasadena to Silverlake, which is still very close to Chinatown. And from Silverlake to currently in Eagle Rock primarily because needing to stay within close distance to my mother. And my entire family of extended cousins and aunts, my mother had a very big family. Lots of I had lots of cousins, lots of aunts and uncles. Everybody stayed within the county for the most part. And so it was very clear and it's interesting watching all my cousins. They stay very close there. They they moved in their own places, but they all stayed really within five to 10 miles of their families. So I I've never moved very far from Chinatown primarily because the need to take care of my mother and make sure that she was okay as well as my grandparents at the time... Yeah, I think there's a sense of you don't stay in Chinatown unless you're a poor immigrant. Whereas I mean, clearly there are people who are flocking to Chinatown now because they are not poor. And the cost of something is less and so they pounce on that. So, you know, but it's me, I would say that it's different for everybody. If I look at my elementary school friends, none of them live in Chinatown, or, to my knowledge, have an overt connection anymore. But because my mother continued to live there, and my niece now lives in Chinatown, it's still a connection for me and I'm probably always will be. I see how other people have chosen, you know, elsewhere, whereas I, I like the

mix of people in Chinatown now.

-Connie

It's like a hub for immigrant communities or people low-income communities to shop because when my mom would shop there, she would haggle. You know, we don't pay taxes. Everything in my home, in our kitchen, whatever my mom uses is the stuff we buy in Chinatown. We don't we don't go to Target and buy a colander. We will go to Chinatown to buy a plastic colander. Things like that. Or, clothes too, it's just, it's more affordable... especially over the past few years, my mom will visit Chinatown less and less because there are the stores in SGV... We used to go to Chinatown and buy those things but now we can go to San Gabriel... everything is more accessible for families here. But those things, those places, businesses still exist in Chinatown, because there are still families in Chinatown that need resources like that.

-Annie

Appendix 5: Statements Describing Race/Ethnic and Class Identities

there's so many problems like in the design or the layout design, because people are competing for the right to design that place or plan that space it's just there's no food, like, there's no full grocery store. And there's, like, it's so limited, like, businesses they have. Yeah. Yeah. It's so it's very limited and what they're offering. And I actually am not sure why, like, well, they're like a couple of weeks, a few, quite a few storefronts like opened by a younger, Asian American but they're like, Asian American, like professionals. And when I go those, those places they do attracts like, younger people. And I think that is a source of tension, probably most prominent to me, that I experienced Chinatown is that these young Asian American professionals, they are not wrong. Like they mostly do, don't have a personal connection to that, but they're taking the space because it's cheaper than elsewhere and they, they're like, Oh, my God, I'm Asian, so they kind of like feel a nativist right to like being that, but like people who do have the connection, direct connection to Chinatown, for example, like, the second generation, the second gen, like the children of the Vietnamese are Cambodian refugees who have been living there, like for 30 years, like they like, like, who are you? Like, do these people like to take up these fronts and like, where it used to be, like this other storefront by, you know, people who have been there for longer? I'm not saying who's right. I respect like, because I kind of like feel that change is inevitable. Yeah, like this tension of the young Asian Americans, they kind of envision that place, in a more economic point then, then, like, the out of a sense of nostalgia, or the original, like working-class, low-income people who have been living there for longer. And I think it's important thing to know that these Asian Americans I'm talking about they're like, like the most socially well off upwardly mobile people who are not from there.

-Kathy

Well, some of the business community really are not sympathetic to those who want to preserve the historic character of the Chinatown, which which historic character includes a place that is affordable to a working-class population. You know, we have historically had people who were blue collar workers, whether it be cooks or laundry people or sewing factory people. The person who clerk works in the grocery store, the nurse, nursing assistant who works at the doctor's office, the people who operate the small swap meet, you know, stalls and selling clothing and selling hats and T shirts. A lot of those people cannot afford the high rents that are now being asked for in these new apartments where the studio unit is going for 2020 \$200 in one bedroom apartment might be 27 \$2,800 \$2,900. If you're making minimum wage, that's completely out of the question. So there's a big gap between the historic working-class blue collar population and the new speculation in land that's occurring in not only Chinatown, but also adjacent urban areas. Some parts are rounding communities are experiencing similar kinds of pressures. Not so much in Lincoln Heights but definitely in Boyle Heights in the east side. And then to the west, you know, places like Echo Park and Silver Lake and Filipino town is starting to feel it and Hollywood starting to feel it. So what you have these high rents caused by land speculation by

