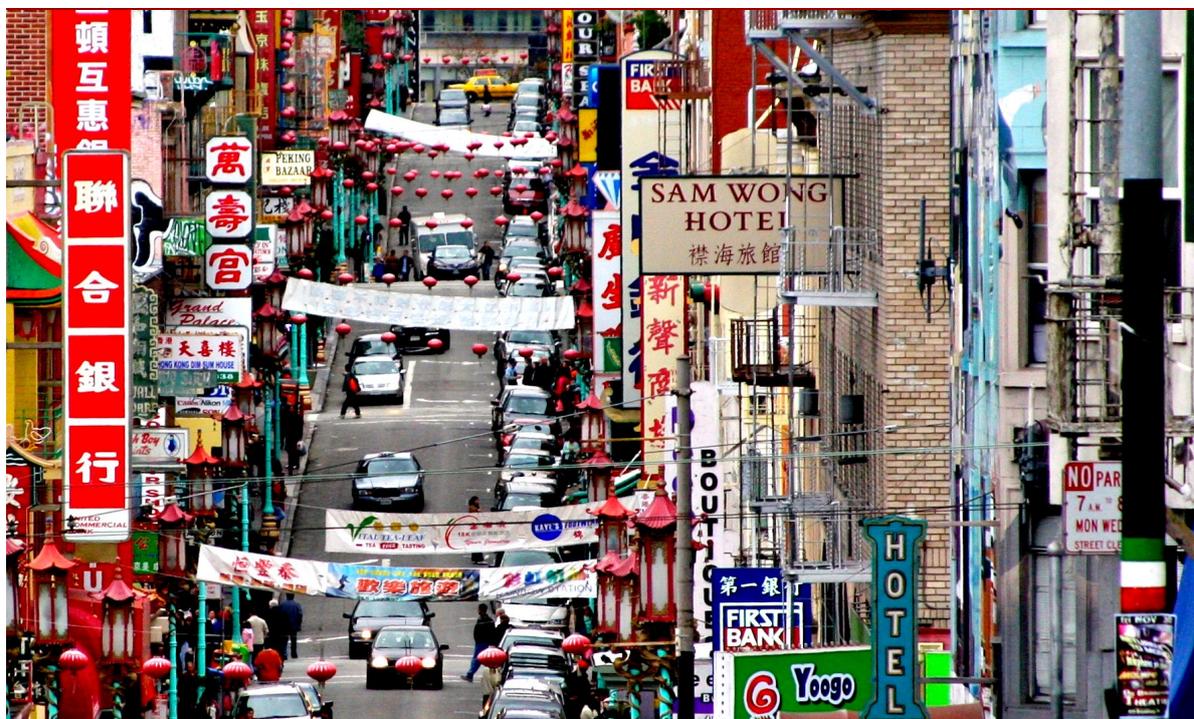


## THE STORY OF CHINATOWN



Unknown (2007) *Chinatown, San Francisco* [photo] Retrieved on 2017, August 21 from: [https://mx.wikimedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Chinatown, San Francisco \(2082734346\).jpg](https://mx.wikimedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Chinatown,_San_Francisco_(2082734346).jpg)

The story of Chinatown is the story of a neighborhood; an American neighborhood, an old neighborhood, an immigrant neighborhood, where the old country still lives inside the new one. The past and the present are inseparably woven together in this neighborhood defined by Broadway, California, Kearny and Powell streets.

In the mid-1840's, following defeat by Britain in the first Opium War, a series of natural catastrophes occurred across China resulting in famine, peasant uprisings and rebellions. Understandably, when the news of gold and opportunity in far away Gum San, (Golden Mountain- the Chinese name for America) reached China, many Chinese seized the opportunity to seek their fortune.

The Chinese were met with ambiguous feelings by Californians. In 1850, San Francisco Mayor John W. Geary invited the "China Boys" to a ceremony to acknowledge their work ethic. However, as the American economy weakened, the Chinese labor force became a threat to mainstream society. Racial discrimination

and repressive legislation drove the Chinese from the gold mines to the sanctuary of the neighborhood that became known as Chinatown. The only ethnic group in the history of the United States to have been specifically denied entrance into the country, the Chinese were prohibited by law to testify in court, to own property, to vote, to have families join them, to marry non-Chinese, and to work in institutional agencies.

The success and survival of Chinatown depended a great deal on the family and district benevolent associations which served as political and social support systems to newcomers. The members strove to meet the basic needs of the community, and represented a united voice in the fight against discriminatory legislation process.

**"CHINATOWN"** offers a revealing look at how a group of people bound geographically, culturally, linguistically and economically during hostile times has flourished to become a vibrant, courageous and proud community for Chinese Americans and greater San Francisco, referred to as Dai Fao (Big City) in Chinese.

#### References

Adapted from: pbs.org

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