developers with access to capital who We can force these changes in the physical environment, then that results in dislocation. And then that results in so called gentrification, that that's kind of a loaded and misleading term. Also, greater economic forces are, are causing change to our Chinatown. And the business co-, some of the business community like the BID, the Business Improvement District leadership will say, Oh, well, there's we already have enough low-income housing, you know, we don't need it. Some of the longtime property owners, like the sons, the children have long early families. They might own a commercial property and they're saying, Well, I want to take advantage of our family's property. I want to sell it to a developer and make a lot of money. I otherwise I lose the opportunity. If i An example is a property on Broadway 651 Broadway, where you have a ground floor commercial, you have a fish store. Upstairs, you have SRO units, rundown and are not well managed, but it's owned by the second generation Chan family, Bob and Elaine Chan, they had a grocery store and then later opened a bank. And now the son runs that particular property at the southwest corner of fourth and Broadway. They are slumlords there, they're not managing the place well, and they're just hanging on because they hope that they can hit a home run with a developer who will pay \$1,000 a square foot of land, and they'll make five or \$10 million. Yeah. Yeah. So so how do you? Yeah, so is there a conflict? Well, Yeah, you know, people are holding, some people are holding on to to have a happy retirement. Then there are also developers who have been acquiring property, like Tom Gilmore, who has who bought the property where the Ai Hoa market, the last supermarket, that big grocery store in Chinatown was, they increased the rents and Hai Wah decided, well, they had another store anyway, so they just didn't need that one.

-Eugene

I think at the end of the day, people like us, people who look like us can also be the very own the very people that are causing the issues, you know. So it really doesn't matter. I don't think it really matters in that sense. Like, you know, there's one there's one landlord in Chinatown, her name is Victoria Vu. She owns like, 30 properties all around LA. And her mom looks just like my mom, you know, you know, it's like, it's like, they're, they're Asian, they're from Vietnam. And they don't care about tenants and humans and you know, they only care about money and so it really doesn't matter. I don't think that is it has only shown us or me that like maybe money capitalism is the greater issue.

-Annie

I hope more folks like think about, like, what does it mean to like, especially for the younger Asian Am folks who are like going to Chinatown and opening like, businesses that don't necessarily serve the low-income folks there like, I really do hope they like think about like, their, their relative like class privilege as people who are able to like open shop there and like, I think they're complicit in gentrification, but I know people would argue like differently. But yeah, like I just think more critically about their position... I

don't think a lot of people think about class, you know, like such a critical way. But we were talking about how like, like we were wondering like, oh, like for those folks like it feels really like important that this is like our--my take, it seems like it feels really important for them to be able to, like, have a business or to like sell things or to like be in Chinatown, like Chinatown means something special to them in like a different way and then I think like what gets challenging is like for me and a lot of other folks in CCED... you're like complicit because you're not thinking critically of like what it means for you to have a business in Chinatown while so many other low-income folks are like being like harassed and like facing economic issues. And so I wonder like, are people... is it because they're just not actively thinking about class in that way. Or, and or is it because like, they're just, they'd rather prioritize their own comfort and like ability to I don't know, explore their culture or ethnic identity over like, all these other things. I don't know if that makes sense. That's like a huge question I've been thinking about like, like, what makes it hard for people to you know, it's I get it, if someone called me a gentrifier, I know, you know, I think it's a natural reaction to react like defensively, but I don't know. I wonder what makes it challenging for folks to like, think beyond just like, their own cultural, like, ethnic identity.

-Frances

I think the main thing is gentrification in terms of that, that Chinatown is take being taken over by non-Asians, and non-Latinos and people with a more income folks, so essentially forcing residents who are or are mostly immigrant working-class folks to move out and that is one thing and then for the mom and pop immigrant businesses have a hard time to survive because the people that move in since there are two worlds in Chinatown. You have the long time, or the working-class, immigrant community with their stores and restaurants. And then you have the more upscale restaurants, the people who live in Jia, Blossom Plaza and up to Hill, where there's quite a few market rate housing and they have their own restaurants, their own stores, so their own banks, they don't mix together. So so as I was saying that with a new addition, it's just gradually eating away the immigrant community.

-King

Appendix 6: Statements Describing Future of Chinatown

I think the unfortunate reality is that it's moving towards the direction of Chinatown BID, where they're going to build some more luxury homes, where it's going to serve like people from outside the community coming in and unfortunately, that should cause more displacement, original Chinatown residents with increased rents and increase like restaurants that tend to serve populations that's outside of Chinatown who want to kind of make it their playground to some extent. So I think the unfortunate reality is just that it's slowly moving towards the trend of becoming like the new hipster place to be in as these new shops with cool restaurants and a place for residents to go dine in for a little bit checkout like these new celebrity chefs who have opened this restaurant, who like these dishes. But I think unfortunately, the trend of like, older businesses are going to also be pushed out because there's also just increased rent from like, these new or older landlords who want different things. They want these hipster trendy places to come in the general revenue is an increase in property value, because it's beneficial as a property owner to have these new trendy places come in and more valuable and make it more desirable for these higher income folks who see Chinatown as more like this cute, trendy place where Chinese people used to reside in. Or yeah, yeah, I think it's very little serving for its or the current inhabitants of Chinatown who have been there for generations or some of the lower income folks and I think CCED plays an important role in trying to figure out what is the solution? What is the next step? You know, with all these changes that are happening, like unfortunate monetary incentives to move in certain directions that would negatively impact lower income folks and people in different generations.

-David

I think like from what I know about like New York SF compared to LA like, it's interesting to see that like, and this is like outside view, right? Like there might be internal there's always internal conflict that we don't know about but I always look at LA Chinatown. I'm like, I wonder why we don't have that like you know, like, there's no like strong coalition within Chinatown. Like CCED has been slowly trying to build that with the different orgs. It's so challenging because you'll find out once you talk to her what it means to preserve Chinatown. For me, preserving Chinatown doesn't mean just preserving a facade and like cultural preservation. It's not just having the Chinese American museum hosting the massacre Memorial and stuff. It's like actually about protecting the people who are still there.

-Frances

Well, I see it continue to be a place where resident, immigrants, working-class people continue to live and have business. You know,

that's why the first of all they're kind of what I call them, helping each other. You need the residents doing the business to cater to each other so that they support each other. I see those two have to be continued. As far as gentrification, I would want to see that have really limited or more housing that had been built that working-class immigrants can afford right now is that you... it is limited all the new constructions they cannot afford you know, even so called affordable housing like Grant Plaza senior citizen housing on Cesar Chavez and Grant is supposed to be affordable housing, but if you want to move there, it costs \$800 or more in rent. And for a person senior that is on SSI, that about \$1150 right now and you only have two to four hundred dollars to spend on living expenses. So that's pretty sad case with the so called affordable housings that are not really affordable. So I think that we will continue to, to push for with low-income, affordable housing. And we're also like CCED the you talk to some of the people that are involved in helping small businesses immigrant businesses of hopefully there to continue to survive.

-King

I feel like every time I visit Chinatown, there's another new building or demolished building that is happening. Like I hadn't been to Chinatown in like, probably five months last year. And when I came back, I noticed like this new building was already like, developed in built and, you know, open for business. And that was like a when did this happen? Like things are moving so fast now. So, you know, like with my involvement in CCED, and with these fights that other committees are like, heading and leading, it's like, we're doing all this work, but it almost seems like no matter what, however much we do, these buildings will these developments will still be built, they'll still be you know, it's kind of sad and disheartening, because I It makes me feel like when, when will, when does it pay off? No, that's not the right way to say it. Is it making a difference? Almost. Yeah, like of course, I know what we're doing is making a difference. But it's hard to see when physically this giant building is new and in front of us, you know, things like that. Um, but yeah, I think in terms of how it's changing, because we can see it with our very own eyes, we see more and more the unhoused population in Chinatown. I think it's so clear that like, affordable housing is such a big issue. And it's like it's only affecting, like people of color. It's only affecting older folks. It's only affecting low-income people. And you know, across the street, there's the Jia apartments that are probably like two-three thousand. And they have a bunch of these empty units where none of these unhoused or low-income families can even afford to live in, because they don't even make that much. You know, and they don't even make that much. And their own landlord is like kicking them out. So like, where are they going to go? So that's where it's like, that's where I see that it's like, gosh, what, what's going to happen in a year or two years? So, yeah, and I think another thing that's changing is like these, a lot of these homes are these apartment buildings. They're so old, they're not well kept whatsoever. So like, yeah, what is going to happen in even 10 years, you know, recently a building on Broadway. I think it caught on fire. And a few tenants had to move out because their unit was affected. And it just made me think like, and this was during the

heavy rains. Heavy rainfall, like earlier in January. So yeah, things like that. Just make me think like, are we just going to slowly let these buildings crash and burn until tenants are just kicked out? Like same with Cathy Manor? Or are we just waiting for folks like this is this sounds really morbid, but are we just waiting for, like, these tenants to like, die off, and then we're, like, create some, like, build another building? Because that building is specifically for older folks. It's like affordable housing for older folks and without proper elevators and laundry and things like that, it's like, well, they're, they're gonna have to work so much harder to just live the end of their lives. And it's, it's just really sad and difficult. Yeah, that's what I think about.

-Annie

Chinatown is not like the only hub for Chinese American or the Asian Americans in LA region, right. We were seeing, like, all these ethnic businesses come up in the San Gabriel Valley, or, even like east father. So yeah. But like, I feel like the value of their Chinatown itself, it's like, a living museum. Yeah. From my perspective, because it's not only about like, oh, the Chinese culture, the, you know, Chinese restaurant, it's more about, like, the stories of the immigrant, like, we can, like, you know, are traced back to like, 19th century. Right. And, like, all this fight against discrimination, and how they survive through those really, you know, a lot of tragic, you know, all of this devastating moments, how they survive, and the histories of the histories of, of these moving families. Yeah, so it's, it's more more of like, a Chinese culture. It's more like this American history. You know, it's about immigrant history. It's about the spirits, the resiliency of the community. No, it's nothing like, like, it's nothing like the community in the Monterey Park in San Gabriel city. They have like, yeah, totally different meanings for the Asian communities in LA.

-Xiaoling

It's literally 2023, people just want to live. People are tired of like, having to fight against everything against the government... people just want to live safely, peacefully. They don't want to deal with asshole landlords who refuse to fix their plumbing or electricity they want to live safely so that a fire doesn't fucking happen in their home... We are literally built on racism and slavery. So it's like, I have mixed feelings of what do we call home with this? When home is about like the relationship and connections that we've made, not necessarily just a singular place. So Chinatown's history of already being displaced. Because back then people just fucking hated Chinese people is just like, well, that's not a very nice thing to look back on your origin as but like, as a place where because they were ostracized because they had nowhere else to go. And so they had to seek community within each other in a way of sort of this bittersweet history of self determination energy of like, I deserve to live, and I will make that happen, regardless of whether or not you think I should die. And I find that very, you know, I wish we didn't live in a world like that. And I want us to work towards a world where people have a safe place to live. And like, you know, eat drink, have fun, and like have joy, because

that's what we deserve. So, like, if that is like this, if LA Chinatown is to be this like space of building working-class solidarity so that people can have that joy then that is what I work--then that is what I want to work towards... I like to imagine we live in a future where borders don't exist anymore. I think a lot of material needs like, wow. Like, imagine, imagine if Chinatown had like several laundromats? You know, like, it's like, really? You know, there's a lot of hills in Chinatown, right? So I'm always thinking, wow, it must be terrible to walk with a bunch of laundry, right? So what if it was a bunch? A bunch, a bunch of laundromats? What if we had, you know, had more? Wow, what do we add to functioning grocery stores with, actual meats, and like, seafood and all that. So I think about those amenities as well. And also kind of this dream of, you know, home ownership. People who live in the community, have a say in what their homes are. And okay, if they have to rent then it's actual affordable rent that's not driven by greed. And sure, just pay whatever you want to pay--what you can actually, in a more ideal sense, I would abolish rent... maybe we should just go over and get rid of like, property. What does ownership actually mean? That's the real question. Maybe we should redistribute land... I don't know if these are too like lofty, I mean, abolish capitalism, right? Let's go back to like, bartering, you know? Let's just get rid of money. And, like, very lofty ideals... but also kind of just like the material needs of people need food, people need water, people need gas and electricity. How do we get to those and beyond just like relying and begging for people with money and people in the government? And, what can the community do for you? And I think about that beyond just services, so it'd be like a very hopeful self determining community. That is Chinatown. And both preserving the history sucks sometimes I think we really do have an oral history of Chinatown. And it's unfortunate that the people who are like giving that history have already kind of like washed it washed away the working-class aspect.

-Kris

Interviewees

1. Paulina. (2023, February 3). Video. [Personal interview].
2. Sophat. (2023, February 3). Video. [Personal interview].
3. Kathy. (2023, February 4). Video. [Personal interview].
4. Larry. (2023, February 6). Video. [Personal interview].
5. Dore. (2023, February 7). Video. [Personal interview].
6. Eugene. (2023, February 7). Video. [Personal interview].
7. Kris. (2023, February 9). Video. [Personal interview].
8. Kenneth. (2023, February 9). Video. [Personal interview].
9. Xiaoling. (2023, February 9). Video. [Personal interview].
10. Annie. (2023, February 9). Video. [Personal interview].
11. King. (2023, February 10). Video. [Personal interview].
12. David. (2023, February 11). Video. [Personal interview].
13. Frances. (2023, February 14). Video. [Personal interview].
14. Connie. (2023, February 16). Video. [Personal interview].
15. Lynn. (2023, February 21). Video. [Personal interview].
16. Lucy. (2023, February 21). Video. [Personal interview].
17. Dana. (2023, February 24). Video. [Personal interview].
18. Jenny. (2023, February 27). Email. [Personal interview].